

A COMPARISON OF IMMIGRANT AND NON-IMMIGRANT WOMEN'S DECISION
MAKING IN ABUSIVE RELATIONSHIPS

by

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B.A., University of Guelph, 1993
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AN ABSTRACT OF A DISSERTATION

submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

School of Family Studies and Human Services
College of Human Ecology

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Abstract

Male-to-female intimate partner violence (IPV) remains a significant social problem as research into its prevalence, incidence, severity, and resulting health consequences has documented. Just as we are beginning to understand some of the pieces of this problem in the United States, researchers and domestic violence advocates have called for expanding that understanding by exploring the range of risks involved in leaving a relationship with a violent man or in seeking help. In addition to the risk of personal physical harm, women in relationships with violent men may also consider the risk of harm to others, and the financial, social and legal risks to leaving (Hamby, 2008). Others have called for a better understanding of IPV through the examination of experiences of IPV within specific groups or subpopulations, such as with immigrant women (Menjívar & Salcido, 2002). This study uses Hamby's (2008) holistic risk assessment, Choice and Lamke's (1997) 2-part decision-making model, and a comparison between immigrant and non-immigrant women, to expand our understanding of the decisions women make about leaving their relationship and to seek help. With a sample of 1,307 women in the United States, similarities and differences between immigrant and non-immigrant women in the predictors to leaving and help seeking were determined through logistic regression analysis. Results indicate support for a holistic risk assessment such as Hamby's (2008), and demonstrate significant differences between immigrant and non-immigrant women in their risks and barriers to leaving and help seeking. Nevertheless, examinations of the predictors to leaving and help seeking demonstrate many areas of similarity between immigrant and non-immigrant women in the ways they make decisions about leaving a relationship with a violent man or seeking help. Domestic violence advocates and therapists who work with women in relationships with violent men are encouraged to explore more fully the impact of the risks of harm to others, and the financial, social and legal risks to leaving or staying, and are further encouraged to expand their ideas of what women need once they leave, given the barriers that may make leaving more difficult for them.

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Major Professor
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Dedication

This work is dedicated to two women who taught me so much about thinking critically and asking interesting questions: my grandmother, Eva Hipple, and my first mentor at the University of Guelph, Dr. Nora Cebotarev. I miss you both very much.

CHAPTER 1 - Introduction

Male-to-female intimate partner violence (IPV) remains a significant social problem as research into its prevalence, incidence, severity, and resulting health consequences has documented. Just as we are beginning to understand some of the pieces of this problem in the United States, researchers have also called for expanding that understanding by exploring more closely the experiences of IPV within specific groups or subpopulations. This study is an attempt to expand our understanding by providing a comparison between the experiences of immigrant and non-immigrant women. As an immigrant, a family therapist, and a former women's shelter volunteer, this research combines many interests which have been both personal and professional for me for a number of years. Those of us who have worked with immigrant women in relationships with violent men have been introduced in many ways to the particular challenges faced by these women if they want to leave their relationship, or to seek help from those outside of their own family. While researchers have begun to document some of these particular or unique challenges, comparisons between immigrant and non-immigrant women have been rare and have been limited to specific immigrant groups, such as Latina women for example. Instead, I would like to bring a broader perspective to this comparison of immigrant and non-immigrant women by including women from a wide range of ethnic and national backgrounds. After providing a brief summary of the context of the problem in this chapter, I describe the study's purpose, significance and theoretical framework, and identify the research questions which frame the study.

Context of the Problem

In examining IPV in the United States, reported rates of IPV vary according to the definition of violence and sampling procedures used. For instance, Tjaden and Thoennes (2000) reported that 22.1% of women (7.4% of men) in the National Violence Against Women Survey reported being physically assaulted by a current or former spouse, cohabiting partner, boyfriend or girlfriend, or date in their lifetime, and that 1.9% of women (3.4% of men) reported being physically assaulted in the past year. They also noted that 31.5 % of female rape victims and 39.0% of female physical assault victims reported being injured during their most recent physical

assault and that the risk of injury to women increases when the perpetrator is a current or former intimate partner (Tjaden & Thoennes, 2000). Coker, Smith, McKeown, & King (2000), using a different sampling procedure, found that of the women who sought care at family practice centers in their study, 14.8 % reported any type of IPV in their current relationship (physical, sexual and/or emotional) and 55.1% of women reported any type of IPV in any intimate relationship in their lifetime. Furthermore, in their review of the literature reporting prevalence rates within the United States, Wilt and Olson (1996) reported that of the studies that used national or statewide stratified random samples, prevalence of physical violence against women by an intimate partner over the past year ranged from 8% to 12%. They also reported on lifetime prevalence rates that ranged from 13% to 30% but noted that these studies utilized differing sampling strategies, and some included sexual and emotional abuse in their findings along with physical violence.

Research has also documented differences in IPV rates within particular communities or subpopulations of the U.S. and researchers have called for a closer examination of IPV within these groups in order to better understand experiences of IPV and the reasons behind these differences in incidence and prevalence rates. For instance, Rennison & Planty (2003, p. 434) argued that “While aggregate national estimates are informative and provide a simplified picture of a problem of interest, generalizing from aggregate estimates to subpopulations can be misleading or simply wrong, since patterns of victimization are often confounded by other factors”. Their findings indicated that when income is included, differences in prevalence rates by race “*become differentiated along income rather than racial lines for White and Black victims*” (Rennison & Planty, 2003, p. 437, italics theirs). Similarly, in their review of the literature, Wilt and Olson (1996) noted mixed results in research that examines rates of IPV by racial and ethnic categories, where differences may be partially explained by differences in income.

As a part of this closer look at subpopulations, some researchers have noted that the trends of increasing migration rates within the U.S. call for a closer examination of IPV within immigrant families (Denham, Frasier, Gerken Hooten, Belton, Newton, Gonzales, Begum, & Campbell, 2007; Erez & Hartley, 2003). Immigration rates have been on the rise in the United States since the passage of the Immigration Act in 1965. Portes and Rumbaut (2006) noted that the foreign-born population was 7.9 percent of the total population in 1990 and 12.5 percent of

the total population in 2005. They wrote, “ Although not yet reaching the situation a century ago, when immigrants accounted for 14.7 percent of the American population, that figure is being approached fast, while the impact of contemporary immigration is significant and growing” (Portes and Rumbaut, 2006, p.12). While research into intimate partner violence in immigrant families has lagged behind research in the mainstream population (Menjívar & Salcido, 2002; Raj & Silverman, 2002; Tran & Des Jardins, 2000), a picture is beginning to emerge of what this phenomenon looks like in immigrant families.

As with non-immigrant families, there are challenges to obtaining accurate prevalence rates, however recent research has documented prevalence and incidence rates for some immigrant populations. For instance, Yoshihama (1999) found a 61% lifetime prevalence rate of any type of abuse in a community sample of women of Japanese descent, with 26.5% reporting some type of physical abuse, 50.7% reporting some type of emotional abuse, and 20.4% reporting sexual abuse in their lifetime. Adam and Schewe (2007) found a 77% lifetime prevalence rate and 71% past year incidence rate of any type of abuse, including physical, psychological and sexual violence, for the South Asian women in their community sample. Shibusawa and Yick (2007), in their community sample of Chinese-born men and women over the age of 50, found that 7 % of women and 6% of men had experienced minor physical violence by their spouses during the previous 12 months.

In telephone surveys with Korean American families, Kim and Sung (2000) found that 18% of women and 8% of men experienced at least one incident of minor physical violence by their spouses with 6.3% of women and 0.8% of men experiencing at least one incident of severe assault by their spouse in the previous 12 months. Finally, in telephone surveys with a community sample, Ingram (2007) found that 57.2 % of Latino respondents (52% of the Latino sample was foreign-born) reported experiencing any type of IPV in their lifetime and 16.2% reported experiencing any IPV in the past year. In another study which employed telephone surveys of a community sample of Mexican Americans and non-Hispanic whites, Sorenson and Telles (1991) found lower lifetime prevalence rates than those reported by Ingram (2007), with 20.0% of Mexican Americans born in Mexico reporting any spousal violence, 21.6% of non-Hispanic whites born in the U.S. reporting any spousal violence in their lifetime, and 30.9% of Mexican Americans born in the U.S. reporting any lifetime spousal violence. Thus, prevalence rates are at least as high and at times higher among immigrant women than non-immigrant

women, depending upon the ethnic background of the population and the sampling strategy used (Bauer, Rodriguez, Szkupinski Quiroga, & Flores-Ortiz, 2000; Klevens, 2007; Menjívar & Salcido, 2002; Raj & Silverman, 2002). Intimate partner violence is clearly a problem that affects both immigrant and non-immigrant women.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to explore immigrant women's experiences of male-to-female IPV in comparison to non-immigrant women's experiences. Specifically, I will examine participants' perceptions of the types of risks, and barriers that influence leaving their relationships or seeking help. While there has been growing attention in the research literature to immigrant women's experiences of abuse, there is still much left to be learned about how the process of immigration or the status of being foreign-born might impact immigrant women's experiences of abuse and help-seeking, how they influence the decision to leave an abusive relationship, and about how these experiences compare to non-immigrant women. This is particularly the case given that so much of the research has been made up of small exploratory studies of specific immigrant groups (see, for example, Abraham, 2000, Bhuyan, Mell, Senturia, Sullivan, & Shiu-Thornton, 2005; Bui and Morash, 1999; Crandall, Senturia, Sullivan, & Shiu-Thornton, 2005; Keller & Brennan, 2007; Raj & Silverman, 2007; Sullivan, Senturia, Negash, Shiu-Thornton, & Giday, 2005). Current understanding of these experiences would be greatly enhanced by more large scale studies that are able to make comparisons within and across immigrant groups, as well as being able to make comparisons to non-immigrant women, and to address the specific processes of leaving and help seeking. While researchers who study IPV in immigrant families have conceptualized immigrant women's experiences of abuse as unique in many ways (Abraham, 1995, 2000; Bhuyan & Senturia, 2005; Dasgupta & Warriar, 1996; Erez & Hartley, 2003; Liao, 2006; Tran & Des Jardins, 2000) studies which actually compare immigrant to non-immigrant women are relatively rare and have been limited to studies of Latina women (Harris, Firestone, & Vega, 2005; Ingram, 2007; Jasinski, 1998). The current study will utilize secondary analysis of a data set including both immigrant and non-immigrant women, in order to better understand the similarities and differences between these two groups of women in their perceptions of the risks and barriers to leaving their relationships, and to seeking help. A better understanding of these similarities and differences may lead to the development of

services targeted to immigrant women's specific needs, as well as contributing more to our understanding of the phenomenon of IPV in general.

Significance of the Study

In this study of immigrant women and IPV, I aim to fill existing gaps in the research literature, contribute to current theoretical models of IPV, and address some knowledge gaps for treatment providers and domestic violence advocates. In their review of the literature in this area, Menjívar and Salcido (2002, p. 900) noted, "We find that what is missing in prior research, and which is necessary to begin theorizing, is a sustained examination of different experiences based on comparative reasoning. Instead of simply adding factors that affect immigrant women, such an examination might lead to a restructuring of domestic violence frameworks in light of the experiences of immigrant women, whose presence is increasing in many countries around the world". Thus, rather than treating immigrant women as a special group, or as an add-on to current theorizing and research, I will instead examine how immigrant women's experiences may be similar to and different from the experiences of non-immigrant women, and examine how these similarities and differences can contribute to a better understanding of IPV in general.

As noted above, empirical studies that compare immigrant to non-immigrant women's experiences of IPV and help-seeking are beginning to emerge, but have been limited to Latino immigrants. This research has demonstrated lower rates of IPV among less acculturated immigrant women, as well as lower rates of help-seeking among immigrant women compared to non-immigrant women. For instance, Harris et al., (2005) and Jasinski (1998) compared foreign-born and U.S.-born Latinos to investigate the impact of acculturation and gender role beliefs on IPV. Jasinski (1998) found that higher levels of acculturation, measured by generational status and age of arrival in the U.S. were associated with higher rates of wife assault, while Harris et al. (2005) found that Latina women with more traditional gender role beliefs, regardless of whether they were born in the U.S. or in Mexico, were less likely to report abuse to researchers than Latina women with less traditional gender role beliefs. The authors of this study suggest this finding could result from those with more traditional gender roles being less likely to define a situation as abusive. Furthermore, in a study which asked about lifetime IPV based on a question that used concrete behavioral terms ("ever hit or thrown things at your spouse/partner?")

Sorenson and Telles (1991) also found lower rates for Mexican Americans born in Mexico (20.0%) compared to Mexican Americans born in the U.S. (30.9%).

Additionally, for the U.S.-born and Mexican-born Latina women in Harris et al.'s (2005) study, different factors were associated with higher rates of IPV. For U.S.-born women, higher rates of IPV were associated with: the male partner's being more likely to make major decisions, both partners making major decisions equally, higher contribution of the female partner to family income, higher rates of illegal drug use. For Mexican-born women, higher rates of IPV were associated with: the male partner being more likely to insist on getting his way, higher levels of acculturative stress, and higher levels of education. Finally, Ingram (2007) compared immigrant and non-immigrant Latina women in IPV prevalence rates and help-seeking behavior and found that significantly more non-immigrant Latina women than immigrant Latinas reported IPV victimization to researchers, and that significantly more non-immigrant Latina women contacted formal support services than immigrant Latina women. Differences in prevalence rates and help-seeking behavior, and the importance of different factors associated with the IPV rates of U.S. and foreign-born participants in this research clearly indicates a need for further research to understand the similarities and differences in IPV experiences for immigrant and non-immigrant women. Theoretical frameworks used to understand IPV in immigrant families have been developed, focusing on immigrant-specific factors related to IPV (Abraham's ethno-gender approach, 1995; Yoshihama's immigrants-in-context framework, 2001) in an attempt to account for experiences often left out of mainstream theoretical frameworks. However, the next step of integrating knowledge gained from these theoretical frameworks with frameworks that have been used to address mainstream populations, such as Choice & Lamke's (1997) two-part decision-making model, has yet to be taken.

In addition to the ongoing work to understand the experiences of immigrant women, treatment providers and domestic violence advocates are beginning to reconsider previous approaches to risk assessment and the question of whether or not advocates should continue to focus their efforts solely on helping women to leave a violent relationship, as shown in Hamby's (2008) concept of holistic risk assessment. According to Hamby (2008), advocates need to be able to consider a wider range of risks than the risk of personal physical harm, including the risk of harm to others, as well as the financial, legal, and social risks to staying in or leaving a violent relationship. While therapists and advocates have focused primarily on women's physical safety

and the risk of further physical harm if they remain in a violent relationship, a more complex understanding of the risks involved in staying or leaving is emerging. In describing the need for understanding this complexity, Davies (1998, p. 3) wrote, “As battered women analyze the risks they and their children face, some will conclude that physical violence is not their greatest risk, whereas others will conclude that leaving increases their risks. Much of the current response to domestic violence focuses almost exclusively on physical violence as the priority and leaving as the primary safety strategy. How can advocates bridge these gaps in perspective?”. One answer may come from the knowledge that could be gained from research with immigrant women. Previous research on IPV in immigrant families has led to a better understanding of the complexity of these risks, as this research has demonstrated that for immigrant women, leaving may carry with it significant legal and social risks (Bauer, et al., 2000; Bui, 2003; Erez & Hartley, 2003; Raj & Silverman, 2002). Yet immigrant women are not the only ones who may face financial, legal, and social risks. In comparing immigrant and non-immigrant women’s perceptions of the risks involved in leaving their relationship, as defined by Hamby’s (2008) concept of holistic risk assessment, I hope to offer a contribution to clinicians and advocates who work with women in abusive relationships by building a more thorough understanding of how both of these groups of women view these risks and the options available to them.

Theoretical Framework

A more detailed description of the theoretical framework and examination of the theoretical literature will be provided in Chapter 2, but to summarize that framework briefly, this study will be framed first by World-Systems Theory to understand the macro-level processes that impact immigration to the United States, and then by Abraham’s (1995) ethno-gender approach to the study of immigrant women’s experiences of IPV. This framework posits that the intersection of ethnicity and gender creates unique experiences for immigrant women in violent relationships, as ethnicity may become more important in a foreign context but may also become the basis for stereotyping and the restriction of access to resources. Their experience of being immigrants may lead immigrant women to understand their situations in vastly different ways, and to make decisions about remaining in the relationship or seeking help from outsiders differently, as compared to non-immigrant women. Additionally, Choice & Lamke’s (1997) two-part decision-making model will be used to guide the research questions addressed in this

study. By integrating many of the theoretical constructs brought to previous research into women's stay/leave decision (constructs stemming from the approaches of learned helplessness, reasoned action/planned behavior, investment model and psychological entrapment), Choice & Lamke (1997) argue that in deciding whether or not to leave an abusive relationship, women ultimately examine the two questions of "Will I be better off?" and "Can I do it?". While these two questions are used by Choice and Lamke (1997) to address the process women go through in deciding to leave an abusive relationship, they could also be helpful in understanding the processes women go through in deciding to seek help from outside agencies. Thus, Choice and Lamke's (1997) model will be used to investigate both of these decision-making processes, the decision to leave and the decision to seek help. Finally, in examining these two questions, Hamby's (2008) concept of holistic risk assessment will also be utilized. This concept of holistic risk assessment allows for a more complete understanding of the factors that may be included in women's examination of Choice and Lamke's (1997) questions. In this way, these theoretical approaches will guide the research questions investigated here in order to develop a better understanding not only of immigrant women's experiences of abuse but of IPV in general.

Research Sample and Questions

As previously stated, this study will involve the secondary analysis of a data set. The data set comes from the RAVE (Risk Assessment Validation) Study conducted by Roehl, O'Sullivan, Webster, & Campbell (2005). This study was a multi-site field test funded by the National Institute of Justice to assess the predictive accuracy of several methods of assessing the risk of repeat assault or potential lethality in domestic violence cases. The sample includes 1307 participants at time one and 782 at time two (approximately 6 months after enrollment in the study). The current study uses only time one data. Thirty-eight per cent of the sample at time one (n=497) were born outside of the U.S. The data set and methods utilized in the original study will be described further in Chapter 3. Limitations in using secondary analysis need to be noted, however. For instance, the original study asked only the respondent's country of origin and did not ask how long the respondent has been in the country, so comparisons based on length of stay in the U.S. are not possible in this study. Additionally, the sample was comprised of women contacted either through local courts, medical facilities, or domestic violence shelters, and so there may be a bias toward help-seeking present in the sample. While these limitations are

present in this study, the ability to make comparisons between immigrant and non-immigrant women in the data set is an advantage that may outweigh these limitations, as previous research has not undertaken this comparison in examining these specific questions related to experiences of IPV.

With this data set, I will compare the experiences of immigrant and non-immigrant women in abusive relationships in three key areas: their perceptions of the risks and barriers to leaving their relationship or seeking help, and how these factors may be important in their decision to leave the relationship, or to seek help. The specific research questions guiding the study are:

1. In relationships with violent men, how do immigrant women compare to non-immigrant women in the types of risks and the barriers they encounter when considering leaving or seeking help?
2. How do these factors (risks and barriers) predict the decision to leave the relationship for immigrant and non-immigrant women?
3. How do these factors (risks and barriers) predict help-seeking for immigrant and non-immigrant women?

The next chapter reviews both the theoretical and empirical literature relating to these questions, while Chapter 3 describes the methods used, Chapter 4 outlines the findings of the study, and Chapter 5 concludes with a discussion of both the research and clinical implications of the findings.

CHAPTER 2 - Literature Review

In this chapter I begin by describing the theoretical framework that is used to inform the study, and then provide some information that gives a context for understanding immigrant experiences in the United States. From there, I move on to review the relevant research in this area. I first examine holistic risk assessment factors relating to the first part of Choice and Lamke's (1997) two part decision-making model, the question of whether or not women will be better off leaving a violent relationship or seeking help, and then examine research focused on the second part of their model, the barriers that influence whether or not women leave or seek help. In each of these sections, I review the research that has focused on non-immigrant populations first, and then the research that specifically investigates immigrant women's experiences of IPV.

Theoretical Framework

As noted in the previous chapter, the theoretical framework that I have used to guide this study is composed of many layers. At the broadest level, World-Systems Theory (Wallerstein, 2004) is used to provide a framework for understanding international migration flows to the United States as a process shaped by the movement of capital from core countries such as the U.S. to developing countries on the periphery. At a more intermediate level, Abraham's (1995) ethno-gender approach is used to understand immigrant women's experiences of IPV as shaped by the intersecting structures of ethnicity and gender. And at the micro-level of individual decision-making, Choice and Lamke's (1997) two-part decision-making model and Hamby's (2008) holistic risk assessment concepts are used to understand the processes both non-immigrant and immigrant women go through in deciding to leave a violent relationship or seek help. Each of these theoretical frameworks are explained in more detail in the following sections.

World-Systems Theory

At the most macro level of the framework used to guide this study, World-Systems Theory is used to help understand the global systems and structures which influence international migration patterns from developing (peripheral) countries, to countries that are more highly developed (the core), such as the United States. World-Systems theorists such as Wallerstein (2004) argue that a fuller understanding of our social reality occurs when we examine whole structures through time, such that “in ‘world-systems’ we are dealing with a spatial/temporal zone which cuts across many political and cultural units, one that represents an integrated zone of activity and institutions which obey certain systemic rules” (p. 17). Viewed through this lens, as Massey, Arango, Hugo, Kouaouci, Pellegrino, & Taylor (2006, p. 42) noted, “migration is a natural outgrowth of disruptions and dislocations that inevitably occur in the process of capitalist development”. Thus, within the modern world-system, international migration has followed a pattern of movement from countries in the periphery to countries in the core as a response to the flow of capital from core countries to the periphery. While my study is unable to test the hypotheses that emerge from a World-Systems explanation of international migration, because the data collected in the original RAVE study is individual level data, the framework is helpful as a context for the study in that it links the individual-level decision-making processes examined here to the broader social and historical structures which shape immigrant women’s lives.

Ethno-Gender Approach

At a more intermediate level, the ethno-gender approach (Abraham, 1995) is further used to frame the experiences of immigrant women in relationships with violent men. Abraham (1995) noted that previous examinations of IPV often fell within one of two schools of thought: (1) the family violence perspective which explained IPV as a result of personal characteristics of the victim or offender, or of internal or external stressors faced by the family, or (2) the feminist perspective, which viewed IPV as a reflection of a social structure that subordinates women and accepts male dominance and aggression. Noting the absence of an understanding of the experiences of ethnic minority women in general, and immigrant women in particular, Abraham (1995) offered the ethno-gender approach as an alternative framework to both the family violence perspective and the feminist perspective. She wrote that this approach can increase our understanding of immigrant women’s experiences, based on the intersection of ethnicity and

gender as equally important external structures which contribute to marital violence. Within the ethno-gender approach, gender is conceptualized as a social construction that defines and evaluates roles and behavioral expectations based on an individual's biological sex, while ethnicity is conceptualized as having two dimensions: "One, as a cultural differentiation based on some element of primordiality, such as race, origin, history, and language, combined with cultural specificities such as distinct religious practices, nomenclature, particularized customs, beliefs, and values; two, as a social construct that is dynamic, manipulated, mediated and symbolically manifested in social interaction in situational contexts" (Abraham, 1995, p. 452).

Recognizing that immigrant women face vulnerabilities and confront challenges relating to multiple oppressions on the basis of gender, ethnicity, culture, legal systems and economics, Abraham's (1995) ethno-gender approach "emphasizes the intersection of ethnicity and gender because cultural differences form an important basis for the social construction of a national culture in a foreign land. Ethnicity becomes the basis for group identification and solidarity in an alien country" (p. 452). Yet at the same time, distinct cultural attributes are used by members of the dominant group to stereotype and mark boundaries in ways which can restrict immigrants from total acceptance by the mainstream and can create both increased vulnerabilities to violence in their relationships and increased barriers to help-seeking. Echoing world-systems theory, Abraham (1995, p. 452) notes, "The social situation is frequently manifested in the dominant group forming the core and the subordinate group being allocated a peripheral position in the social, economic, and political structure of the setting." Thus, the ethno-gender approach recognizes that immigrant women, unlike immigrant men, must cope with gender boundaries that define them as subordinate based on patriarchal norms of both the immigrant and the mainstream cultures and, unlike mainstream women, must cope with "semipermeable boundaries that allow them, as subordinate group members, to partially internalize the norms and values of the dominant culture while being excluded by the dominant group from total membership" in that culture (Abraham, 1995, p. 453). Immigrant women thus face dual subordinations, based on both ethnicity and gender.

The ethno-gender approach is similar to the concept of intersectionality as applied to the phenomenon of IPV by Bograd (1999) in recognizing the multiple systems of power and oppression previously ignored in much of the IPV literature. Bograd (1999, p. 276) noted that "In practice, social dimensions are not merely abstract descriptions as they are suffused with

evaluations that have social consequences”. Recognition of these social consequences is important for an accurate understanding of the experiences and the causes of violence in families, particularly for families outside of the mainstream. Bograd (1999) noted that in previous examinations of IPV, if social dimensions other than gender inequality were included at all, they were often viewed as stressors, rather than as explanatory factors. From the perspective of intersectionality, “no dimension, such as gender inequality, is privileged as an explanatory construct of domestic violence, and gender inequality itself is modified by its intersection with other systems of power and oppression” (Bograd, 1999, p. 277). The concept of intersectionality then argues for the importance of recognizing the various social systems of power and oppression which may play a role in contributing to violence against women. In contrast, Abraham’s (1995) ethno-gender approach, in focusing specifically on the experiences of immigrant women, does privilege certain systems of power over others in offering an explanation for IPV by choosing to place at the forefront the particular intersection of gender and ethnicity in creating dual structures, each with their own assumptions about roles and behavioral expectations, which may contribute to violence in immigrant families and may also limit immigrant women in their abilities to seek help from services located in the mainstream.

The importance of this particular intersection has been noted by other researchers as well. For instance, in researching IPV among Vietnamese immigrants, Bui (2003, p. 210) noted, “The interplay of gender and race/ethnicity can exert major influences on the ways immigrant women respond to domestic abuse. Although the family can be an arena of patriarchal oppression, racial/ethnic minorities also see family as a site of resistance to the dominant society”. Furthermore, in their review of the literature Raj and Silverman (2002, p. 369) wrote that immigrant women may face increased vulnerability to IPV as they “live within two often conflicting cultures and within a context in which they are isolated and viewed as other”.

Two-Part Decision Making Model

Moving from world-systems theory to provide a context for understanding the historical structures that influence migration from other parts of the world to developed nations such as to the United States, to the more intermediate level of the ethno-gender approach to understanding the intersection of the external structures of gender and ethnicity as contributors to IPV, the theoretical framework that I have used to examine IPV in immigrant families takes one step

closer to the experiences of individual women by utilizing the two-part decision-making model of Choice and Lamke (1997) to better understand decision making processes of individual women in relationships with violent men. While immigrant women's decision-making processes may be shaped by the external structures recognized in world-systems theory and the ethno-gender approach, I think it is also important to recognize that women are actively involved in day-to-day decision making, and Choice and Lamke's (1997) two-part decision-making model provides a framework for further investigating these decision-making processes. In determining whether or not to leave a violent relationship, Choice and Lamke (1997) suggest that women first ask the question, "Will I be better off?" and then ask "Can I do it?". They argue that these two questions are central to the process of leaving and that these questions integrate the major concepts that make up the four theoretical frameworks previously used to examine women's stay/leave behavior: learned helplessness, psychological entrapment, investment model, and reasoned action/planned behavior. In framing the stay/leave decision in terms of these two questions, researchers are able to consider both the intrapsychic (perceived control) and external (economic resources, cultural/social norms) features involved in women's decision-making.

In examining the first question, Choice and Lamke (1997) posit this part of the decision-making process is influenced by a woman's evaluation of her relationship satisfaction, her perception of irretrievable investments, that is, her thoughts and feelings regarding the amount of time and effort already put into the relationship, her quality of alternatives, and her subjective norm, or her beliefs about what significant others would say or feel about her leaving the relationship. In examining the second question, Choice and Lamke (1997) posit that after deciding that her quality of life would be better outside of her relationship, a woman then examines the resources and barriers presented to her in leaving. These resources and barriers may be personal, in terms of concepts of self-efficacy and feelings of control, or structural, in terms of access to money, employment, shelters or other services for help.

In the current study, use of this model provides a framework for considering both immigrant and non-immigrant women's decision making. Given the intersection of gender and ethnicity in the lives of immigrant women, it is possible that in asking themselves these two questions, "will I be better off?" and "can I do it?", immigrant women consider or are influenced by both similar and different factors as compared to non-immigrant women. Combined with the broader framework offered by world-systems theory to understand the context of international

migration that shapes the experiences of immigrant women in the United States and by the ethno-gender approach that recognizes the importance of dual systems of oppression in the lives of immigrant women, Choice and Lamke's (1997) two-part decision making model is used in this study to understand the particular features that are important for immigrant women as compared to non-immigrant women in choosing to leave an abusive relationship or to seek help. However, the question of leaving or staying brings attention to an emerging issue in work with IPV survivors that requires the inclusion of one more conceptualization, a holistic risk assessment, which shifts Choice and Lamke's (1997) model somewhat in an effort to be more inclusive of current best practices in work with IPV survivors.

Holistic Risk Assessment

The final conceptualization that is woven into the theoretical framework that I use to investigate my research questions is the concept of holistic risk assessment, as presented by Hamby (2008). Hamby (2008) argues that in addition to considering the risk for physical harm to themselves, women in abusive relationships who are facing the stay/leave decision, also consider a number of risks that many domestic violence advocates are only just beginning to understand. For instance, women in violent relationships may also consider the risk of physical harm to others if they chose to leave, as well as considering the financial, social, and legal risks involved in leaving (Hamby, 2008). The risk of physical harm to others includes the risk of future abuse at the hands of their intimate partner, as well as the risk that may be inherent in having to move to a less safe environment. The financial risks to leaving involve an evaluation of a woman's potential for earning income on her own, as well as the risk of losing financial assets such as access to her partner's health insurance or future pension and retirement income. Social risks involve the potential loss of status and possible stigmatization from friends, family and community members after leaving a relationship. Legal risks involve the possibility of increased vulnerability to legal authorities, such as Child Protective Services, immigration officials, or the police, as many women who contemplate leaving are faced with threats of exposure to these authorities by the partners. Thus, in addition to the types of evaluations that women make in asking themselves Choice and Lamke's (1997) two questions, I would suggest that these types of risks involved in leaving or seeking helping are also important components to women's decision-making processes and in this study I will use aspects of this holistic risk

assessment to explore the factors that women consider in asking themselves “will I be better off?”.

The Immigration Context

Before moving on to consider the research literature surrounding my research questions, I think it would be helpful to provide a glimpse of what immigration to the United States looks like at the present time. As noted in Chapter One, immigration to the United States has increased since the mid-1960s and these increasing rates make it more important to consider what IPV experiences are like for immigrant women, and how the process of immigration itself may influence the phenomenon of IPV. Researchers have noted that immigration rates have been steadily increasing since the late 1960s and that the percentage of the population that is foreign-born has increased dramatically since the 1990s (Bean & Stevens, 2003; Clark, 2003; Suárez-Orozco & Suárez-Orozco, 2001). Malone, Baluja, Costanzo, & Davis (2003) reported, based on Census Bureau data, that between 1990 and 2000 the foreign-born population increased by 57 percent. Larson (2004) similarly reported, again based on Census Bureau data, that in March 2003 the foreign-born population in the U.S. was 33.5 million, or 11.7 percent of the total population. Bean & Stevens (2003) wrote that almost 60 percent of annual population growth in the United States can be accounted for either directly through immigration, or indirectly through births to foreign-born parents. Clark (2003, p. 31) explained that the contribution to population growth from births to foreign-born mothers occurs “largely because the foreign-born population is more youthful and has more children than the native-born population”. Thus, with immigration reaching levels that are “the largest ever in the nation’s history” (Clark, 2003, p. 31), it is becoming increasingly important for researchers and clinicians to better understand the experiences of immigrants and the impact of immigration processes on phenomena such as family violence.

This is particularly the case given that as immigration rates have been increasing, immigration itself has become a family affair. Policy changes have supported this process. In 1965, the institution of the Amendments to the Immigration and Nationality Act eliminated national quotas and created a preference system for employment-based skills and family reunification (Bean & Stevens, 2003; Inniss, 1997-98). These changes have meant that immigrants are increasingly arriving in families or having family members join them through

Visas aimed at reunification (Portes & Zhou, 1993; Suárez-Orozco & Suárez-Orozco, 2001). Schmidley (2001) reported, based on U.S. Census data, that in 2000, 15.7 percent of married couples had at least one foreign-born spouse and 61.3 percent of families with a foreign-born householder had one or more related children under age 18 (compared to 45.8 percent of those with a native householder). Schmidley (2001) further reported that in 2000, 16 percent of children lived with a foreign-born householder and 77.7 percent of these children were native-born; the percentage of children living with at least one foreign-born parent rose to 20 % in 2004 (Federal Interagency Forum on Child and Family Statistics, 2005). Finally, Census Bureau data indicate that, regardless of where they were born, 81 percent of children with at least one foreign-born parent lived with two parents in 2004, compared with 68 percent of children with native parents (Federal Interagency Forum on Child and Family Statistics, 2005). Thus, immigration policy changes that give preference to family members, on top of the growing population of the second generation, mean that immigration and family are increasingly intertwined, and this connection calls for more focused attention on the ways in which experiences such as IPV play out in immigrant families.

In keeping with World-Systems analyses of international migration, researchers have noted that in addition to the increased rates of immigration, immigrants are increasingly coming from parts of the world that had not been as highly represented in the foreign-born population before – the so-called “new immigrants” (Portes & Zhou, 1993; Rumbaut, 1996; Suárez-Orozco & Suárez-Orozco, 2001). Again, owing in large part to the policy changes from the Amendments to the Immigration and Nationality Act of 1965, the elimination of country quotas has meant increasing immigration from Asia, Latin America and Africa, rather than from Europe (Suárez-Orozco & Suárez-Orozco, 2001). This trend is important to consider in looking at access to outside services for immigrant women, as language and cultural differences may make it more difficult for “new immigrant” women to consider options such as leaving a violent relationship or seeking help from outsiders to deal with the violence.

Finally, while immigration policies have changed the face of immigration today, so too have those who work with immigrants begun to draw attention to the fact that immigration itself, and the adjustment processes that follow it, may create conflict within families and a need for clinical services (Baptiste, 1993; Darvishpour, 2002; Harker, 2001; Mirkin, 1998; Suárez-Orozco & Suárez-Orozco, 2001; Zhou, 1997). Foner (1997, p. 971) wrote, “In the wake of the enormous

recent migration to the United States, we are only just beginning to understand the complex ways that the new arrivals construct – and reconstruct – their family lives here”. In the process of reconstructing and reinterpreting the meaning of family, a number of issues have been highlighted as those that may be encountered in clinical work with immigrant families. These issues may include: the trauma of the immigration experience (Perez Foster, 2001; Mirkin, 1998); acculturative stress (Nicholson, 1997, Perez Foster, 2001); cultural bereavement (Baptiste, 2005; Mann, 2004; Nicholson, 1997, Perez Foster, 2001) conflict based on new gender or generational norms (Baptiste, 1993; Foner, 1997; Mirkin, 1998; Suárez-Orozco & Suárez-Orozco, 2001; Darvishpour, 2002); self-esteem and identity construction (Portes & Zady, 2002; Suárez-Orozco & Suárez-Orozco, 2001); and the effects of racism and discrimination encountered after immigration (Mirkin, 1998; Suárez-Orozco & Suárez-Orozco, 2001). Many of these factors have been investigated as risk factors for IPV in immigrant families, and will be described further in the following sections of this chapter. At this point it is enough to note that one part of this glimpse into immigration to the United States today includes the acknowledgement that the migration process itself is not always a smooth one, and that problems encountered along the way may have important implications for IPV researchers, clinicians, and advocates. A better understanding of the similarities and differences in the decision-making processes of immigrant and non-immigrant women in relationships with violent men is clearly called for, based on what immigration researchers are beginning to find about the face of immigration today. The following sections turn more specifically to these decision-making processes and reviews the available research focused on the factors that may influence both immigrant and non-immigrant women’s decisions to leave a violent relationship or to seek help from outside services. This review will be framed by Choice and Lamke’s (1997) two-part decision making process, as well as Hamby’s (2008) holistic risk assessment.

The Stay/Leave Decision: Will I be better off?

The first part of Choice and Lamke’s (1997) two-part decision making model relates to the question that women in relationships with violent men ask themselves when they consider the options available to them, asking “will I be better off?” by leaving this relationship. As they consider this question, both immigrant and non-immigrant women evaluate the risks involved in their leaving, including the types of risks that have been identified by Hamby (2008) in her

holistic risk assessment: the risk of personal physical harm, and the risk of harm to others, and the financial, social, and legal risks to staying or leaving. Because the concept of a holistic risk assessment is an emerging one, there is little empirical research in this area with either immigrant or non-immigrant populations, however, the types of risks identified in Hamby's (2008) holistic risk assessment have received empirical attention. Previous research has examined these risks to leaving, including investigations that document the existence of these types of risks, such as financial or social risks, and those that seek to identify the types of factors that may increase these risks, such as factors that increase the risk of personal physical harm. In this section, I review the research that relates to this first questions of "will I be better off?", beginning first with studies that have explored holistic risk assessment factors with non-immigrant women populations, and then examining the research that has focused on holistic risk assessment factors with immigrant women.

Research Supporting a Holistic Risk Assessment with Non-Immigrant Women

In seeking to examine the research with non-immigrant populations, it should be noted first that the distinction between immigrant and non-immigrant study populations in the literature is a difficult one, since studies that focus on immigrant populations are very clear cut, while studies that do not focus specifically on immigrants may indeed include immigrant women as study participants. I have therefore chosen to begin with an examination of non-immigrant population studies, as they cover the broadest category of risks that may be true for women in general, and often also identify how these risks may differ by race or ethnicity, and then move on to the more particular experiences of immigrant women. Again, without research that compares the experiences of immigrant and non-immigrant women to each other, we cannot know for certain where the similarities and differences in their experiences may lie.

Holistic Risk Factor 1: The Risk of Personal Physical Harm

As Hamby (2008) noted, advocacy work has traditionally focused on the risk of future physical harm for women in intimate relationships, and just as this has been a focus for advocacy, it also appears to have been the most thoroughly researched risk in examinations of IPV. Much of this research has focused on identifying what types of factors may increase women's risk for future physical harm; factors such as violence in the family of origin, violence in the current relationship, social isolation, socioeconomic status, attitudes and beliefs, substance

use and abuse, mental health, conflict in the relationship, marital status, interactions with the criminal justice systems, and women's own perceptions of their risk for physical harm have been examined. While only the final risk factor relating to the risk of future physical harm, women's perceptions of their risk for future harm, will be investigated in my study, it is helpful to review this literature in order to gain a sense of its breadth and the amount of focus it has received, especially as compared to some of the other types of risks that have not received as much empirical attention, such as the financial, social and legal risks to leaving.

Violence in the Family of Origin

First, violence in the family of origin has been associated with a higher risk of IPV occurrence, both when that violence occurred in the perpetrator's childhood home and when it has occurred in the victim's childhood home. In a study to identify factors that differentiated between non-violent, verbally aggressive, minor physically abusive, and severely physically abusive men, Sugarman and Hotaling (1989) conducted a multivariate analysis using the 1975 National Family Violence Survey, with a sample size that included 608 male respondents. In this study, both witnessing and experiencing physical violence in the family of origin were found to be statistically significant risk markers for physically violent men. To examine how this risk factor may differ by race and ethnicity, Schafer, Caetano, and Cunradi (2004) conducted three separate path analyses in groups of African American (n=354 couples), Hispanic (n=521 couples), and White couples (n=552 couples) to determine the relationship between childhood physical abuse, impulsivity, and alcohol problems. They found that in the samples of African American and Hispanic men, and in samples of African-American, Hispanic and White women, a history of childhood physical abuse had a significant direct effect on reports of IPV.

Additionally, in a study of 1401 female patients at 2 family practice sites Coker et al., (2000) found that IPV in the family of origin was correlated with physical, sexual, and psychological abuse in future adult relationships. Finally, in a meta-analysis of the intergenerational transmission of violence, Stith, Rosen, Middleton, Busch, Lundeberg, and Carlton (2000) found a weak-to-moderate relationship between violence in the family of origin (either witnessing IPV or being a victim of child abuse) and current IPV, and also found that these effects differed by gender with a stronger relationship to victimization for women and to perpetration for men.

Violence in the Current Relationship

In addition to a history of violence in childhood, the history of violence in the current relationship has also been examined as a risk for future violence. A number of different measures of history of abuse in the current relationship have been examined for their influence on the risk of future violence, including how recent the last violent episode was, the severity or frequency of past physical violence, and the existence of different types of abusive behavior, including sexual abuse, stalking, or psychological abuse in the past. In their examination of the accuracy of victims' own assessment of the risk of future physical harm, Cattaneo, Bell, Goodman, and Dutton (2007), using a sample of 406 female IPV victims seeking help from shelters or civil or criminal courts, found that duration of prior abuse and prior psychological abuse were not significant risk factors for future violence when combined with other factors in their multivariate analysis, but that recency of violence and severity of prior violence were marginally significant risk factors for future violence, and that stalking was a strong predictor for future violence. The authors noted that because increased severity of violence is often a prompt for help-seeking, this may be one reason why it was not as strong a predictor for future risk of violence as they had expected.

Similarly, Cattaneo and Goodman (2003) found, in research with 169 women who came to a court intake center following the arrest of an abusive partner (91% of whom were African American) that the three sub-scales of the Conflict Tactic Scale (Straus, 1979) that measure prior physical abuse, prior sexual abuse, and prior injury were all predictors of future abuse, as was one subscale of psychological abuse from the Psychological Maltreatment of Women Inventory –Short Form (Tolman, 1989, 1999), the dominance-isolation scale. Bennett, Goodman, and Dutton (2000) conducted research with a similar sample of 92 women referred to an intake center following a partner's arrest for IPV (only 49 were located at time 2 for follow-up) and found that of the three subscales of the CTS measuring injury, physical abuse, and sexual abuse, only the frequency of sexual abuse was a significant predictor of re-abuse, and that psychological abuse, particularly the scale measuring dominance and isolation was also a significant predictor of future abuse. Finally, Heckert and Gondolf (2004) conducted research with both victims and perpetrators of abuse, using a sample of 840 men who were court referred for batterer treatment and completed questionnaires at intake, and 688 of their partners who were interviewed within two weeks of intake; each group also completed follow up interviews every 3 months for a 15-

month period. Important predictors of future abuse in this study included the female partner previously being injured by the abuser and previous psychological abuse, measured in terms of verbal abuse, controlling behaviors, and the use of threats.

Social Isolation

In addition to noting the role that isolation plays as a component of psychological abuse, isolation itself has been examined as a contributor to further violence in the relationship, with mixed results. For instance, focus group research with 68 women in drug treatment programs who were also in abusive relationships conducted by El-Bassel, Gilbert, Rajah, Foleno, and Frye (2001) described the number of ways that abusive partners isolated women in order to carry out further abuse. Participants in these focus groups described tactics used by their abusive partners, ranging from maintaining control over women's daily routines through constant questioning about their relationships with others, to creating an "us versus them" ethic in the partnerships where women were led to believe that no one else cared for them, to actual physical restraints of locking women in their homes or rooms within their homes. At the same time, studies that have attempted to examine the link between levels of social support and levels of violence in relationships have found limited support. In examining the level of both structural and functional social support for battered pregnant women (n=145) as compared to non-battered pregnant women (n=58), and the relationship of this social support to severity of abuse, and to mental health outcomes, Levendosky, Bogat, Theran, Trotter, von Eye, and Davidson (2004) found that severity of abuse was not significantly related to emotional support or practical aid for study participants. Similarly, in telephone interviews with 557 female patients of two primary care centers in the northeastern United States, Carlson, McNutt, Choi, and Rose (2002, p. 738) found that abused and non-abused women did not differ in the amount of support they received from individuals other than their partners.

Coohey (2007) has suggested that investigations of the relationship between social isolation and IPV may have shown mixed results because of differences in measures or in study populations, or because of the tendency of researchers to combine family members and friends in their analyses of IPV victims' social networks. Coohey (2007) suggested that abusers may be more effective in limiting their partners' interactions with friends than with family members and argued for examining victims' level of social support from these two sources separately. El-Bassel, et al.'s (2001, p. 257) focus group research supports this suggestion, as participants

“reported more success in maintaining contact with family members, especially mothers and sisters, if they were already emotionally close to them”, though they also noted that efforts to maintain contact with family members also often resulted in threats against their safety. In Coohy’s (2007) research, battered mothers who were severely abused were compared to battered mothers who were not severely abused and mothers who were not abused. Results indicated that there were no differences between the groups in levels of emotional support received from family members, however, there were significant differences between mothers who were severely abused and mothers who were not severely abused and the non-battered mothers in the support they received from friends. Mothers who were severely abused had fewer friends, fewer contacts with their friends, fewer long-term friends and fewer friends who they felt had really listened to them than did women from the other two groups. Thus, isolation has been identified as a tactic that may contribute to future violence however, whether or not it stands alone as a risk factor for future violence is a question that requires further research.

Socioeconomic Status

Additionally, research has indicated that there is a relationship between socioeconomic status and risk of IPV. In Sugarman and Hotaling’s (1989) study of risk markers, lower socioeconomic status, measured in terms of family income, husband’s income and husband’s occupation, was a significant risk marker for severely physically violent men. Hotaling and Sugarman (1990) conducted a similar study with a sample of 699 women to identify risk markers of assaulted wives and again found that lower socioeconomic status, measured by husband’s occupational status, family income, and husband’s income was significantly correlated with severe IPV. Similarly, Coker et al. (2000) found that female unemployment was correlated with physical and sexual abuse and that male unemployment was correlated with physical, sexual and psychological abuse, while Cunradi, Caetano, and Shafer (2002), in an analysis using data from the 1995 National Alcohol Survey found that annual household income had the highest influence on probability of IPV relative to other SES variables including employment and education for African American, Hispanic and White couples. Additionally, Campbell, Webster et al. (2003) conducted an analysis of risk factors for femicide (murder by an intimate partner), and found that perpetrator unemployment was the strongest sociodemographic risk factor for femicide in comparison to a control group of abused women, and that perpetrator college education was a protective factor. Additionally, Campbell’s (2004) analysis of femicide found

that women who were abused had higher educational levels and lower unemployment levels than their husbands, but did not report whether this difference was a significant risk factor for violence or murder. Finally, Rennison and Planty (2003) analyzed data from the National Crime Victimization Survey and compared a bivariate analysis of the relationship between race and IPV with a multivariate analysis that included gender and income and found that race was no longer predictive of IPV once income was introduced. Thus, in each of these studies reviewed with respect to socioeconomic status, couples from a lower socioeconomic status, measured mainly by husband's income or employment status, were at higher risk for IPV.

Attitudes and Beliefs

Research also indicates that women may be at a higher risk for future violence when perpetrators display attitudes that condone violence towards women and IPV. In their meta-analysis of risk factors for IPV, Stith, Smith, Penn, Ward, and Tritt (2004) found a large effect size between perpetration of IPV and attitudes that condone violence. Similarly, Stith and Farley's (1993) study of 175 men in either substance abuse or violence treatment programs found that attitudes approving male violence were a strong predictor of violence in their predictive model of IPV. Additionally, research investigating typologies of men who are violent in relationships indicate that men who are more severely physically violent have higher rates of positive attitudes towards violence toward women (Holtzworth-Munroe, Meehan, Herron, Rehman & Stuart, 2000). In another study of the differences between male sexual offenders, male batterers, and both violent and non-violent men from a community sample, hostile attitudes towards women was found to discriminate between the violent and non-violent groups (Dewhurst, Moore, & Alfano, 1992). Finally, Cunradi et al. (2002) found that among Whites, female approval of marital aggression was a statistically significant risk factor for IPV and that among African Americans, male approval of marital aggression was a statistically significant risk factor for IPV.

Similarly, research indicates a relationship between gender role expectations and the risk for future violence. Stith and Farley's (1993) predictive model of marital violence found two variables with a direct relationship on the use of severe marital violence, the first being attitudes that approve of marital violence, as discussed above, and the second being sex role egalitarianism. In this study, egalitarian sex role expectations were negatively correlated to

marital violence. Additionally, in their meta-analysis of risk factors, Stith et al. (2004) found a moderate effect size for the correlation between traditional gender role expectations and IPV.

Substance Use and Abuse

Research further indicates a relationship between drug and alcohol abuse and the risk for future violence. At times, findings have supported a direct relationship between substance abuse and IPV, and at other times, an indirect relationship has been found. For example, Coker et al. (2000), in their study of female patients at two health care settings found participants' reports of male drug or alcohol use was significantly correlated to physical, sexual and psychological abuse of women. Cattaneo and Goodman (2003) found that alcohol abuse was a predictor for re-abuse in their sample of 169 female IPV victims, 91% of whom were African American, but in a similar sample of 49 women these same researchers found that alcohol abuse was not predictive of future violence while drug abuse was. Additionally, Schafer et al.'s (2004) path models for risk factors among African American, Hispanic and White couples found significant direct relationships between alcohol problems and IPV for all groups, except Hispanic women. In contrast, Stith and Farley (1993) found an indirect relationship between alcoholism and marital violence, with attitudes towards violence appearing to mediate this relationship. Finally, Stith et al.'s (2004) meta-analysis of risk factors found that illicit drug use was strongly correlated with being physically abusive and alcohol abuse was a moderate risk factor for IPV.

Mental Health Factors

Additional research indicates a link between mental health problems in the perpetrator and the risk for future violence. Investigations of typologies of men who are violent in intimate relationships indicates a relationship between men who are violent and the existence of personality disorders or other psychopathology, including mood disorders such as depression (Dewhurst et al., 1992; Holtzworth-Munroe et al., 2000; Holtzworth-Munroe and Meehan, 2004). Similarly, Stith et al.'s (2004) meta-analysis of risk factors found that both anger/hostility and depression were moderately correlated with IPV.

Conflict in the Relationship

At the relationship level, research indicates that conflict in the relationship can be a risk factor for future violence. Sugarman and Hotaling (1989) found that marital conflict was the

most powerful discriminator between groups of maritally violent men, with men who were both severely and slightly physically violent reporting higher rates of marital conflict than those who were verbally aggressive and those who were not violent. They similarly found that marital conflict was a significant predictor of IPV in a sample of female victims (Hotaling & Sugarman, 1990). Additionally, couple's communication patterns and conflict resolution skills have been researched for their relationship to IPV. Holtzworth-Munroe et al. (2000) found that in relationships where men were more severely physically violent, men had less competent general social skills and conflict resolution skills in the relationship, and communication patterns showed that husbands displayed less positive behaviors, more defensive behaviors, and higher levels of hostile communication.

Marital Status

Also at the relationship level, marital status has been investigated as a risk factor for future violence. Coker et al. (2000) found that female partner's marital status of being divorced or currently separated was correlated with a greater risk for future violence, and indeed, other researchers have documented that women's risk for future violence, and for homicide, increases when they are separated from an abusive partner, noting that ending the relationship does not necessarily end the violence (Fleury, Sullivan, and Bybee, 2000). In their longitudinal study of the risks for "separation assault", or incidents of physical assault following separation from an intimate partner, Fleury et al. (2000) interviewed 278 female participants in a domestic violence shelter program at six different times over a two year period. They found that 36% of these women were assaulted by an ex-partner prior to either reuniting with him or the end of the study. Seventy-two per cent of these women experienced at least one form of severe or potentially lethal violence such as being kicked, raped, choked, stabbed, or shot; 45% of the women who were assaulted experienced some form of injury, and 25% experienced at least some form of severe or potentially lethal violence more than once a month. Additionally, Campbell et al.'s (2003) analysis of abuse and femicide victims found that being separated from their partner, either at the time of the incident or ever in their relationship, was associated with a higher risk of murder by their intimate partner.

Interactions with Criminal Justice Systems

Abusers' interactions with court systems and legal interventions have been investigated for their impact on future abuse. Holt, Kernic, Wolf, and Rivara (2003) examined the impact of obtaining a civil protection order (CPO) for 448 female IPV victims, interviewed at baseline, 5 months and 9 months following the initial incident and found that for women who obtained a CPO, the risk of contact with the abuser, weapons threats, injury and abuse-related medical care were significantly decreased between the first and second follow-up interviews. Similarly, in research with friends and family members of 456 femicide victims, Campbell (2004) found that prior arrest was a protective factor where "arrest seemed to function to keep highly dangerous abusive men from killing their victims" (p. 1471). Finally, Woldredge (2007) investigated the effects of convictions and jail sentences for 353 male defendants facing felony domestic violence charges, following them for two years following case closure or the serving of a sentence (if any was served) and found that convictions and jail sentences significantly lowered the chance of a second charge for domestic violence, but prison sentences were not related to the likelihood of future charges. The author noted that the difference in effectiveness of jail vs. prison sentence may relate to the fact that those sent to prison were at a higher risk for re-assault, perhaps based on other factors such as substance use and criminal history.

Women's Perceptions of Their Risks

Finally, research has examined how women's own feelings of safety in the relationship and their perception of how likely they are to be re-assaulted relate to the actual likelihood of re-assault. In their examination of risk factors with 169 female victims of abuse, Cattaneo and Goodman (2003, p. 362) found that "victim's assessment of the dangerousness of the case was a significant predictor of continued abuse". Similarly, with a sample of 406 women seeking help from domestic violence shelters, civil or criminal courts, Cattaneo, Bell, Goodman, and Dutton (2007) investigated the accuracy of female victims' assessment of risk against the actual occurrence of re-assault 18 months later and found that victims were more likely to be correct than incorrect in assessing their risk for future physical abuse. Heckert and Gondolf (2004) compared the accuracy of female victims' perceptions of their risk for future assault against the accuracy of three risk assessment instruments with a sample of female partners of 840 men admitted to four batterer programs in four cities across the United States. Participants were interviewed at intake and then again every three months for a 15-month period, with 67% of

women followed for the full 15 months. They found that women's perceptions of risk improved the predictive ability of the models tested over the other risk factors studied; however the relationship was not straightforward as women who felt somewhat safe or were uncertain about their level of safety were more likely to be re-assaulted than those who felt safe, or who felt very safe, or very unsafe. The researchers suggest one reason for this finding may be that those who felt very unsafe were likely to take protective measures, thus decreasing the likelihood of re-assault (Heckert & Gondolf, 2004). Finally, Weisz, Tolman, and Saunders (2000) conducted a secondary analysis of a similar sample of 177 female partners of men who were court-ordered to attend a batterer's treatment program; the women had been interviewed at intake and four months later. These researchers found that women's predictions of future violence were strongly associated with subsequent violence and that women's subjective assessment of risk significantly improved the predictive ability of multiple regression models that included other risk factor variables. Thus, women's perceptions of their risk for future physical harm appear to be an accurate indicator of their risk of re-assault.

In sum, a number of risk factors have been identified in the literature as relating to women's risk of future physical harm, and the research examining women's own estimation of their risk clearly indicates that women have an awareness of their level of safety, and even suggests that when they are certain their risk is high they may take actions to mitigate against that risk (Heckert & Gondolf, 2004). However, as Hamby (2008) suggests, their risk of future physical harm is not the only factor that women consider in evaluating their relationship and in deciding to leave or to seek help. Research examining the other risks that may be important to them, including the risk of harm to others, and the financial, social and legal risks to leaving, is reviewed in the next sections, before turning to an examination of these same areas in research with immigrant women in relationships with violent men.

Holistic Risk Factor 2: The Risk of Harm to Others

As Hamby (2008) noted, women who consider leaving an abusive relationship, and, I would add, women who contemplate seeking outside help, face other risks in addition to the risk of future violence to themselves. One of these risks is the risk that her leaving or seeking help may pose for the physical safety of others. The most well-researched of these risks is the risk of harm to her children. In an investigation of the effects of family violence on children's mental health, McCloskey, Figueredo and Koss (1995) interviewed 365 mothers and one of their

children between the ages of 6 and 12 about the abuse that occurred in their home and found that spousal abuse increased the risk of sexual and physical abuse of children, with all but one instance of sexual abuse occurring in the group of battered women compared to the community sample, and 2% of children in the comparison community group reporting severe physical abuse by their fathers, such as burning, compared to 10.8% of the children from the group of battered women reporting such abuse. Zoellner, Feeny, Alvaraez, Watlington, O'Neill, Zager, and Foa (2000) conducted research on the factors that influence women's completion of the restraining order process, and found that 88% of the women who experienced threats to their children's safety if they completed the restraining order process did not complete the process of filing. Hilton (1992) interviewed 20 women in domestic violence shelters about their concerns for their children and found that 70% of mothers reported that their children witnessed violence or its aftereffects, 50% said they were assaulted while pregnant, and 10% reported that their children were abducted by their fathers. Additionally, Hilton (1992) reported on the way that mothers in her sample weighed the risks of staying or leaving the relationship relative to their children's needs and found that 30% stayed in the relationship because they felt it was the best way for them to ensure that all their needs (financial needs, family stability) were met, while 55% of mothers reported leaving because of a fear for their children's physical safety. Clearly, in deciding on their options, women weigh the risk of future harm to their children.

Holistic Risk Factor 3: The Financial, Social, and Legal Risks to Leaving

In addition to the risk of personal physical harm and the risk of harm to others, women who consider leaving or seeking help may face other types of risks, including financial risks, such as a decreased ability to financially provide for herself and her children, social risks such as stigmatization and family break-up, and legal risks, such as losing legal access or custody to their children or facing charges of child abuse. Each of these types of risks must be balanced against the risk of future physical harm to herself or others as women decide whether or not to leave or seek help. One of these types of risks combines the legal risk that women face in being charged with child abuse if authorities intervene following an incident of violence and hold the woman responsible for not adequately protecting her children, with the social risks of family break-up and being labeled as a bad mother, if she subsequently loses access to her children. In semi-structured interviews with 10 women who were asked about their experiences of disclosing their abuse history to case workers when applying for welfare, participants talked about the need to

balance the risk of losing custody of their children, due to a “failure to protect” claim against them, against the risk of not being able to financially support their children on their own without public assistance (Busch & Wolfer, 2002). These women also noted the risk of social stigma in their fear of “being stereotyped or misjudged by their case managers and others at the social service office, particularly if the offices did not offer adequate privacy”. Tatum (2000), in writing about the need for Child Protective Services case works to balance the needs of mothers and children, also noted that “the agency has used a tool known as ‘failure to protect’ with the nonoffending parent. This means that the nonabusive parent is held responsible for the actions of the abusive party and sometimes is faced with the potential loss of his or her children” (p. 288). Finally, in a qualitative study with six female victims of IPV, Shalansky, Ericksen, and Henderson (1999) noted how the legal system, particularly with respect to family courts and child custody proceedings, often place women in the position of having to follow strict legal requirements around providing fathers’ access to their children, at the same time that following these requirements may place them at greater risk for re-abuse. Participants in this research also noted that threats to take their children away from them if they left were a common part of their experiences.

In sum, research with non-immigrant study populations has documented the types of factors that relate to women’s risk of future physical harm, as well as the other types of risks that need to be evaluated in considering leaving a violent relationship or seeking help. The strongest support for these concepts has come in the area of the risk for future physical harm, reflecting the priority given by researchers and advocates in better understanding the factors that put women at greater risk of physical harm. Other risks to leaving and seeking help have also been documented however, in the areas of risks of harm to others, particularly children, as well as the social and legal risks of being labeled a “bad mother”, facing charges for endangering children and/or losing custody of children. While there is limited evidence to suggest that women consider these risks, in addition to the risk of future physical harm, there have not been any studies to compare these risks to each other, in terms of their relative importance in determining women’s decision to leave or to seek help. It is this type of comparison, along with comparing non-immigrant women to immigrant women that I carried out in this study. The next section turns to a review of the research into holistic risk assessment factors with immigrant women.

Research Supporting a Holistic Risk Assessment with Immigrant Populations

As noted above, the concept of a holistic risk assessment is an emerging one, but as with research with non-immigrant populations, the individual factors that make up the holistic risk assessment have received some empirical attention with immigrant women. In this section, I review these factors, including factors that may increase the risk of personal physical harm, the risk of harm to others, and the financial, social and legal risks associated with leaving a violent partner or seeking help, as they relate to immigrant populations.

Holistic Risk Factor 1: The Risk of Personal Physical Harm

The previous section identified the many factors that may relate to non-immigrant women's risk of future physical harm if she decides to stay in or leave an abusive relationship, or if she decides to seek help. Some of these same risk factors, such as attitudes and beliefs and social isolation, have been investigated with immigrant populations, and this research will be reviewed here, along with research that identifies some of the immigrant-specific risk factors, such as acculturative stress, conflict over changing gender norms, and men's downward mobility, that may place immigrant women at a greater risk for future violence. As noted in the review of research with non-immigrant women, not all of the risk factors relating to the risk of personal physical harm can be investigated in my study, but reviewing the breadth of factors previously researched is helpful both for the insight it can provide into the priority that has been given to research focused on physical harm, and for the insight it may provide into some of the particular experiences of immigrant women as compared to non-immigrant women.

Attitudes and Beliefs

As with research in the general population, research with immigrant populations has demonstrated that attitudes that condone violence, as well as traditional gender role expectations, increase women's risk for future violence. For instance, in survey research with 78 immigrant Indian and Pakistani women in the United States, "belief in male domination was positively and significantly associated with domestic violence" (Adam & Schewe, 2007, p. 11). Similarly, in telephone surveys with 256 Korean immigrant men, Kim and Sung (2000) found that male dominant marriages had the highest level of violence against women. Focus group research has found support for patriarchal beliefs about rigid gender roles that permit men to be violent against their wives among groups of Russian immigrants (Crandall, Senturia, Sullivan, & Shiu-

Thornton, 2005), Vietnamese immigrants (Shiu-Thornton, Senturia, & Sullivan, 2005), Cambodian immigrants (Bhuyan, et al., 2005), and Ethiopian immigrants (Sullivan, et al., 2005). Finally, qualitative interviews conducted with 12 Asian Indian immigrant women by Dasgupta and Warriar (1996) found that beliefs about women's subservience and men's right to control women were not only a large part of participants' upbringing in India, but that women were "under added pressure to uphold the standards of 'cultural family values' in a foreign land" (p. 254). In this way, "Not only are the traditional patriarchal power imbalances still strong and thriving, they may be gaining strength in the immigrant community in the guise of 'maintaining culture'" (Dasgupta & Warriar, 1996, p. 255).

Social Isolation

Additionally, increased social isolation faced by immigrant women, either as a result of the migration process, or through cultural beliefs and practices that isolate women within the home, has been associated with increased risk for further violence in immigrant families. In their focus group research with Ethiopian immigrant women, Sullivan et al. (2005, p. 930) noted the "profound levels of isolation that are related to the immigrant and refugee experience" and reported that the Ethiopian immigrant women in their focus groups described the ways in which migration had disrupted their familial and social support networks, leading to greater social isolation. Bhuyan et al. (2005), in reporting on focus group research with Cambodian immigrant women concluded that "the disruption of community life through war and migration in addition to isolation from other Cambodians may also contribute to the incidence of domestic violence".

Similarly, reporting on qualitative interviews with 29 South Asian immigrant women, Abraham (2000, p. 222) described the "*invisible wall of isolation*" which increases immigrant women's vulnerability to abuse, resulting from a number of factors including "the power tactics used by abusers; the lack of geographic mobility; the cultural constraints; the language barriers; the woman's financial dependency; and the lack of friendship networks, social contacts, and emotional support". Bauer et al. (2000) reported that the Latina and Asian immigrant women in their focus groups also described feeling more socially isolated after migration, as extended family members and friends were left back home, and this isolation often resulted in them being economically and socially dependent on their husbands, particularly if their language skills were not strong. Finally, in questionnaires administered at work to 1,212 Latina immigrant women in Eastern North Carolina, Denham et al. (2007) found that "Latinas who experienced IPV were

more than twice as likely as Latinas who did not experience IPV to lack social support. Almost half the Latinas who experienced IPV reported not having any friends or relatives who lived nearby with whom they felt comfortable talking about private things or calling for help” (p. 128).

In addition to isolation that results from migration itself, cultural practices are often further employed to keep immigrant women further isolated within the home (Sullivan, et al., 2005). Cultural practices may allow men to forbid their spouse to go to school, to learn English, to work outside the home, to visit with Americans, or to visit with members of their own ethnic group. These forms of isolation were reported by women from diverse cultural backgrounds, including Ethiopian women (Sullivan et al., 2005); South Asian women (Abraham, 2000; Dasgupta & Warriar, 1996); and Cambodian women (Bhuyan et al., 2005), and may be similar to the experiences of some of the women described in the review of the literature of the general population, where psychological abuse that focused on domination and isolation increased women’s risk for future violence (Bennett et al., 2000; Cattaneo & Goodman, 2003; Heckert & Gondolf, 2004). In these ways, isolation may increase immigrant women’s vulnerability to future violence, while also making it more difficult for them to develop skills that would allow them to live independently, and more difficult for them to access services that would help them to either leave abusive relationships, or stop the violence in their relationships.

Acculturation and Acculturative Stress

Studies of violence in immigrant families have examined the link between acculturation, acculturative stress and future violence. Immigrants may experience stress from a number of sources as they adjust to life in a new country. Acculturative stress may be defined as “a stress reaction in response to life events that are rooted in the experience of acculturation” (Berry, 2006, p. 294). For immigrants, this stress can come from the process of migration itself, from being cut off from friends and family at home, as well as from difficulties in learning a new language, securing employment, and adjusting to different cultural practices. Using the Holmes and Rahe Stressful Life Events Scale with four additional items related to acculturative stress, Kim and Sung (2000) found that “[h]usbands who experienced higher levels of stress had a higher rate of assaulting their wives than did those who experienced lower levels of stress” (p. 341) in telephone surveys with 256 Korean immigrant men. Similarly, using an acculturation stress scale based on the Hispanic Stress Inventory, Firestone, Harris, and Vega (2003), found that acculturative stress significantly increased women’s risk for abuse in their analysis of data

from a subset of 926 women who participated in the Mexican American Prevalence and Services Survey. However, Lee (2007), using a 17-item scale developed to measure acculturative stress in questionnaires with 136 Korean immigrant women, found that acculturative stress did not increase the risk for domestic violence among women in this sample. Findings regarding acculturative stress as a risk factor have thus been contradictory. Different findings may be a result of the use of different instruments to measure acculturative stress, or gender may be an intervening variable such that acculturative stress may impact men and women differently and may therefore create different outcomes related to IPV.

In addition to acculturative stress, level of acculturation has also been examined as a risk factor for IPV in immigrant families, based upon the hypothesis that increased acculturation or integration into mainstream American society may decrease the risk for IPV. Results of these studies have also been contradictory. In Lee's (2007) study with Korean immigrant women, for instance, level of acculturation, measured by questions relating to language, media, food, friends, and identity, was not predictive of physical abuse, but a lower level of acculturation was associated with more psychological abuse perpetrated by a male partner. Jin, Eagle, and Yoshioka (2007) in a survey of Chinese immigrant batterers and a control group of Chinese immigrant non-violent men, measured acculturation by cultural preferences in entertainment, friendship, marriage, and value orientation, and found that acculturation was not significantly correlated with IPV. In an analysis of data from the 1992 National Alcohol and Family Violence Survey (n = 743 Latino/a participants), Jasinski (1998) used five measures of acculturation level: country of birth, generational status, age of arrival in the U.S., language preference, and language in which the interview was conducted. Findings in this analysis showed that only two indicators of acculturation significantly predicted wife assault, generation and age of arrival in the U.S, however the direction of the relationship was opposite to what was expected. In this study, third-generation Hispanic immigrants were almost three times as likely to assault their wives, compared to Hispanic husbands born in the U.S., and Hispanic husbands who arrived at a younger age were significantly more likely to engage in wife assault compared to those who arrived at an older age.

These contradictory results and the differences in the direction of the relationship between acculturation level and risk of abuse may again result from the use of different instruments to measure level of acculturation or from an interaction with gender. These results

could also be related to the amount of conflict that arises within immigrant families as they adjust to life in a new country (Jasinski, 1998). For instance, higher acculturation levels may be associated with a higher risk of abuse because level of integration into mainstream society may not be as significant a risk factor in itself, but the stress and the conflict that may emerge along the way to acculturation may be what increases this risk. This idea relates to the next series of risk factors studied in research of IPV in immigrant families, conflict over changing gender norms, and downward mobility for males after immigration.

Conflict over Changing Gender Norms

As immigrant couples acculturate and adjust to life in a new country, they are exposed to different cultural norms, including norms about gender roles, and as family members adjust to these new norms at different rates, conflict may arise. This conflict over changes in gender roles may increase women's risk for future violence. Qualitative interviews conducted with Vietnamese and Korean immigrant women found that "differing rates of acculturation between spouses may lead to marital tension and put women at risk for abuse. Clashes between traditional Vietnamese and Korean patriarchal ideals and American ideals of equality between the sexes were particularly evident..." (Tran and Des Jardins, 2000, p. 84). In their focus groups with Cambodian immigrant women, Bhuyan et al. (2005) similarly found that changes in gender dynamics following immigration increased marital tensions, and also increased women's responsibilities for caring for their families, as increased involvement in paid employment did not decrease women's responsibilities within the home. These increased tensions were seen by participants as contributing to the violence. In semi-structured interviews with 20 Vietnamese immigrant women, Bui and Morash (1999) found that conflict over changing gender roles was associated with increased risk for both physical and psychological abuse. Changing gender roles following immigration and acculturation may then be a risk factor for IPV in immigrant families, but there is still very limited empirical evidence to support this link.

Downward Mobility

Similarly, research has documented that men often face downward mobility following immigration, as they may face unemployment or underemployment in their new country and as their social status shifts downward when they find themselves foreigners in a new country. This downward mobility may be another factor that increases immigrant women's risk of IPV, as

violence could be used as a way for men to exercise control in the home when they are unable to exercise control in other ways outside of the home, or as men become violent due to the stress that results from this downward mobility. Kim and Sung (2000) found that the Korean immigrant men in their study experienced downward mobility and reported that “[n]early half of the sample responded that there was an inconsistency between their educational and occupational achievements”. Further, they found that more than half the husbands in their study said they would be more satisfied with the economic and work status they held back in Korea. While downward mobility itself was not included as a variable in this study, husbands in male dominant marriages were more likely to experience occupational and economic stress and to assault their wives, and men reporting higher levels of stress were also more likely to assault their wives, indicating the possibility of a relationship between patriarchal gender roles, stress from downward mobility, and violence against women. Tran and Des Jardins (2000), reporting on qualitative interviews with Vietnamese and Korean immigrant women, stated that male downward mobility and unemployment “appeared to be significant factors characterizing the batterers and contributing to abuse” (p. 85). Clearly, the evidence of male downward mobility as a risk factor for IPV is still limited, and as with the other risks for future violence, further research is needed to more fully understand the importance of these factors as risks for IPV and for understanding how these risks relate to women’s decision-making processes. Additionally, much of the research with immigrant families has utilized small-scale qualitative studies and thus has limitations in its generalizability to immigrant women outside of the particular samples that were studied. Thus more research, with larger sample sizes, that can compare variations within and across immigrant groups, as well as including non-immigrant women as a comparison group, would contribute to current understandings about the factors that relate to the risk for future spousal violence in immigrant families, as well as the other types of risks that women weigh in deciding to leave a violent relationship or to seek help. Research examining these other types of risks, including the risk of harm to others, and the financial, social, and legal risks to leaving or seeking help, with respect to immigrant populations, will be reviewed in the next sections.

Holistic Risk Factor 2: The Risk of Harm to Others

Unlike research with non-immigrant populations, little research has been conducted to document the risk of harm to others, including children, other family members, or pets, with immigrant populations. I found only one reference to threats of harm to others in reviewing the

literature with immigrant women. This occurred in Bhuyan et al.'s (2005) focus group research with Camdonian immigrant women, where they noted that “threats and harassment of the woman or harassment of her family and those who try to help were common themes that arose” (p. 912).

Holistic Risk Factor 3: The Financial, Social, and Legal Risks to Leaving

Compared to the limited research on the risk of harm to others with immigrant populations, and to research examining the financial, social and legal risks to leaving with non-immigrant study populations, there appears to be a stronger focus on the financial, social and legal risks to leaving for immigrant women in violent relationships. This difference in focus may relate to perceptions of immigrant women having greater vulnerabilities in these areas. Some of these types of risks that have been the focus of research with immigrant women include their financial dependence on spouses due to immigration policies prohibiting their employment or to cultural practices of limiting female autonomy outside of the home, as well as the social risks of being disloyal to their culture, and the loss of social status, and the legal risks of losing custody of their children and deportation if exposed to outside agencies. This research is briefly reviewed in this section.

Economic Dependence

While economic dependence is not unique to immigrant women, when women's immigration status is dependent on their husband's and they are prohibited from pursuing paid employment, either because of immigration laws, or because of cultural values, they may be at an increased risk of being financially dependent upon their husbands. This dependence may lead to control by their spouse, difficulty in obtaining help from outside services, and difficulty in envisioning a future without their spouse. Immigrant Latina and Asian women who participated in focus groups conducted by Bauer et al. (2000) spoke about the ways their economic dependence on abusive husbands made seeking outside help more difficult for them. Similarly, in qualitative interviews with abused Vietnamese immigrant women conducted by Bui (2003) participants spoke of the ways they balanced financial risk against other risks in contacting outsiders such as the police, as they feared that contacting police would result in charges against their husbands that would have an economic impact on the family. While this can also be a fear for non-immigrant women, the legal restrictions around employment that some immigrant women may face can make this a more difficult risk for them to balance, especially if they are far

away from extended family members who might otherwise be able to provide financial assistance. Abraham (2000, p. 231) notes, “the inability to seek financial support from their own families back home and the lack of any source of financial support in the United States, other than the husband, exacerbates isolation and increases the abuser’s power over his wife.”

In research with immigrant women, even women who had a legal right to work spoke of ways in which their husbands controlled the finances in order to keep women more economically dependent on them. Cambodian immigrant women who participated in focus groups with Bhuyan, et al. (2005) described ways in which their husbands controlled financial resources, by not allowing women to participate in financial decisions, by not allowing them to have access to money of their own, and by gambling. In qualitative interviews with South Asian women, Dasgupta & Warriar (1996, p. 250) wrote, “all 12 women asserted that their husbands kept them under constant economic threat. Even the 11 women who held jobs had no access to the family income or their own earnings. All had to literally hand over their paychecks to their spouses. Although a few couples had joint bank accounts, the women had no right to utilize these.” Additionally, Pan, Daley, Rivera, Williams, Lingle, and Reznik (2006) conducted a needs assessment and interviews with providers of services to South Asian immigrant women and identified the obligation to send money home as a source of tension in immigrant marriages. Conceivably, if immigrant women feel financially dependent on their spouses not only for themselves and their children, but also for extended family members back home, then the option of leaving the marriage may become a more difficult one for them. In these ways, research with immigrant women has documented the types of financial risks they face in leaving a violent relationship where they are financially dependent, through cultural practices and/or immigration requirements, on their partner.

Loss of Cultural Identity or Social Status

A number of social risks in leaving an abusive relationship or seeking help have been identified for immigrant women. Feelings of being disloyal to their culture or fear of losing their cultural identity if they seek help outside of the home was identified as a concern for Indian immigrant women in Dasgupta and Warriar’s (1996) qualitative study of 12 women in abusive relationships, as well as in Tran and DesJardins’ (2000) qualitative interviews with 65 Vietnamese immigrant women and 150 Korean immigrant women. Dasgupta and Warriar (1996) explained this fear in this way: “As immigrants, these women were under added pressure

to uphold the standard of ‘cultural family values’ in a foreign land...Maintenance of cultural standards also included the obligation of not shaming the natal family in India” (p. 254). A similar social risk was the risk of community sanction and stigmatization if they sought help or separated from or divorced their abusive husband. This was a fear discussed by the Indian immigrant women interviewed by Dasgupta and Warriar (1996) and in focus groups conducted with Russian immigrant women (Crandall et al., 2005), Ethiopian immigrant women (Sullivan et al., 2005), Vietnamese immigrant women (Shiu-Thornton et al., 2005) and Cambodian immigrant women (Bhuyan et al., 2005). A final social risk to leaving their relationship was noted by Dasgupta and Warriar (1996); in their interviews with Indian immigrant women, these researchers found that many of them feared a loss of social status if they left their marriages. Researchers connected this risk to participants’ upbringing in upper-middle class homes and their childhood socialization that placed a high value on social status.

Loss of Child Custody

Finally, research with immigrant women in violent relationships has identified some legal risks which women weigh when considering their options to leave the relationship or seek help. As with non-immigrant women, immigrant women may fear a loss of child custody if they seek help. In focus groups with Russian immigrant women, Crandall et al. (2005) noted that, “Women were wary of child protective services, and many feared that their children would be taken away” and in interviews with Indian immigrant women Dasgupta and Warriar (1996) noted that all of the mothers they spoke with believed that legal custody of their children would automatically transfer to their husbands if they divorced them.

Deportation

The most notable legal risk to help-seeking or leaving the relationship for immigrant women was the risk of deportation, either for herself, her children, or her abuser. In interviews with 15 service providers working with Haitian immigrant women, Latta and Goodman (2005, p. 1450) found that “Women who are undocumented in the United States face a host of fears regarding deportation,...a women deals not only with fear of her own deportation, but the imagined and real effects should the abuser be detained or deported.” Sullivan et al.’s (2005) research with Ethiopian women also found that those with undocumented status may hesitate to interact with the legal system for fear of deportation.

This threat is not only applicable to women with undocumented immigrant status, however. In focus groups and semi-structured interviews with 24 Russian immigrant women, many of whom were “mail-order brides”, Crandall et al. (2005) found that the use of immigration status to create social isolation or to control women’s options was a prominent theme, writing, “threats of deportation were common, as was keeping women uninformed about the immigration process, not doing necessary paperwork, and not allowing women to get green cards” (p. 947). Furthermore, individuals on temporary visas or with Lawful Permanent Residency can still be subjected to deportation if they are convicted of a crime, including domestic violence (Bui, 2003; Erez & Hartley, 2003). Thus immigrant women must weigh the risk of deportation for their abuser in calling the police, as well as for themselves in areas with dual-arrest policies, or if contact with authorities increases their vulnerability to child abuse charges.

In summary, research with immigrant populations has documented the types of risk factors related to an increased risk of future physical harm, as well as the financial, social, and legal risks that immigrant women may face in deciding to leave a violent relationship or to seek help, while the risk of harm to others has not been a significant focus of previous studies. As with research with non-immigrant populations, however, the relative importance of each of these types of risks have not been examined together in terms of their impact on women’s decision-making processes. An added limitation to the research with immigrant populations has also been the tendency toward small, qualitative studies that do not allow findings to be generalized beyond the immigrant group studied. My study is an attempt to fill some of these gaps in the literature by providing these types of comparisons with a large sample of women from diverse immigrant groups. In addition to comparing the types of risks that women evaluate in deciding whether or not they would be better off leaving a relationship or seeking help, I also compare the barriers that non-immigrant and immigrant women face in deciding whether or not they are able to leave a violent relationship or seek help. The next sections review previous research in the areas of barriers, beginning first with a review of this research with non-immigrant populations, and then reviewing the research with immigrant women.

The Stay/Leave Decision: Can I Do It?

The second part of Choice and Lamke's (1997) two-part decision-making model relates to the question women ask themselves once they have decided to leave (or to seek help): "Can I do it?" In asking this question, women seek to evaluate whether or not they are able to take action based on their determination that they would indeed be better off leaving their relationship, or, I would add, better off seeking help from outsiders. As with examining research related to the first part of Choice & Lamke's (1997) model and with Hamby's (2008) holistic risk assessment, research related to the second part of the model will be reviewed here, but again it should be noted that not all of these types of barriers will be included in my investigation. They are included in this review in order to gain a better perspective of the scope of previous research, as well as to gain insight into the similarities and differences in this research as it has related to non-immigrant and immigrant populations.

Research Examining Barriers for Non-Immigrant Women

Choice and Lamke (1997) describe resources and barriers facing women who contemplate leaving as both personal resources and barriers, such as individual self-esteem and feelings of control, and structural resources and barriers, such as economic assets and external supports. Both of these types of resources/barriers have been investigated with respect to women in abusive relationships, and as with the previous section, research with non-immigrant women will be reviewed first, followed by a review of research with immigrant populations.

The question of whether a particular factor is conceptualized as a resource or a barrier comes to mind in reviewing this literature, as it appears at times that these labels are used interchangeably. It seems that the choice of whether to label something as a barrier or a resource relates to whether or not the characteristic is helpful for women and whether or not they possess it, so that something that is positive, having money, for instance, is viewed as a resource if women have it, and barrier if they do not, whereas something negative, such as depression, is viewed as a barrier if women have it, and possibly as a resource (mental health) if they do not. To keep some consistency in writing about these characteristics, I have chosen to focus on the "barrier" side of this conceptualization and to refer to them consistently throughout the text in this way.

Emotional Attachment

In terms of personal barriers, women's emotional attachment, including feelings of commitment to the relationship and love for their partner, is one of the most widely noted barriers to leaving, as high levels of these feelings have been demonstrated to prevent women from leaving the relationship or seeking help by accessing domestic violence services or the criminal justice system. Brookoff, O'Brein, Cook, Thompson, and Williams (1997) surveyed both victims and assailants at the scenes of police calls for domestic assault and found that women who called the police had rarely sought other types of services, such as medical care or counseling, and the study authors identified strong emotional attachments to their partners as a potential barrier to receiving services. Using a different sample and methodology, Griffing, Ragin, Sage, Madry, Bingham, and Primm (2002) conducted structured interviews with 90 female residents at domestic violence shelters to identify past and potential future reasons for returning to an abusive spouse, and found 73.3% of women in their sample identified "continued emotional attachment" as a reason for returning in the past and 28.3% identified it as a potential reason for returning in the future. In a qualitative study of focus groups with 14 women who were in counseling for domestic violence, Dziegielewski, Campbell, and Turnage (2005) reported that both "love of the abuser" and "commitment to the relationship" were identified as important reasons for staying in their relationship.

In another qualitative study of interviews with 15 African American and 15 Anglo American women who had left an abusive relationship, Moss, Pitula, Campbell, and Halstead (1997, p. 442) wrote that "commitment was found to be the strongest barrier to leaving but was not identified as such until the women had reflected on the experience for many months or years". Similarly, in interviews with 17 women who had left abusive relationships, many women described a strong commitment to the relationship, and feelings of love for the abuser was the most frequently given reason for not leaving (Davis, 2002). In 22 focus groups with a total of 168 women who had experienced physical violence but had been free from violence for six months, Short, McMahon, Chervin, Shelley, Lezin, Sloop, and Dawkins (2000) found that commitment to the relationship was often expressed by the women as a reason for staying. Finally, in structured interviews with 100 shelter residents, Rusbult and Martz (1995, p. 567) found that "whether (and how quickly) women returned to their battering partners after leaving the shelter was strongly related to commitment level" and that commitment appeared to mediate

the relationship between stay/leave behavior and investment in the relationship and between stay/leave behavior and relationship satisfaction.

Self-Perceptions

Another personal barrier to leaving or seeking help is women's self-perceptions, particularly feelings of self-esteem and perceptions of being in control. In an analysis of data from the 452 women who participated in the Domestic Violence Experiment in Omaha, Nebraska, which interviewed domestic violence victims after a 9-1-1 dispatch call at 1 week, 6 months, and 12 months after the initial incident, researchers found that women with high levels of self-esteem and a greater internal locus of control were more likely to leave their abuser (Kim & Gray, 2008). Similarly, in a secondary analysis of interviews conducted at intake with 426 female shelter residents, Johnson (1992) investigated the role of women's perception of herself, operationally defined as positive if the victim perceived herself, her capabilities and her current situation as favorable, and as negative if she perceived herself, her capabilities and her current situation as unfavorable. This factor was an important predictor of her decision to stay in the relationship only when she had a low family income and was not employed, such that "the woman with a negative perception of herself stays in the abusive relationship, while the woman with a positive perception of herself leaves the relationship" (Johnson, 1992, p. 173).

Fear of Repercussions

Fear of the repercussions to leaving is another personal barrier that has been demonstrated to impact women's choice of staying in an abusive relationship. Short et al. (2000, p. 276) identified "fear of the repercussions of leaving derived from threats to take the children or kill her or her children" as a notable reason for staying in an abusive relationship identified by their focus group participants. In their analysis of the Domestic Violence Experiment in Omaha, Nebraska, Kim and Gray (2008) also found that women with a low level of fear were more likely to leave their abuser, while in interviews with 137 female domestic violence shelter residents Fleury, Sullivan, Bybee, and Davidson (1998) found that 26% of women reported fear for their personal safety as a barrier to calling the police. Brookoff et al. (1997, p. 1372) reported that, based on interviews with victims and abusers at the scene of domestic violence calls, "One barrier to seeking help that victims repeatedly mentioned was the prospect that seeking care or assisting in the prosecution of their assailants would escalate the violence". Finally, in a study

looking specifically at the barriers to seeking help from the police, Wolf, Ly, Hobart, and Kernic (2003) conducted focus groups with a total of 41 women in abusive relationships and reported that fear of retaliation based on previous experiences of being physically assaulted after abusers were released from jail, or batterer threats that they would kill them, prevented many of the women from calling the police for help.

Awareness of Services

A lack of awareness of available services has received some attention in the literature, mainly in small qualitative studies that explore women's experiences of leaving or attempting to leave an abusive relationship. For instance, Short et al. (2000) identified lack of awareness of available services as a barrier to help-seeking for their focus group participants, and in another study that used a focus group methodology with 24 female IPV victims, Lutenbacher, Cohen, and Mitzel (2003) similarly found that participants expressed a general lack of awareness and knowledge about available resources. Additionally, in a study that investigated what is helpful for low-income women in surviving IPV, utilizing both quantitative (n=390) and qualitative (n=78) methodologies, Campo, McDonnell, Gielen, Burke and Chen (2002) asked women about their knowledge of services for violence against women and found that 29% reported not knowing of any services.

Financial Resources

What has received more attention in the literature than awareness of service, however, is the role that financial resources play in women's leaving or seeking help. Participants in Lutenbacher et al.'s (2003) focus group research identified lack of financial and housing resources as a barrier to leaving; similarly, participants in Wolf et al.'s (2003) focus groups identified economic dependence on their spouse as a barrier to leaving, and participants interviewed by Davis (2002) noted that a lack of money and non-existent housing options prevented women from terminating an abusive relationship. Kim and Gray's (2008) analysis of the Omaha, Nebraska data (n= 452) found that victims who were more financially independent were more likely to leave their abusers. Similarly, Johnson's (1992) secondary analysis of the intake interviews of 426 female domestic violence shelter residents found that victims who returned to their abuser were significantly more likely to have been unemployed, and that family income was a significant factor in a victim's returning to an abusive partner, only when family

income was high and abuse was severe. Finally, in structured interviews with 90 female residents of a domestic violence shelter, Griffing et al. (2002) found that 53% of their sample identified economic need as a reason for returning to an abusive relationship in the past, and 10% identified it as a potential reason for returning in the future.

Interactions with Criminal Justice Systems

A final structural barrier for non-immigrant women in contemplating leaving abusive relationships or seeking help is the barrier posed by negative perceptions of or negative interactions with the criminal justice system. In their mixed-method study with low-income women, Campo et al. (2002) reported that distrust of the system and negative experiences with police was identified as a barrier to help seeking by their participants. Similarly, in their interviews with 137 female domestic violence shelter residents, Fleury, et al. (1998) reported that 64% of the women said that one of their reasons for not contacting the police was the belief that they would not or could not help them. Additionally, Moss et al. (1997) identified race as an intervening variable in this relationship for their African American participants. They noted that because of a history of distrust of the police and because “past experiences with police were punitive and demeaning, and their men, especially, were treated harshly”, African American women in their study did not seek help from police (Moss et al., 1997, p. 444). Finally, in their examination of barriers to seeking help from police, Wolf et al.’s (2005) focus group participants noted negative past experiences with police, including lack of batterer arrest, mistaken identification of the victim as the batterer, trivializing responses from the police, slow response time, batterer’s manipulation and bonding with the police, and fear of discrimination, as barriers to requesting their help. Similar to Moss et al.’s (1997) finding, fear of discrimination also meant the victims in this study feared a harsher response to their abuser on the part of the police because of their race and ethnicity and noted that this fear prevented them from requesting police help.

In summary, research with non-immigrant samples have identified barriers to leaving a violent relationship or seeking help in the areas of emotional attachment, self-perceptions, fear of repercussions, awareness of services, financial dependence, and negative interactions with the criminal justice system. While I will not be able to investigate all of these areas in my study, due to the constraints imposed by performing a secondary analysis on an existing data set, many of them will be included, and their impact on the decision-making processes of non-immigrant vs.

immigrant women in violent relationships will be investigated. The final section of this chapter reviews the research concerning barriers to leaving or seeking help for immigrant women.

Research Examining Barriers for Immigrant Populations

As with research with non-immigrant populations, research with immigrant women has similarly identified a range of personal and structural barriers presented to women as they contemplate leaving an abusive relationship or seeking help, some of which are similar to non-immigrant women, and some of which are different. Personal barriers found to be relevant for immigrant populations include commitment to the relationship, language skills, and awareness of services, while structural barriers include experiences of discrimination, cultural beliefs in the immigrant community, and financial resources. The research describing each of these barriers for immigrant women who are deciding to leave a violent relationship or to seek help is reviewed in this section.

Commitment to the Relationship

Similar to the influence of commitment to the relationship on leaving or help-seeking for non-immigrant women, researchers have identified that for immigrant women the desire to be a “good wife” or a “good mother” could be a barrier. However, rather than this being the result of an emotional attachment or from feelings of love for the abuser, commitment is often described more in terms of a desire to live up to a cultural ideal. This was identified as a barrier by the Vietnamese immigrant women in Shiu-Thornton et al.’s (2005) focus groups and by the Indian immigrant women interviewed by Dasgupta and Warriar (1996) who noted that to be a “good mother” they needed to keep their family intact.

Language

One of the most often identified, and perhaps the most obvious, barriers to leaving or help-seeking for immigrant women, is the level of English language skills possessed by the victim. Lack of English language skills was identified as a barrier by Abu-Ras (2003) in research with Arab immigrant women, Bauer et al. (2000) in their research with Latina and Asian immigrant women, Crandall et al. (2005) in their research with Russian immigrant women, Keller and Brennan (2007) in their research with service providers working with Sudanese women, Latta and Goodman (2005) in their research with service providers who work with

Haitian immigrant women, Shiu-Thornton et al. (2005) in research with Vietnamese immigrant women, and by Sullivan et al. (2005) in their research with Ethiopian women.

Awareness of Services

An additional barrier that has received attention in research with immigrant women, is a lack of information about available services, as well as a lack of information about their legal rights in terms of abuse, immigration and custody. This is similar to the findings described above in research with non-immigrant women however, this lack of information may be related to language barriers, as well as to isolating behaviors of abusers that keep immigrant women from interacting with outsiders in ways that would increase their knowledge in these areas. In 67 semi-structured interviews to investigate the barriers to services for Arab immigrant women in relationships with violent men, Abu-Ras (2003) found that 92.5% of participants disclosed a lack of knowledge about how existing service providers operate. Focus group research with immigrant women has identified a lack of knowledge about the legal system and community services for Latina and Asian immigrant women (Bauer et al., 2000), Cambodian women (Bhuyan et al., 2005), Russian women (Crandall et al., 2005), and Ethiopian women (Sullivan et al., 2005). Interviews with services providers about barriers to services have also identified a lack of information regarding immigration law and services available through police intervention for Haitian immigrant women (Latta and Goodman, 2005), and a lack of information about their legal rights in the United States for Sudanese immigrant women (Keller and Brennan, 2007). Qualitative interviews with 12 Indian immigrant women conducted by Dasgupta and Warriar (1996) also identified a lack of knowledge about their legal rights as a barrier to help seeking. Finally, in interviews with 100 recent Latino immigrants to North Carolina, Moracco, Hilton, Hodges, and Frasier (2005) found that 65% said they knew of a place where a domestic violence victim could go for help, but only 25% could identify a place where batterers could go for help, and only 27% had ever heard of a domestic violence protective order.

A related barrier to help seeking for immigrant women was the perception that available services were not culturally sensitive or culturally competent. Vietnamese immigrant women in focus groups conducted by Shiu-Thornton et al. (2005, p. 972) expressed greater comfort in services provided by someone from a similar cultural background, having “a collective perception that only those with a shared cultural and language background could understand the meaning of women’s experiences”. Similarly, Latta and Goodman’s (2005) interviews with

service providers who work with Haitian immigrants found that a lack of culturally sensitive services was perceived as a barrier for Haitian immigrant women, noting specifically the alienating experiences of not having anyone who spoke their language and the lack of availability of Haitian food in domestic violence shelters.

Experiences of Discrimination

Additionally, a fear that they will be met with prejudice and discrimination based on their status as immigrants has been identified as a barrier to help-seeking for immigrant women, just as fear of discrimination was identified as a barrier for non-immigrant women of color (Moss et al., 1997). This may have similar implications for immigrant women, as in semi-structured interviews with 20 Vietnamese immigrant women, Bui and Morash (1999) noted not only the fear of prejudice and discrimination as a barrier to service, but went on to conclude that “feelings of being lonely, alienated, discriminated against, or rejected by the mainstream society, as experienced by half of the women in this sample, may cause women to attach themselves to their ethnic community, their families, and their traditional values as a way to resist the dominance of mainstream society”. This finding represents the double-bind that immigrant women may find themselves in, as these same researchers noted that many of the women in this sample rejected traditional gender role beliefs that emphasized women’s submissiveness. It would be a concern for service providers if experiences of discrimination in help-seeking moved women closer to these traditional views and made it more difficult for them to seek help. Additionally, Bauer et al. (2000) reported that their Latina and Asian immigrant participants described feeling that their interactions with health care providers were marred by racial and ethnic prejudice, and Latta and Goodman’s (2005) service providers working with Haitian immigrants noted the existence of perceptions within the Haitian community about discrimination against them in a variety of settings, including social service agencies and the courts.

Cultural Beliefs in the Immigrant Community

An additional structural barrier that has received a great deal of attention in research with immigrant women leaving abusive relationships is the role that cultural beliefs in immigrant communities play in preventing women from accessing services. These cultural beliefs appear in a number of forms, including beliefs that accept or condone violence against women, beliefs in traditional gender roles, and beliefs that prohibit going outside of the family for help with private

matters. In focus groups with Ethiopian women, Sullivan et al. (2005) reported that participants described the ways that violence is minimized in their immigrant community and women acknowledged that men were more likely to get support from community members than were women. Similarly, in focus groups with abused Latina and Asian immigrant women, Bauer et al. (2000) reported that traditional gender roles and beliefs about marriage were seen to act as a barrier to help-seeking. In interviews with service providers working with Haitian immigrants, Latta and Goodmen (2005) identified cultural beliefs that violence is a normal part of life, both inside and outside the home, as a barrier to help seeking, and religious beliefs that do not allow for divorce as a barrier to ending violent relationships. Similarly, in interviews with service providers who work with Sudanese immigrants, cultural beliefs in traditional gender roles and beliefs of immigrant community members that were accepting of violence were identified as barriers to services (Keller & Brennan, 2007).

An additional cultural belief that served as a barrier to help-seeking was the belief that individuals should not go outside of the family for help with family-related problems. This barrier was identified by Bhuyan et al. (2005) in research with Cambodian immigrant women, by Crandall et al. (2005) in research with Russian immigrant women, and by Shiu-Thornton et al. (2005) in research with Vietnamese immigrant women. Relatedly, Abu-Ras (2003) reported that 70.1 % of respondents reported shame and 62.7 % of respondents reported embarrassment associated with seeking help from those outside of their family.

Financial Resources

Finally, another well documented barrier to leaving an abusive relationship or help-seeking for immigrant women is the lack of economic resources available to them. While this was also identified as a barrier in literature focusing on non-immigrant women, in research with immigrant women this is more often described as immigrant women's constant struggle to meet their own and their children's basic needs, including housing, transportation, and child care. Meeting these needs would be necessary for women to become independent of their abusive partners, as well as necessary for them to engage in services. For instance, Bhuyan et al (2005) and Sullivan et al. (2005) reported on the difficulty Cambodian immigrant women and Ethiopian immigrant women, respectively, would have in meeting these basic needs if they were to separate from their spouse. Keller and Brennan (2007) identified this barrier in their research with service providers who work with Sudanese immigrants, but also added as a barrier the

perception that if they divorced their husband women would lose all of their material possessions, a consequence of divorce in the Sudan. Clearly, the barrier of lack of knowledge of their legal rights could also be identified in work with this population of immigrants. In focus groups with Latina and Asian immigrant women, Bauer et al. (2000) identified economic dependence on their partner as a barrier to leaving an abusive relationship, and also noted that this economic dependence may be exacerbated through the process of immigration by the loss of extended family members' financial support. Finally, in the area of help seeking rather than leaving, Murdaugh, Hunt, Sowell, and Santana (2004) surveyed 309 immigrant women and found that "not enough money" was identified as an important barrier for 54% of their sample.

Conclusions

In conclusion, within the broad scope of research examining the decision-making processes of women contemplating leaving a violent relationship or seeking help, as well as the types of risks to staying/leaving, and the barriers that influence women's perceptions of their ability to leave or seek help, a number of important factors have been identified for both non-immigrant and immigrant women. For non-immigrant women, the risk of future physical harm has been found to relate to violence in the family of origin, violence in the current relationship, social isolation, socioeconomic status, attitudes and beliefs condoning violence or in favor of rigid gender roles, substance use and abuse, mental health factors, conflict in the relationship, marital status, interactions with the criminal justice system, and women's perceptions of their risk for future harm. For non-immigrant women similar risk factors, such as attitudes and beliefs condoning violence, and social isolation, have been found to relate to the risk of future harm, but other variables have also been of interest with immigrant populations, such as the role of acculturation and acculturative stress, conflict over changing gender roles, and male downward mobility.

Additionally, other types of risks, such as those identified by Hamby's (2008) holistic risk assessment, have been found to be important considerations for women in relationships with violent men. For non-immigrant women, the risk of harm to others, especially their children, has been found to be a significant concern, but this issue has not been investigated with immigrant women. Additionally, for non-immigrant women the possibility of social stigma, and the loss of child custody or possibility of criminal charges related to abuse have been identified as

significant considerations, while for immigrant women, more focus has been on the financial risk to leaving, as well as the social risk of loss of cultural identity or social status within the immigrant community, and the legal risks of losing custody of children or facing deportation.

In the area of barriers to leaving or seeking help, there have been some similarities and differences in important factors identified in research with non-immigrant and immigrant women. For both of these groups, financial resources, awareness of services, and emotional attachment or commitment to the relationship have been identified as barriers to leaving or seeking help, while with non-immigrant populations, additional barriers that have been identified include self-perceptions, fear of repercussions, and negative interactions with the criminal justice system, and with immigrant populations, additional barriers have included language skills, experiences of discrimination, and cultural beliefs within the immigrant community.

What has not yet been investigated, however, is the relative importance of each of these types of risks and barriers in women's decision-making processes, as well as the similarities and differences in their importance for non-immigrant and immigrant women deciding to leave a violent relationship or seek help. It is these comparisons that I focus on in the current study. While the use of a secondary analysis of an existing data set means that I will not be able to include every type of risk and barrier identified in this literature review, I will be able to include factors related to each type of risk identified in Hamby's (2008) holistic risk assessment and a number of barriers to leaving and seeking help. The next chapter explains more specifically which of these factors I will be able to include and how they will be measured, as well as describing the data set more specifically and outlining how the data will be analyzed.

CHAPTER 3 - Methods

This chapter describes the methods I used to examine my research questions aimed at better understanding the decision-making processes of immigrant and non-immigrant women as they decide whether or not to leave a violent relationship or to seek help. In this chapter, I begin by reviewing the research questions and identifying my hypotheses. Then I describe the data set by outlining the data collection methods used in the original study and describing the demographics of the sample. Finally, I will proceed to describe the models that I tested in this analysis by first identifying the measures used, and then describing the methods of statistical analysis used to test them.

Research Questions and Hypotheses

In order to investigate the factors that influence non-immigrant and immigrant women's decisions to leave a violent relationship or to seek help, I have identified the following research questions:

1. In relationships with violent men, how do immigrant women compare to non-immigrant women in the types of risks and barriers they encounter when considering leaving or seeking help?
2. How do these factors (risks and barriers) predict the decision to leave the relationship for immigrant and non-immigrant women?
3. How do these factors (risks and barriers) predict help-seeking for immigrant and non-immigrant women?

In order to answer these research questions I will test the following hypotheses.

Hypothesis 1: Immigrant and non-immigrant women differ in the types of risks and barriers they encounter in deciding to leave a violent relationship or to seek help. Specifically, immigrant women face greater financial, social, and legal risks to leaving or seeking help, and have higher levels of structural barriers to leaving or seeking help.

Hypothesis 2.1: The ability to predict the likelihood of leaving an abusive relationship is significantly improved by the inclusion of additional perceived risk variables (risk of harm to

others, financial, social and legal risks) over and above the inclusion of the risk of personal physical harm.

Hypothesis 2.2: Immigrant and non-immigrant women will differ in the relative influence of each type of risk on the stay/leave decision. Specially, the financial, social and legal risks to leaving will be stronger predictors of the likelihood for immigrant women to leave an abusive relationship than for non-immigrant women to leave.

Hypothesis 2.3: The more barriers that are present for women, the lower their likelihood of leaving a violent relationship, and differences between immigrant and non-immigrant women will exist only to the extent that there are differences in levels of barriers they face.

Hypothesis 3.1: The ability to predict the likelihood of seeking help is significantly improved by the inclusion of additional perceived risk variables (risk of harm to others, financial, social and legal risks) over and above the inclusion of the risk of personal physical harm.

Hypothesis 3.2: Immigrant and non-immigrant women will differ in the relative influence of each type of risk on the decision to seek help. Specifically, the financial, social and legal risks to seeking help will be stronger predictors of the likelihood for immigrant women to seek help than for non-immigrant women to do so.

Hypothesis 3.3: The more barriers that are present for women, the lower their likelihood of seeking help, and differences between immigrant and non-immigrant women will exist only to the extent that there are differences in levels of barrier they face.

Testing these hypotheses will occur through the use of logistic regression analysis, but before describing that analysis and the measures used, I would first like to describe the data set that will be used for this analysis.

The Data Set

This study will use the data set originating from the RAVE (Risk Assessment Validation) Study conducted by Roehl, O'Sullivan, Webster, and Campbell (2005). The RAVE study was a multi-site field test funded by the National Institute of Justice to collect predictive validity data on two risk assessment instruments currently being used by practitioners to assess the risk of IPV recidivism, and two assessments methods currently being used to assess the risk of lethality or near lethality. I chose to use this data set because it has the unique feature of including both IPV data and information regarding participants' country of origin, with nearly 40% of participants

reporting foreign-born status. As noted in my review of the literature, large scale studies of IPV have rarely asked questions concerning immigration status, and studies of immigrant women's experiences of IPV have most often been made up of small studies focused on a particular immigrant group. Because I am most interested in understanding how being an immigrant shapes women's experiences of IPV in terms of identifying the similarities and differences between immigrant and non-immigrant women, I wanted to be able to conduct a study that would include a large enough number of both immigrant and non-immigrant women that would allow me to make comparisons between these two groups. The RAVE data set provides me with just this opportunity. In the next sections I provide more information about the RAVE study by first describing the data collection methods used in that study and then describing the demographic composition of the sample.

Data Collection Methods Used in the RAVE Study

Data collection methods used in the RAVE study included structured interviews that were conducted in two metropolitan locations: New York City and Los Angeles, California. Interviews were conducted at two points in time, separated by approximately six months. For my analysis, I will only be using the data from Time One. Bilingual (Spanish/English) interviewers were available at all research sites. Most of the interviews conducted in New York were conducted in person, while interviews in Los Angeles were conducted in person or over the telephone, according to the preference of the participants. In New York, participants were recruited through the Family Courts of Queens, Brooklyn, and the Bronx, through domestic violence shelters and the Safe Horizon Community Offices in Brooklyn, Staten Island, the Bronx, and Queens, through one domestic violence shelter in Manhattan, and through four public hospitals in New York City. In Los Angeles, participants were recruited through the Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department and through one domestic violence shelter. The following table was provided by Roehl, O'Sullivan, Webster, and Campbell (2005, p. 34) to summarize the location of interviews and the interview format:

Table 3-1: Interview Location and Modality

Site	# Baseline Interviews	Primary Modality
NYC Family Courts	630	In person
LA Sherriff Department	399	Phone
NYC Shelters	177	In person
LA Shelter	60	In person
NYC Hospitals	30	In person and Phone
NYC Community Offices	11	In person
Total	1307	68% in person

Interviews conducted with participants at Time One included five types of measures: 1.) demographics and background information on the relationship with the offender, 2.) history of abuse in the relationship and over the past six months, 3.) actions taken by the victim or the criminal justice system that could mitigate her risk for future violence, 4.) risk assessment and self-perceived risk questions, and 5.) impact of the questionnaire on perception of risk and self-protective actions taken. Questions about history of abuse in the relationship were taken from the Revised Conflict Tactics Scale (Straus, Hamby, Boney-McCoy, & Sugarman, 1996), the Women’s Experience of Battering (WEB; Hall-Smith, Smith, & Earp, 1999), and the HARASS scale, which measures experiences of stalking and harassment (Sheridan, 1998). Risk assessment measures included the Domestic Violence Screening Inventory (DVSI; Williams, 1999) and the K-SID (Gelles, 1998) and lethality assessments included the Danger Assessment (Campbell, 1995) and the DV-Mosaic (de Becker, 2000). Because the focus of the RAVE study was on evaluating the validity of different types of measures, participants each received only one of the risk assessment measures and one of the lethality assessments. In a later section of this chapter, I describe how I operationally defined the concepts included in my analysis, specifically identifying which questions from each of these types of measures that I used in my analysis, but first I would like to provide some background information about the demographic composition of the sample.

Demographic Composition of the RAVE Sample

Thirty-eight percent of participants in the RAVE study were born outside of the United States. Additionally, 53% of the total sample was Latina/Hispanic; 47% of U.S.-born respondents were Latina/Hispanic and 63.9% of those born outside of the U.S. were Latina/Hispanic. Employment status differed slightly between groups, as 43.8% of the total sample were employed full- or part-time, with 42.3% of U.S.-born respondents falling into this group and 46.5 % of those born outside of the U.S. falling into this group. The highest education level completed also differed slightly between groups, with higher percentages for foreign-born women at both extremes of this measure; for example, more foreign-born women had an 8th grade education or less (18.5%) compared to U.S.-born women (1.5%), and more foreign-born women were college graduates (8%) or had some graduate school (1.8%) compared to U.S.-born women (6.8% and 1.4%). Finally, in terms of the level of involvement in their relationship, the majority of both U.S.-born (74%) and foreign-born (69%) respondents indicated that at the time of their interview they were no longer involved with their violent partner. The table on the next page summarizes this demographic information for all respondents, for U.S-born respondents, and for foreign-born respondents.

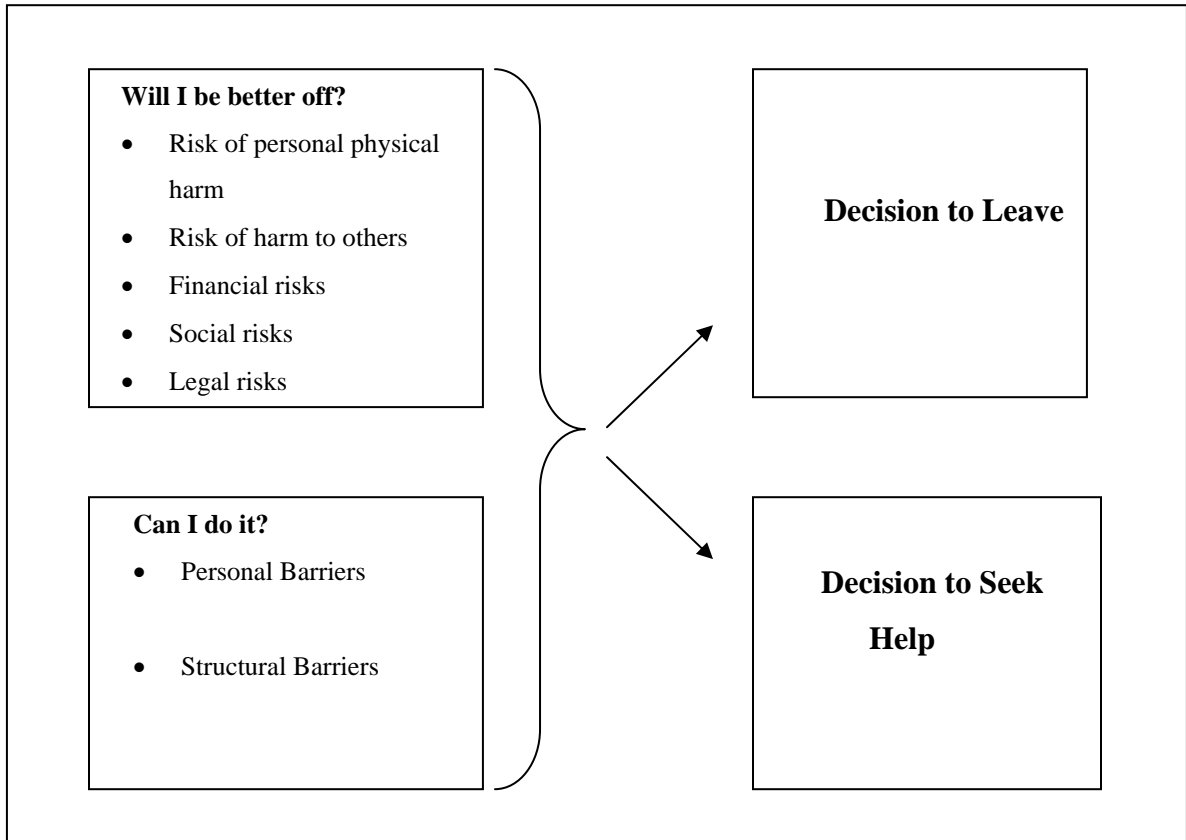
Table 3-2: Demographic Information for RAVE Sample

Demographic Variable	All Respondents	U.S.-Born Respondents	Foreign-Born Respondents
Racial/Ethnic Group	Number (Percent)	Number (Percent)	Number (Percent)
African American	362 (27.8)	273 (33.8)	89 (17.9)
Latina/Hispanic	693 (53.1)	376 (46.5)	317 (63.9)
Middle Eastern	3 (.2)	0	3 (.6)
American Indian/Alaskan Native	6 (.5)	5 (.6)	1 (.2)
European Descent/White	130 (10)	109 (13.5)	21 (4.2)
Asian/Pacific Islander	20 (1.5)	1 (.1)	19 (3.8)
South Asian	9 (.7)	1 (.1)	8 (1.6)
Biracial/Multiracial	41 (3.1)	35 (4.3)	6 (1.2)
Other	38 (2.9)	7 (.9)	31 (6.3)
Declined	2 (.2)	1 (.1)	1 (.1)
Total	1304 (100)	808 (100)	496 (100)
Employment Status			
Working Full or Part-Time	573 (43.9)	342 (42.3)	231 (46.5)
Other	732(56.1)	466 (57.7)	266 (53.5)
Total	1307 (100)	808 (100)	497 (100)
Highest Education Completed			
8th Grade or Less	105 (8.1)	13 (1.6)	92 (18.5)
Some High School	339 (26.0)	227 (28.1)	112 (22.5)
High School Grad/GED	411 (31.5)	260 (32.2)	151 (30.4)
Some College or Vocational School	334 (25.6)	241 (29.9)	93 (18.7)
College Graduate	95 (7.3)	55 (6.8)	40 (8.0)
Graduate School	20 (1.5)	11 (1.4)	9 (1.8)
Total	1304 (100)	807 (100)	497 (100)
Level of Involvement in Relationship			
Cohabiting	268 (20.5)	142 (17.6)	126 (25.4)
Still involved, not cohabitating	49 (3.8)	39 (4.8)	10 (2.0)
On again, off again	46 (3.5)	28 (3.5)	18 (3.6)
Not involved or cohabiting	942 (72.2)	599 (74.1)	343 (69)
Total	1305 (100)	808 (100)	497 (100)

The Model Tested in the Current Analysis

The current analysis examined the factors that influence immigrant and non-immigrant women’s decisions to leave a violent relationship or to seek help. Specifically, it tested components of Choice & Lamke’s (1997) two-part decision-making model and Hamby’s (2008) holistic risk assessment. The model to be tested is represented graphically in the figure below.

Figure 3-1: The Decision-Making Model



As this figure shows, the first part of Choice and Lamke’s (1997) two-part decision-making model, the question of “will I be better off?” was measured in terms of the components of Hamby’s (2008) holistic risk assessment and the second part of their model, the question of “can I do it?” was measured in terms of various personal and structural barriers. The importance of each of these factors in predicting immigrant and non-immigrant women’s decision to leave an abusive relationship or to seek help was tested. The following section describes more specifically how each of the components of this model was measured.

Measures

Grouping Variable

Throughout my analysis, respondents were divided into the two groups of immigrant and non-immigrant women in order to compare experiences of these two groups. Immigrant status was measured with one question that was asked of all respondents, “Were you born in the U.S.?” This is a categorical variable with the options of yes and no. While immigration status can be much more complicated than place of birth, especially in regards to length of residence, type of status, and whether respondents are documented or undocumented, for example, this was the only question related to immigration status asked of respondents and so it served as an indication of whether or not the participant was an immigrant.

Independent Variables

The factors listed on the left side of Figure 1 are the independent variables. This includes the following factors: the risk of personal physical harm, risk of harm to others, financial, legal and social risks, and the personal and structural barriers. In the following sections I describe the variables chosen from the RAVE data set as measures of these independent variables.

The Risk of Personal Physical Harm

As noted in the literature review, many potential risk factors for physical harm have been noted in the research literature, and while this data set included questions related to some of these factors, I chose to measure this risk with one question related to respondent’s self-perceived risk of physical harm. I made this choice for a number of reasons. First, many of the questions related to risk factors appeared to be highly correlated to each other. Second, questions related to risks for physical harm came from the risk assessment measures tested in the original survey, and only half of the sample received each assessment. Finally, I think it makes some intuitive sense that self-perceived risk has a more direct impact on individual decision-making than does some of the other types of risk factors, such as substance use or perpetrator mental health, for example. For these reasons, the risk of personal physical harm was measured with the question related to self-perceived risk that was asked of all participants. This question is an ordinal variable with a scale of 0 to 10, asking “How likely is it that your partner will be physically abusive with you in the next year?”

The Risk of Harm to Others

The risk of harm to others was measured with one question asked of all participants, “In the past six months has your partner threatened to hurt your children, family or someone you care about?” This is an ordinal-level variable, measured on a 5-point scale. This is the only question in the original data set that appears to relate to the risk of harm to others.

Financial, Social, and Legal Risks

The financial risk to leaving was measured in terms of partner’s employment status, because it is access to partner’s income, not necessarily access to one’s own income, which is at risk in the decision to leave a violent relationship or to seek help. This item is the only question that was asked differently of different respondents, and so it is a composite of three questions. Half of respondents received the Domestic Violence Screening Inventory (DVSI; Williams, 1999) which asks “What is your partner’s current employment status?”, with three possible options: “unknown”, “employed”, and “unemployed”, while the other half of respondents were given the K-SID (Gelles, 1998) , which asks “What is his current employment status?”, with the three options of “employed”, “unemployed (not looking for work)”, and “looking for work”. Additionally, half of the respondents were given the Danger Assessment (Campbell, 1995) which asks, “Is he unemployed?”, with the three options of “yes”, “no”, and “don’t know”. These questions were re-coded and combined to form one measure of partner’s employment status with the categories of “unemployed”, and “employed”.

While the literature review identified a number of social risks to leaving, such as the risk of family breakup or the risk of social stigma, the only type of social risk to leaving that I was able to measure from the RAVE data set is the risk of losing one’s children. This item is measured by one question asked of all participants, “Do you fear that your partner will take the children away from you or gain custody of them?” This is an ordinal-level variable with four options of “Yes, I am very afraid he will”, “Yes, I am somewhat afraid he will”, “No, I am not afraid that he will take the children or gain custody”, and “He already has”. This variable was re-coded from lowest to highest fear, with the final option of “He already has” removed from the analysis. Finally, one question from the original survey instruments asked of all respondents related to the legal risk to leaving or seeking help, “In the past six months has your partner threatened to report you to child protective services, immigration, or other authorities?” This is an ordinal-level variable, measured on a 5-point scale.

Personal Barriers

Respondents were asked questions that related to personal barriers previously identified in the literature with non-immigrant and immigrant women. Personal barriers that can be measured from the RAVE data set included commitment to the relationship, fear of their abuser, and feeling controlled by their abuser. Commitment to the relationship was measured with one question regarding legal marital status. Respondents were asked “What is your legal married status?”, with the options of “single”, “married”, “separated”, and “divorced”. In order to use this variable as a measure of commitment to the relationship, it was re-coded into two categories of “high commitment” and “low commitment”, with women who were married falling in the high commitment group and women who were single, separated or divorced falling into the low commitment group. Fear was measured with one question; all participants were asked how strongly they agreed with the statement, “He can scare me without ever laying a hand on me.” This is an ordinal-level variable measured on a 6-point scale from “Agree strongly” to “Disagree strongly”; it was re-coded in the other direction in order for a higher number to represent a higher level of fear. Respondent’s feelings of being controlled by their abuser were measured with one question; again, all participants were asked how strongly they agreed with the statement, “He makes me feel like I have no control over my life, no power, no protection.” This is also an ordinal-level variable measured on a 6-point scale from “Agree strongly” (1) to “Disagree strongly” (6). Respondents who responded with a higher number indicating strong disagreement with the statement may be interpreted as feeling a greater degree of control in their lives. Thus, higher levels of fear and more feelings of being controlled are conceived as barriers to leaving or seeking help.

Structural Barriers

Participants were also asked a number of questions that would relate to structural barriers previously identified in the literature with non-immigrant and immigrant women, such as age, employment status, level of education, race/ethnicity, and social isolation. First, all respondents were asked their age, measured in years; higher age was interpreted as a barrier to leaving or seeking help, as it might relate to respondents’ ability to live independently. All respondents were also asked their current employment status, with categorical options of “employed full-time”, “employed, part-time”, “homemaker”, “seasonal/temp worker”, “looking for work”, “unemployed”, “student”, “disabled”, and “declined”. This item was collapsed into the

categories of “unemployed”, and “employed” and unemployment was conceptualized as a barrier to leaving or help seeking. All respondents were asked their highest education level, with ordinal-level categories of “8th grade or less”, “some high school”, “high school graduate/GED”, “some college or vocational school”, “college graduate” and “graduate school”. A lower level of education represents a barrier to leaving or seeking help, as, like age, it may relate to respondents’ ability to live independently. All respondents were also asked their race/ethnicity with the options given being: African-American, European descent/White, Latina/Hispanic, Asian/Pacific Islander, Middle Eastern, South Asian, American Indian or Alaskan Native, Biracial/Multiracial, Declined, and Other. My intention was to collapse this variable into the categories of White and Non-White in order to measure the possibility of minority status as a barrier to leaving or seeking help, however, with only 10% of the total sample (see Table 3-2) and 13.5% of non-immigrant women and 4.2% of immigrant women falling into this category, I was unable to include race/ethnicity as a barrier variable in the regression models. An additional structural barrier that was included was whether respondents were socially isolated by their partners. This was measured with a question that was asked of all respondents, “Has he tried to prevent you from going to school, getting job training, or learning English?” This was a categorical variable with respondents answering yes or no.

Dependent Variables

My study included two dependent variables: the decision to leave the relationship and the decision to seek help. Each of these variables was measured with one item each from the RAVE survey instruments. The decision to leave was measured with the question, “In the past six months have you gone someplace where he couldn’t find you or see you?” This is a categorical level variable with the two options of yes or no. I chose this question rather than questions regarding the intent to leave because there is more variability in the sample in regard to this question, as so many of the respondents indicated that they have already left the relationship (see Table 3-2), and it also seems that a behavioral indication of leaving could be a stronger measure of the decision to leave rather than a question about intent to leave. It should be noted, however, that this question does not measure the intent to end the relationship, or even the act of ending the relationship, but only the act of leaving. It is entirely possible that women decided to return to their relationship after this one act of leaving, but because we know that the process of ending the relationship may include repeated attempts to leave (Griffing et al., 2002; Johnson, 1992),

this one question captures at a specific point in time one of these attempts to leave, and independent variables are used to determine which factors relate to this one attempt.

While the RAVE study included a number of questions about women's help-seeking, including specific questions about help-seeking behaviors such as obtaining restraining orders or going to a domestic violence shelter, the decision to seek help could best be measured with the question, "Have you ever received services related to domestic violence in this relationship?" This is a behavioral-level indicator and it is broad enough to encompass any type of help-seeking behavior; it also is a categorical level variable with the two options of yes or no.

Methods of Analysis

This study included bivariate and multivariate levels of analysis using SPSS software. Related to the first research question, differences between immigrant and non-immigrant women in types of risks and barriers that may predict leaving or help seeking were made using bivariate analyses such as t-tests or chi-square statistics, depending upon the type of variable. Relationships between variables were also examined using bivariate correlations. Finally, to determine how the specific types of risks and barriers predicted women's decisions to leave an abusive relationship (research question 2) or to seek help (research question 3), logistic regression analyses were used.

Logistic regression analyses, rather than linear regression, were used because both of the dependent variables are categorical-level variables, and logistic regression can be used with independent variables that are either categorical or continuous. Separate models were run for immigrant and non-immigrant women. To test Question 2, a model for risks and a model for barriers was run for both immigrant and non-immigrant women. To examine the perceived risks to leaving, the risk of personal physical harm was added first as a block, and then the risk of harm to others, and the financial, social, and legal risks were entered. To examine the barriers to leaving, personal barriers were entered as one block, and then structural barriers were entered. To test Question 3, a model for risks and a model for barriers were run for both immigrant and non-immigrant women in the same way as they were run to test Question 2. The next chapter presents the results of these analyses.

CHAPTER 4 - Results

This chapter presents the results of this study. First, background characteristics of the sample as a whole, and for immigrant and non-immigrant women, will be presented. Next, results of Bivariate analyses, including t-tests and chi-square statistics, will be presented to address the first research question of how do immigrant and non-immigrant women differ in the perceived risks and barriers to leaving or help seeking? A correlation matrix will be presented to examine inter-correlations between variables. Finally, results from logistic regression models computed for immigrant and non-immigrant women to determine how well the perceptions of risks and barriers predicted the likelihood of leaving an abusive relationship (research question 2) and seeking help (research question 3) will be presented. Eight models were run in all – four for immigrant women, and four for non-immigrant women – the first to determine how well perceived risks predicted the likelihood of leaving, the second to determine how well barriers predicted the likelihood of leaving, the third to determine how well perceived risks predicted the likelihood of seeking help, and the fourth to determine how well barriers predicted the likelihood of seeking help. Results of these logistic regression models are presented after the presentation of the descriptive statistics.

Sample Description

This section presents a brief narrative description of the sample. Many of the sample characteristics will also be described in more detail in later sections of this chapter that describe the results of analyses conducted to address the first research question. Before presenting those results, demographic information about the sample is presented, followed by information about the relationships in which respondents were involved, the extent of violence to which they were subjected in their relationship, and how likely they were to have left the relationship or sought help.

Demographics

As noted in Chapter 3, 38% of this sample was foreign-born and more than half of the total sample (53%) was Latina/Hispanic, with 47% of non-immigrant respondents and 63.9%

immigrant respondents being Latina/Hispanic. Participant ages ranged from 18 to 67 years, with a mean for the total sample of 31.1 years, and immigrant women being on average slightly older than non-immigrant women (33.31 years vs. 29.75 years). Less than half of the sample (43.8%) were employed full or part-time, with fewer non-immigrant respondents (42.3%) falling into this group and than immigrant respondents (46.5%). The highest education level completed also differed slightly between groups, with higher percentages for immigrant women at both extremes of this measure; for example, more immigrant women had an 8th grade education or less (18.5%) compared to non-immigrant women (1.5%), and more immigrant women were college graduates (8%) or had some graduate school (1.8%) compared to non-immigrant women (6.8% and 1.4%).

Relationship with Abuser

As was also noted in Chapter 3, the majority of both non-immigrant (74%) and immigrant (69%) respondents indicated that at the time of their interview they were no longer involved with their violent partner. This finding makes sense given that respondents were recruited through women's shelters and domestic violence agencies, as well as family and criminal court services. However, the sample differed in terms of marital status, as the majority of immigrant women indicated at the time of the interview that they were married (54.6%) and the majority of non-immigrant women indicated that they were single (60.2%), as opposed to separated or divorced. Similarly, when asked about their relationship with their abuser, 51.9% of non-immigrant women indicated that he was an ex-boyfriend, while the modal category for immigrant women was husband, with 37.4% indicating this relationship with their abuser and an additional 20.2% of immigrant women indicating that he was an estranged husband. Finally, the mean number of children in respondents' households was 1.82 for the total sample, with little difference between non-immigrant (1.76) and immigrant women (1.90).

Extent of Violence

Most of the women in this sample indicated that they felt unsafe in their own home (60.8% of immigrant women and 54.1% of non-immigrant women), and that their partners were verbally abusive. Sixty-nine percent of immigrant women and 72% of non-immigrant women indicated that their partners had insulted or sworn at them six or more times in the last six months (the highest point on the 5-point scale given in these question from the Conflict Tactics Scale), and 72.6% of immigrant women and 73.5% of non-immigrant women indicated that their

partners had shouted or yelled at them 6 or more times in the last 6 months. Additionally, 60% of immigrant women and 56.5% of non-immigrant women indicated that their partners had said they wanted to kill them.

In answering questions about the particular violent behaviors to which they were subjected, respondents were given a scale of 0 (this has never happened) to 4 (six or more times in the last six months), as well as an option (7) for behaviors that had not happened in the past six months but had happened before. After removing those who had responded with a 7, I calculated the mean score for each of these behaviors for both immigrant and non-immigrant women, in order to present a picture of the extent of violence to which women in the sample were subjected. The picture of violence that emerges based on these questions appears similar for immigrant and non-immigrant women. For immigrant women, behaviors that had a mean greater than 1 (once in the last six months) included: having something thrown at them, having their arm or hair twisted, being forced to have sex without a condom, being pushed or shoved, being punched or hit with something, being slammed against a wall, their partner insisting on sex without the use of force, being beaten up, grabbed, and slapped. For non-immigrant women, behaviors that had a mean greater than 1 included: having something thrown at them, having their arm or hair twisted, being pushed or shoved, being punched or hit with something, being choked, being slammed against a wall, their partner insisting on sex without the use of force, being beaten up, grabbed, and slapped.

Additionally, when asked whether they had been treated by a doctor or nurse for injuries from their abusive partner, 16.5% of immigrant women and 19.6% of non-immigrant women indicated that they had. Fifty-one percent of immigrant women and 53.7% of non-immigrant women indicated that in the past 6 months their partner's abusive behavior had resulted in pain that was still felt the next day, and 46.5% of immigrant women and 54.9% of non-immigrant women indicated that his violence had resulted in a sprain or bruise. Finally, results indicate that for both immigrant and non-immigrant women, the most recent incident of abuse did not result in their partner's arrest (70.4% of immigrant women's partners and 64.8% of non-immigrant women's partners had not been arrested), nor have their partners been ordered to attend a batterer's program, with only 17.1% of immigrant women's partners being ordered to a program and 22.7% of non-immigrant women's partners being ordered to a program.

Choices in Leaving or Seeking Help

Before moving on to discuss the results of the first research question, I also examined the differences between immigrant and non-immigrant women in terms of the two outcome variables, leaving their relationship or seeking help. Information about these two variables is provided here in more detail than the preceding background variables, as it will not be presented again in later sections. The following table shows the chi-square results for tests of an association between leaving and immigrant status, and help seeking and immigrant status. Leaving was measured with the question of whether or not respondents had gone somewhere in the past six months where their partner could not find or see them, and help seeking was measured with the question of whether or not respondents had ever in their relationship received services related to their partner’s abuse.

Table 4-1: Prevalence (%) of Leaving and Help Seeking Among Immigrant and Non-Immigrant Women

Outcome	Immigrant Women (n = 497)	Non-Immigrant Women (n = 808)	$X^2(1)$
Leaving	30.0	42.8	21.55***
Help Seeking	39.9	40.8	0.13

***p < .001

As table 4-1 shows, non-immigrant women were more likely to have left their relationship in the past six months than were immigrant women. There was a significant association between leaving and immigrant status $X^2(1) = 21.55, p < .001$. Based on the odds ratio non-immigrant women were 1.75 times more likely to have left their relationship in the past six months than were immigrant women. There was no significant association between help seeking and immigrant status $X^2(1) = 0.13, p > .05$.

After being asked whether or not they had gone somewhere in the past 6 months that their partner could not find or see them, respondents were also asked where they had gone. Similarly, after being asked whether or not they had received services in their current relationship, women were asked what type of services they had received. The tables below show the chi-square results testing the association between immigrant status and where women went after leaving their relationship and between immigrant status and what type of help was sought. Note that the

sample sizes vary as many women indicated that these questions were “not applicable” for them and analyses were run only for those who indicated a yes or no response.

Table 4-2: Prevalence (%) of Chosen Locations for Immigrant and Non-Immigrant Women Who Chose to Leave the Relationship in the Past Six Months

Location	Immigrant Women		Non-Immigrant Women		X^2 (1)
	n	% yes	n	% yes	
Went out of town	149	10.1	343	11.1	0.11
Stayed with friend or relative	150	28.7	346	33.2	1.01
Went to hotel or motel	150	0.7	346	0.9	0.05
Went to a shelter	150	54	346	52	0.16
Hospital	150	0.7	346	0.6	0.01

Table 4-3: Prevalence (%) of Types of Services Received for Immigrant and Non-Immigrant Women Receiving Services Ever in this Relationship

Service	Immigrant Women		Non-Immigrant Women		X^2 (1)
	n	% yes	n	% yes	
Safety Planning	201	11.4	335	21.5	8.70**
Counseling	201	64.7	335	55.2	4.63*
Legal Assistance	201	22.9	335	19.4	0.93
Shelter	201	43.3	335	55.5	7.53**
Help with/for kids	201	14.9	335	10.4	2.36

**p < .01, *p < .05

As table 4-2 shows, for women who indicated they had gone somewhere in the past six months that their partner could not find or see them, there were no significant differences between immigrant and non-immigrant women in where they chose to go. Interestingly, although there was no significant association between immigrant status and receiving services in their current relationship, when examining what type of services were received by those women who had sought help, significant differences between immigrant and non-immigrant women emerged, as can be seen in Table 4-3. There was a significant association between safety planning and immigrant status $X^2(1) = 8.70, p < .01$, between receiving shelter services and immigrant status $X^2(1) = 7.53, p < .01$, and between receiving counseling and immigrant status $X^2(1) = 4.63, p < .05$. Based on the odds ratios, non-immigrant women were 2.12 times more likely to have received safety planning than were immigrant women, and were 1.64 times more likely to have received shelter services than were immigrant women, while immigrant women were 1.49 times more likely to have received counseling than were non-immigrant women. It should be noted that respondents were asked about shelter services in both of these questions, where they had gone in the past six months, and what types of services they had ever received in their relationship, and there is some discrepancy between responses to these two questions, which may stem from being asked this question as a follow up to two different questions, one which used a time frame of the past 6 months, and one which used a time frame of ever in their relationship.

The information presented so far provides a picture of the women in this sample, in terms of their background characteristics, their relationships, the extent of violence to which they were subjected, and their choices in leaving their relationship or seeking help. The next two sections will more closely examine the similarities and differences between immigrant and non-immigrant women in their perceptions of the risks involved in leaving their relationship or seeking help, and their similarities and differences in the barriers facing them in leaving or seeking help.

Research Question 1: Comparing Immigrant and Non-Immigrant Women in their Perceptions of Risks and Barriers to Leaving or Seeking Help

The first research question asks: In a relationship with a violent man, how do immigrant women compare to non-immigrant women in the types of risks and barriers they encounter when deciding to leave or to seek help? My corresponding hypothesis stated that immigrant and non-

immigrant women differ in the types of risks and barriers they encounter in deciding to leave a relationship with a violent man or to seek help. Specifically, immigrant women face greater financial, social and legal risk to leaving or seeking help, and have higher levels of structural barriers to leaving or seeking help than do non-immigrant women. The following section presents the results of analyses used to compare immigrant and non-immigrant women in their perceptions of the risks involved to leaving or seeking help, followed by the results of analyses to compare immigrant and non-immigrant women in the presence of barriers to leaving or seeking help.

Will I be Better Off?

In order to compare immigrant and non-immigrant women’s perceptions of the risks involved in leaving their relationship or seeking help, independent t-tests were run for the risk of personal physical harm, the risk of harm to others, and the social and legal risks. Recall from Chapter 3 that the risk of personal physical harm was measured with the question, “How likely is it that your partner will be physically abusive with you in the next year?”; the risk of harm to others was measured with the question of how often in the past six months their partner had “Threatened to hurt your children, family, or someone you care about?”; the social risk was measured with the question “Do you fear that your partner will take the children away from you or gain custody of them?”, and the legal risk was measured with the question of how often in the past six months their partner had “Threatened to report you to child protective services, immigration, or other authorities?”. Table 4-4 presents the results of the independent t-tests.

Table 4-4: Results of Independent T-Tests for Perceived Risks

Risk	Immigrant Women			Non-Immigrant Women			df	t
	n	M	SD	n	M	SD		
Personal Physical Harm	487	5.80	3.85	803	4.77	3.77	1011.24	4.72***
Harm to Others	497	0.97	1.47	806	1.08	1.46	1046.84	-1.29
Social	407	0.98	0.91	624	0.74	0.87	843.92	4.24***
Legal	495	0.92	1.44	804	0.66	1.25	1297.00	3.46***

***p < .001

As Table 4-4 shows, there were significant differences between immigrant and non-immigrant women's perceptions of the risks to leaving or seeking help. On average, immigrant women perceived a higher risk of personal physical harm ($M = 5.80$) than did non-immigrant women ($M = 4.77$) and this difference was significant $t(1011.24) = 4.72, p < .001$, but represented a small sized effect $r = .02$. Immigrant women perceived a higher social risk ($M = 0.98$) than did non-immigrant women ($M = 0.74$) and this difference was significant $t(843.92) = 4.24, p < .001$, but represented a small sized effect $r = .14$. Immigrant women perceived a higher legal risk ($M = 0.92$) than non-immigrant women ($M = 0.66$) and this difference was significant $t(1297) = 3.46, p < .001$, but represented a small sized effect size $r = .09$. Immigrant women perceived a lower risk of harm to others ($M = 0.97$) than non-immigrant women ($M = 1.08$) and this difference was not significant $t(1046.84) = -1.29, p > .05$, and represented a small sized effect $r = .04$.

The chi-square statistic was used to investigate the difference between immigrant and non-immigrant women's financial risk to leaving. The financial risk to leaving was measured with the question of whether or not the respondent's partner was employed. Results of this analysis are shown in Table 4-5.

Table 4-5: Financial Risk by Immigrant Status

	Immigrant Women (n = 434)	Non-Immigrant Women (n = 736)	$X^2(1)$
Partner is Employed (% yes)	74.4	51.9	57.83***

*** $p < .001$

As table 4-5 indicates, there was a significant association between immigrant status and partner's employment status, $X^2(1) = 57.83, p < .001$. Based on the odds ratio immigrant women's partners were 2.69 times more likely to be employed than were non-immigrant women's partners, thus they faced a higher financial risk to leaving or seeking help in that their decision may lead them to losing access to their partner's employment income. Based on these results, Hypothesis 1, which stated that immigrant women would face greater financial, social and legal risks to leaving or seeking help than would non-immigrant women, is supported, as they reported significantly higher levels of these risks than did non-immigrant women, however, effect sizes for differences in legal and social risks were small. Interestingly, immigrant women also appeared to face a greater risk of personal physical harm than did non-immigrant women,

though this was not a difference that I hypothesized. Additionally, because there was so little literature addressing the risk of harm to others for immigrant women, I did not hypothesize a significant difference between groups on this risk, and results of this analysis show that they do not appear to differ significantly in this area of risk.

Can I do it?

Independent t-tests were conducted to determine the significance of difference between immigrant and non-immigrant women in the continuous barrier variables of feeling controlled by abuser, fear of abuser, age, and highest education. Recall from Chapter 3 that feeling controlled by abuser was measured with the question of how much the respondent agreed with the statement that in the past six months “He makes me feel like I have no control over my life, no power, no protection”; fear of abuser was measured with the question about respondents’ agreement with the statement that in the past six months “He can scare me without ever laying a hand on me”, age was measured in years, and highest education completed was an ordinal-level variable with options ranging from “8th grade or less” to “graduate school”. The results of the t-tests are summarized in Table 4-6.

Table 4-6: Results of Independent T-Tests for Barriers

Barrier	Immigrant Women			Non-Immigrant Women			df	t
	n	M	SD	n	M	SD		
Controlled by Abuser	497	2.33	1.95	805	2.65	2.05	1300	-2.80**
Fear of Abuser	496	4.81	1.89	806	4.54	2.01	1300	2.33*
Age	497	33.31	8.40	807	29.75	8.52	1302	7.41***
Highest Education	497	2.81	1.27	807	3.16	1.01	1302	-5.60***

***p < .001, **p < .01, *p < .05

As table 4-6 shows, there were significant differences between immigrant and non-immigrant women in their barriers to leaving or seeking help. On average, immigrant women felt more controlled by their abuser (M = 2.33,) than did non-immigrant women (M = 2.65,) and this difference was significant $t(1300) = -2.80, p < .01$ and represented a small sized effect $r =$

.08. Immigrant women felt more fear of their abuser ($M = 4.81$.) than did non-immigrant women ($M = 4.55$) and this difference was significant $t(1300) = 2.33$, $p < .05$ but represents a small sized effect $r = .06$. Immigrant women were older ($M = 33.31$) than were non-immigrant women ($M = 29.75$.) and this difference was significant $t(1302) = 7.41$, $p < .001$ and represented a small sized effect $r = .20$. Immigrant women had completed less education ($M = 2.81$.) than non-immigrant women ($M = 3.16$.) and this difference was significant $t(1302) = -5.60$, $p < .001$ and represented a small sized effect $r = .15$.

The chi-square statistic was used to test for an association between immigrant status and each of commitment level, employment status and social isolation. Commitment level was a dichotomous variable with the categories of “high commitment” and “low commitment”. Employment status is a dichotomous variable with options of being “employed full or part-time” and being “unemployed”, and social isolation is measured with the yes or no question of “Has he tried to prevent you from going to school, getting job training, or learning English?”. Results of the chi-square tests are presented in Table 4-7.

Table 4-7: Chi-Square Results for Marital Status, Employment Status and Social Isolation by Immigrant Status

Variable	Immigrant Women		Non-Immigrant Women		$X^2(1)$
	n	% yes	n	% yes	
High Commitment	496	54.6	805	28.9	85.37***
Employed	497	46.5	808	42.3	2.15
Social Isolation	493	47.3	803	41.4	4.32*

*** $p < .001$, * $p < .05$

As table 4-7 shows, there was a significant association between commitment to the relationship and immigrant status $X^2(1) = 85.37$, $p < .001$, and between social isolation and immigrant status $X^2(1) = 4.32$, $p < .05$. Based on the odds ratios, immigrant women were 2.96 times more likely to be currently married to their abuser than were non-immigrant women and were 1.28 times more likely to report that their partner prevented them from going to school,

getting job training, or learning English than were non-immigrant women. There was no significant association between employment status and immigrant status $X^2(1) = 2.15, p > .05$.

Based on these results, Hypothesis 1, which stated that immigrant women would face higher levels of structural barriers (age, education, employment, and social isolation) to leaving or seeking help than would non-immigrant women, receives partial support. Immigrant women faced higher structural barriers in the areas of age, education and social isolation, but not in the area of employment, and those differences that were significant represented small effect sizes. Additionally, while I did not hypothesize a difference between immigrant and non-immigrant women in personal barriers, results suggest that immigrant women face higher barriers in these areas as well, since they were more likely to be married and thus more committed to the relationship, and reported significantly higher levels of fear and higher levels of feeling controlled by their abusive partners than did non-immigrant women, though differences represented small effect sizes.

Variable Correlations

Before conducting the logistic regression analyses, the correlations between variables were examined, and those results are presented in the Table 4-8. As can be seen in this table, while there were some statistically significant correlations, the size of the correlations between variables was not high, and therefore multi-collinearity was not a problem in the data.

Table 4-8: Correlations between Variables in the Logistic Regression Models

Variable	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15
1. Born in the U.S.	1														
2. Abusive in Next Year	-.13**	1													
3. Threatened to Hurt Others	.04	.06*	1												
4. Partner is Employed	-.22**	.02	-.08**	1											
5. Fear partner will take children	.06*	-.07*	-.03	-.05	1										
6. Threatened to Report You	-.01	.04	.65**	.01	.02	1									
7. Commitment	-.26**	.03	-.01	.14**	-.03	-.01	1								
8. Loss of Control	.06*	-.17*	.78**	-.02	.01	.58**	-.01	1							
9. Afraid of Him	-.06*	.36**	.21**	-.06*	-.02	.03	.03	-.54**	1						
10. Age	-.20**	.08*	-.01	.08**	.23**	.07*	.28**	-.03	.07*	1					
11. Highest Education	.15**	-.03	-.02	.03	.08**	.02	.05	-.03	.04	.07**	1				
12. Employed	-.04	.05	-.04	.08**	.01	-.05	.13**	-.01	-.01	.13**	.24**	1			
13. Isolates You	-.04	.10**	.01	.00	.02	-.01	.01	-.02	.04	.03	-.05	.01	1		
14. Left in past 6 Months	.13**	.09**	.07**	-.04	-.01	.04	-.10**	-.10**	.19**	-.14**	.02	-.20**	-.02	1	
15. Received Services Ever	.01	.15**	.10**	.01	-.11**	.08**	-.06*	-.05	.16**	-.02	-.01	-.19**	-.03	.43**	1

**p < .01, *p < .05

Research Question 2: Leaving an Abusive Relationship

The second research question that I addressed in this study was: How do the perceived risks and barriers predict the decision to leave an abusive relationship for immigrant and non-immigrant women. I proposed the following hypotheses in regard to this question. Hypothesis 2.1 stated that the ability to predict the likelihood of leaving an abusive relationship would be significantly improved by the inclusion of additional perceived risk variables (risk of harm to others, financial, social and legal risks) over and above the inclusion of the risk of personal physical harm. Hypothesis 2.2 stated that immigrant and non-immigrant women would differ in the relative influence of each type of risk variable on the stay/leave decision. Specifically, the financial, social and legal risks to leaving will be stronger predictors of the likelihood for immigrant women to leave an abusive relationship than for non-immigrant women. Finally, Hypothesis 2.3 stated that the more barriers that are present for women, the lower their likelihood of leaving a violent relationship, and differences between immigrant and non-immigrant women will exist only to the extent that there are differences in level of barriers they face.

In order to test these hypotheses, logistic regression models were computed for immigrant and non-immigrant women; one model to predict the decision to leave based on perceived risks, and one model to predict the decision to leave based on barriers was computed separately for immigrant and for non-immigrant women. The results of these analyses are presented in the following sections. Rather than re-state it for each model, I will report here that the results of Hosmer and Lemeshow's test for goodness of fit was not significant for each of the models tested, suggesting that each model fit the data well.

Will I be Better Off?

Table 4-9 shows the results of the two logistic regression models predicting the likelihood of leaving for immigrant and non-immigrant women based on the types of perceived risks, including the risk of personal physical harm, the risk of harm to others, and the financial, social, and legal risks. The regression models were completed in two blocks, the first included only the risk of personal physical harm, and the second included all of the risk variables, in order to determine whether or not the predictive ability of the model would be improved by the addition of risks over and above the risk of personal physical harm.

Table 4-9: Logistic Regression Predicting the Likelihood of Leaving for Immigrant and Non-Immigrant Women (Risk Variables)

Predictor	Immigrant Women			Non-Immigrant Women		
	β	SE	Odds Ratio	β	SE	Odds Ratio
Block 1: Risk of Personal Physical Harm	.02	.03	1.02	.08***	.02	1.08
Constant	-.97***	.19	.38	-.76***	.13	.47
Block 2: Risk of Personal Physical Harm	.00	.03	1.00	.06**	.02	1.07
Risk of Harm to Others	.23***	.07	1.27	.20***	.05	1.22
Financial Risk	.55*	.27	1.73	-.17	.16	.84
Social Risk	-.00	.00	1.01	.00	.00	1.00
Legal Risk	.01	.02	1.01	.03	.03	1.03
Constant	-2.09***	.53	.12	-.70*	.28	.50

Note: Immigrant Women: Block 1 $R^2 = .00$ (Cox & Snell), .00 (Nagelkerke), Model $X^2(1) = .393$; Block 2 $R^2 = .03$ (Cox & Snell), .05 (Nagelkerke), Block $X^2(4) = 13.66^{**}$, Model $X^2(5) = 14.05^*$; Non-Immigrant Women: Block 1 $R^2 = .02$ (Cox & Snell), .03 (Nagelkerke), Model $X^2(1) = 16.08^{***}$; Block 2 $R^2 = .05$ (Cox & Snell), .07 (Nagelkerke), Block $X^2(4) = 20.50^{***}$, Model $X^2(5) = 36.58^{***}$, * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$.

As Table 4-9 shows, for immigrant women Block 1 appeared to explain none of the variance in the decision to leave the relationship as the risk of personal physical harm was not predictive of the likelihood of leaving for immigrant women (OR = 1.02, $p > .05$) and the overall percentage of cases classified correctly from the Block 0 to Block 1 remained the same at 70.5. When other types of perceived risks were added to the model in Block 2, 3-5% of the variance in immigrant women's decision to leave was explained, and this was a significant improvement over the first block, Block $X^2(4) = 13.66$, $p < .01$, however the overall percentage of cases classified correctly remained at 70.5. In the second block, the variables that significantly predicted the likelihood of leaving for immigrant women were the risk of harm to others (OR = 1.27, $p < .001$), and the financial risk (OR = 1.73, $p < .05$). These results indicate that immigrant women were more likely to decide to leave as the risk of harm to others increased, and as the financial risk of leaving, measured by partner's employment status, increased.

Table 4-9 also shows the results for non-immigrant women, for whom Block 1 explained 2-3% of the variance in their decision to leave, as the risk of personal physical harm was predictive of their decision (OR = 1.08, $p < .001$), indicating that as the risk of personal physical

harm increased, non-immigrant women were more likely to decide to leave their relationship. The model in the first block correctly classified 60.3% of cases overall, compared to 59.2% for Block 0. This is in contrast to the finding for immigrant women, as the risk of personal physical harm was not predictive of their leaving and did not result in any improvement in the percentage of cases classified correctly. As with immigrant women, when the additional perceived risks were added to the model in Block 2, the percentage of variance explained by the model increased significantly to 5-7%, Block $X^2(4) = 20.50$, $p < .001$, and this model resulted in 62.2% of cases being correctly classified overall. In the second block, the variables that significantly predicted the likelihood of leaving for non-immigrant women included the risk of personal physical harm (OR = 1.07, $p < .01$), and the risk of harm to others (OR = 1.22, $p < .001$), indicating non-immigrant women were more likely to leave as the risk of personal physical harm increased, and as the risk of harm to others increased.

Based on the results shown in Tables 4-9 Hypothesis 2.1, which stated that the ability to predict the likelihood of leaving would be significantly improved by the inclusion of additional perceived risks, is supported. Additionally, Hypothesis 2.2, which stated that the financial, social, and legal risks to leaving would be stronger predictors of leaving for immigrant women than for non-immigrant women, receives some support as the financial risk was significantly predictive for immigrant women, while none of these risks were predictive of leaving for non-immigrant women. Additionally, the model in the second block for immigrant women correctly classified 70.5% of cases overall, compared to 62.2% for the model in the second block for non-immigrant women.

Can I do it?

Table 4-10 shows the results of the two logistic regression models predicting the likelihood of leaving for immigrant and non-immigrant women based on the personal barriers of commitment to the relationship, fear of the abuser and feeling controlled by the abuser, entered in one block, and the structural barriers of age, education, employment, and social isolation, entered in the next block.

Table 4-10: Logistic Regression Predicting the Likelihood of Leaving for Immigrant and Non-Immigrant Women (Barrier Variables)

Predictor	Immigrant Women			Non-Immigrant Women		
	β	SE	Odds Ratio	β	SE	Odds Ratio
Block1: Commitment	-.60**	.20	.55	-.21	.17	.81
Fear of Abuser	.27***	.08	1.31	.08	.05	1.08
Controlled by Abuser	-.07	.07	.93	-.27***	.05	.77
Constant	-1.74***	.50	.17	.08	.29	1.09
Block 2: Commitment	-.45*	.21	.64	.02	.18	1.02
Fear of Abuser	.27***	.08	1.31	.09	.05	1.09
Controlled by Abuser	-.07	.07	.93	-.28***	.05	.76
Age	-.04**	.01	.96	-.03**	.01	.97
Education	.20*	.09	1.22	.06	.08	1.06
Employment	-.69**	.22	.50	-.95***	.17	.39
Social Isolation	-.03	.03	.98	.02	.02	1.02
Constant	-.68	.67	.50	.95*	.44	2.58

Note: Immigrant Women: Block 1 $R^2 = .07$ (Cox & Snell), $.10$ (Nagelkerke), Model $X^2(3) = 35.15^{***}$; Block 2 $R^2 = .12$ (Cox & Snell), $.17$ (Nagelkerke), Block $X^2(4) = 28.20^{***}$, Model $X^2(7) = 63.35^{***}$. Non-Immigrant Women: Block 1 $R^2 = .08$ (Cox & Snell), $.11$ (Nagelkerke), Model $X^2(3) = 69.87^{***}$; Block 2 $R^2 = .13$ (Cox & Snell), $.18$ (Nagelkerke), Block $X^2(4) = 45.47^{***}$, Model $X^2(7) = 115.34^{***}$, * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$.

As Table 4-10 shows, for immigrant women, Block 1 explained 7-10% of the variance in the decision to leave, and in this block commitment to the relationship (OR = .55, $p < .01$) and fear of her abuser significantly predicted the likelihood of leaving for immigrant women (OR = 1.31, $p < .001$) indicating that women with low commitment to the relationship and women with greater fear of their abuser were more likely to leave. However, the overall percentage of cases classified correctly remained unchanged from Block 0 to Block 1 at 69.9. In contrast, Block 2 correctly classified 71.9% of cases overall and explained 12-17% of the variance in the decision to leave, representing a significant improvement over the first block, Block $X^2(4) = 28.20$, $p < .001$. In the second block, variables that significantly predicted the likelihood of leaving for immigrant women were commitment to the relationship (OR = .64, $p < .05$), fear of the abuser (OR = 1.31, $p < .001$), age (OR = .96, $p < .001$), education (OR = 1.22, $p < .05$) and employment (OR = .50, $p < .01$). These results indicate that immigrant women were more likely to leave their

abusive relationship if they were single, and when they were more afraid of their abuser, when they were younger, had more education, and were unemployed.

As Table 4-10 also shows, for non-immigrant women Block 1 explained 8-11% of the variance in the decision to leave, and in this block feeling controlled by her abuser is predictive of non-immigrant women's likelihood of leaving (OR = .77, $p < .001$). This model classified 62.2% of cases correctly overall, compared to 57.3% of cases overall in Block 0. These results are different than results for immigrant women, for whom commitment to the relationship and fear were predictive, and they indicate that for non-immigrant women the likelihood of leaving was increased when they felt more controlled by their abuser. Again, as with immigrant women, the percentage of variance explained by the model increased significantly, to 13-18% of the variance with the inclusion of structural barriers, Block $X^2(4) = 45.47$, $p < .001$ and the overall percentage of cases classified correctly increased to 67.5. As shown in Block 2, once structural barriers were included in the model, variables that were predictive of non-immigrant women's likelihood of leaving included feeling controlled by abuser (OR = .76, $p < .001$), age (OR = .97, $p < .01$), and employment (OR = .39, $p < .001$), indicating that non-immigrant women were more likely to leave their abusive relationship when they felt more controlled by their abuser, were younger, and unemployed.

Based on the results shown in Table 4-10, Hypothesis 2.3, which stated that women's likelihood of leaving an abusive relationship would be lower as they faced more barriers receives some support, in that for immigrant women being single, younger and having more education were predictive of leaving and for non-immigrant women, being younger was predictive of leaving. However, the relationship occurred in the opposite direction for the remaining barriers that were significantly predictive of leaving, including fear and employment status for immigrant women, and feeling controlled and employment status for non-immigrant women. Contrary to Hypothesis 2.3, immigrant women were more likely to leave when they faced greater barriers in fear and employment status, and non-immigrant women were more likely to leave when they faced greater barriers in feeling controlled, and employment status.

Research Question 3: Seeking Help

The third research question that I addressed in this study was: How do the perceived risks and barriers predict the decision to seek help for immigrant and non-immigrant women in

abusive relationships? I proposed the following hypotheses in regard to this question. Hypothesis 3.1 stated that the ability to predict the likelihood of seeking help would be significantly improved by the inclusion of additional perceived risk variables (risk of harm to others, financial, social and legal risks) over and above the inclusion of the risk of personal physical harm. Hypothesis 3.2 stated that immigrant and non-immigrant women would differ in the relative influence of each type of risk variable on the decision to seek help. Specifically, the financial, social and legal risks to seeking help will be stronger predictors of the likelihood of help seeking for immigrant women than for non-immigrant women. Finally, Hypothesis 3.3 stated that the more barriers that are present for women, the lower their likelihood of seeking help and differences between immigrant and non-immigrant women would exist only to the extent that there are differences in levels of barriers they face.

Again, in order to test these hypotheses, logistic regression models were computed for immigrant and non-immigrant women; one model to predict the decision to seek help based on perceived risks, and one model to predict the decision to seek help based on barriers was run separately for immigrant and for non-immigrant women. The results of those analyses are presented in the following sections.

Will I be Better Off?

Table 4-11 shows the results of the two logistic regression models predicting the likelihood of help seeking for immigrant and non-immigrant women based on the types of perceived risks, including the risk of personal physical harm, the risk of harm to others, and the financial, social, and legal risks. As with the models to predict the likelihood of leaving, these regression models were also completed in two blocks, the first including only the risk of personal physical harm, and the second including all of the risk variables, in order to determine whether or not the predictive ability of the model would be significantly improved by the addition of risks over and above the risk of personal physical harm.

Table 4-11: Logistic Regression Predicting the Likelihood of Help Seeking for Immigrant and Non-Immigrant Women (Risk Variables)

Predictor	Immigrant Women			Non-Immigrant Women		
	β	SE	Odds Ratio	β	SE	Odds Ratio
Block 1: Risk of Personal Physical Harm	.06*	.03	1.06	.09***	.0	1.10
Constant	-.84***	.19	.43	-.94***	.13	.39
Block 2: Risk of Personal Physical Harm	.05*	.03	1.06	.07***	.02	1.07
Risk of Harm to Others	.13	.07	1.14	.17**	.06	1.19
Financial Risk	.71**	.25	2.03	-.27	.16	.76
Social Risk	-.01*	.00	.99	-.01**	.01	.99
Legal Risk	.01	.02	1.01	.16**	.06	1.17
Constant	-2.12***	.51	.12	-.61*	.29	.54

Note: Immigrant Women: Block 1 $R^2 = .01$ (Cox & Snell), .02 (Nagelkerke), Model $X^2(1) = 4.74^*$; Block 2 $R^2 = .05$ (Cox & Snell), .07 (Nagelkerke), Block $X^2(4) = 16.03^{**}$, Model $X^2(5) = 20.76^{***}$; Non-Immigrant Women: Block 1 $R^2 = .03$ (Cox & Snell), .04 (Nagelkerke), Model $X^2(1) = 20.89^{***}$; Block 2 $R^2 = .08$ (Cox & Snell), .10 (Nagelkerke), Block $X^2(4) = 34.95^{***}$, Model $X^2(5) = 55.85^{***}$, * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$.

As Table 4-11 shows, Block 1 explained 1-2% of the variance in the decision to seek help for immigrant women, as immigrant women were more likely to seek help (OR = 1.06, $p < .05$) when their risk of personal physical harm was higher. This was in contrast to the finding that the risk of personal physical harm was not predictive of immigrant women's leaving their relationship. However, the percentage of cases classified correctly overall remained the same from Block 0 to Block 1 at 62.3. The percentage of variance explained by the model increased significantly to 5-7% with the addition of other risk variables in Block 2, Block $X^2(4) = 16.03$, $p < .01$ but the percentage of cases classified correctly overall decreased to 61.8. In the second block, the variables that were predictive of immigrant women's likelihood of seeking help were the risk of personal physical harm (OR = 1.06, $p < .05$), the financial risk (OR = 2.03, $p < .01$), and the social risk (OR = .99, $p < .05$). These results indicate that immigrant women were more likely to seek help when their risk of personal physical harm was higher, their financial risk, measured by partner's employment status, was higher, and their social risk, measured by fear of losing their children, was lower.

As Table 4-11 also shows, Block 1 explained 3-4% of the variance in non-immigrant women's decision to seek help as non-immigrant women were more likely to seek help when their risk of personal physical harm was higher (OR = 1.10, $p < .001$). Again, however, the overall percentage of cases classified correctly remained the same from Block 0 to Block 1 at 61.8. Additionally, as with immigrant women, the percentage of variance explained by the model increased significantly, to 8-10% of the variance, with the inclusion of the additional risk variables in Block 2, Block $X^2(4) = 34.95$, $p < .001$ and in this model the overall percentage of cases classified correctly increased to 64.3. In the second block, variables that were predictive of non-immigrant women's likelihood of seeking help were the risk of personal physical harm (OR = 1.07, $p < .001$), the risk of harm to others (OR = 1.19, $p < .01$), the social risk (OR = .99, $p < .01$), and the legal risk (OR = 1.17, $p < .01$). These results indicate that non-immigrant women were more likely to seek help when the risk of physical harm, the risk of harm to others, and the legal risk, measured by partners' threats to report them to outside authorities, were all higher, and when the social risk, measured by fear of losing their children, was lower.

Based on the results shown in Table 4-11, Hypothesis 3.1, which stated that the ability to predict the likelihood of seeking help would be significantly improved with the inclusion of additional risk factors over and above the risk of personal physical harm, was supported for both immigrant and non-immigrant women. However, Hypothesis 3.2, which stated that the financial, social, and legal risks to seeking help would be stronger predictors of immigrant women's help seeking than non-immigrant women's help seeking was not supported, as the financial and social risks were predictive of immigrant women's help seeking, and the social and legal risks were predictive of non-immigrant women's help seeking. In fact, when these variables were added to the second block of the model, 8-10% of the variance was explained for non-immigrant women, while only 5-7% of the variance was explained for immigrant women, and for non-immigrant women the overall percentage of cases classified correctly in Block 2 was 64.3, while for immigrant women it was 61.8.

Can I do it?

Table 4-12 presents the results of the two logistic regression models predicting the likelihood of seeking help for immigrant and non-immigrant women based on the personal barriers of commitment to the relationship, fear of the abuser and feeling controlled by the

abuser, entered in one block, and the structural barriers of age, education, employment, and social isolation, entered in the next block.

Table 4-12: Logistic Regression Predicting the Likelihood of Help Seeking for Immigrant and Non-Immigrant Women (Barrier Variables)

Predictor	Immigrant Women			Non-Immigrant Women		
	β	SE	Odds Ratio	β	SE	Odds Ratio
Block 1: Commitment	-.36	.19	.70	-.25	.17	.78
Fear of Abuser	.20**	.07	1.22	.04	.04	1.04
Controlled by Abuser	-.10	.06	.91	-.20***	.04	.82
Constant	-.97*	.43	.38	.02	.29	1.02
Block 2: Commitment	-.29	.20	.75	-.13	.18	.88
Fear of Abuser	.21**	.07	1.23	.05	.05	1.05
Controlled by Abuser	-.09	.06	.92	-.20***	.05	.82
Age	.01	.01	1.01	-.01	.01	.99
Education	.01	.08	1.00	.15	.08	1.17
Employment	-.71***	.20	.49	-.88***	.16	.42
Social Isolation	-.03	.03	.97	-.01	.02	.99
Constant	-.97	.59	.38	.01	.43	1.01

Note: Immigrant Women: Block 1 $R^2 = .06$ (Cox & Snell), .07 (Nagelkerke), Model $X^2(3) = 27.72^{***}$; Block 2 $R^2 = .09$ (Cox & Snell), .12 (Nagelkerke), Block $X^2(4) = 15.84^{**}$, Model $X^2 = 43.56^{***}$; Non-Immigrant Women: Block 1 $R^2 = .05$ (Cox & Snell), .07 (Nagelkerke), Model $X^2(3) = 39.53^{***}$; Block 2 $R^2 = .09$ (Cox & Snell), .12 (Nagelkerke), Block $X^2(4) = 31.24^{***}$, Model $X^2(7) = 70.76^{***}$, * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$.

As Table 4-12 shows, Block 1 explained 6-7% of the variance in immigrant women's decision to seek help, as immigrant women were more likely to seek help when their fear was higher (OR = 1.22, $p < .01$), just as they were more likely to leave when their fear was higher. The overage percentage of cases classified correctly increased to 62.6 in this model, compared to 60.0 in Block 0. Additionally, the percentage of variance explained by the model for immigrant women increased significantly to 9-12% with the inclusion of structural barriers in Block 2, Block $X^2(4) = 15.84$, $p < .01$ and the overall percentage of cases classified correctly increased to 63.8. In the second block, variables that were predictive of immigrant women's likelihood of seeking help were fear of abuser (OR = 1.23, $p < .01$), and employment (OR = .49, $p < .001$), indicating that immigrant women were more likely to seek help when their fear was higher and when they were unemployed.

As Table 4-12 also shows, Block 1 explained 5-7% of the variance in non-immigrant women's decision to seek help, as non-immigrant women were more likely to seek help when they felt more controlled by their abuser (OR=.82, $p < .001$), just as they were more likely to leave when they felt more controlled by him. The overall percentage of cases classified correctly increased to 60.6 for the model in this block, compared to 59.2 for Block 0. Additionally, the percentage of variance explained by the model increased significantly to 9-12% with the inclusion of the structural barriers in Block 2, Block $X^2(4) = 31.24$, $p < .001$ and the overall percentage of cases classified correctly increased to 69.5. In the second block, variables that were predictive of non-immigrant women's likelihood of seeking help were loss of control (OR = .82, $p < .001$) and employment (OR = .42, $p < .001$), indicating that non-immigrant women were more likely to seek help when they felt more controlled by their abuser and when they were unemployed. These results differ from those obtained for immigrant women. Based on these results Hypothesis 3.3, which stated that immigrant and non-immigrant women would be less likely to seek help when they faced more barriers to doing so, was not supported. Rather than being a barrier to help seeking, higher fear and being unemployed predicted help seeking for immigrant women, and feeling more controlled by their abuser and being unemployed predicted help seeking for non-immigrant women.

Conclusions

Clearly, with such low levels of the variance being explained by the variables in the logistic regression models that were conducted, there are many more factors that are important in predicting women's decision to leave an abusive relationship or to seek help. However, the analyses that were conducted allow me to draw some conclusions about the importance of the risk of personal physical harm as a predictor, compared to the other risks that women might face in leaving an abusive relationship or seeking help, and allow me to make some comparisons between immigrant and non-immigrant women's likelihood of leaving or seeking help. Results indicate that immigrant women perceive higher levels of risks to leaving or help seeking than do non-immigrant women, and that they face higher levels of both personal and structural barriers to leaving and help seeking than do non-immigrant women, though effect sizes were small for all significant differences between groups. Furthermore, results show that there are more important risks to leaving and seeking help than the risk of personal physical harm, and that for immigrant

women especially, the risk of personal physical harm in and of itself is not predictive of leaving. Comparisons between immigrant and non-immigrant women's decision to leave or seek help also show that different types of risks are important for each group of women. Finally, results show that while higher levels of some barriers, such as increased age and lower education, may prevent women from leaving or seeking help, for other barriers, such as fear and feeling controlled by their abuser, women were more likely to leave or seek help when these barriers were higher rather than lower. These results have important clinical implications for advocates and therapists working with women who are contemplating leaving, or women who have left and sought help. These clinical implications will be discussed further in the next chapter, as the results are further interpreted and put into the context of previous research findings, along with an identification of the strengths and limitations of this study and research implications.

CHAPTER 5 - Discussion

“Why don’t they just leave?” is a question that has been posed to me repeatedly over the years, as I am sure it has been for many who work with women in relationships with violent men. The implication that there is something wrong with women’s logic, or something defective in their character, is never far from the surface of this question. Throughout my work with women in abusive relationships, I have come to believe that there is not something wrong with their logic, nor is there something defective with their character, that might prohibit them from leaving an abusive relationship. I think that the answer to the question of why women don’t leave is more complex than could ever truly be captured in the five words it takes to ask this question, or even in the thousands of words I have used here to try to explore the question. But it is a question we must grapple with, and this study represents my attempt to do just that.

With immigration rates increasing in the United States (Portes & Rumbault, 2006), domestic violence researchers and advocates have been calling for more research with immigrant populations in order to provide a better basis for more well-informed treatment and policy decisions (Denham et al., 2007; Erez & Hartley, 2003). At the same time, there has been a call for domestic violence advocates and researchers to re-examine traditional risk assessments that focus on personal safety and developing strategies for leaving, to take into account the wider array of risks faced by women in relationships with violent men (Davies, 1998; Hamby, 2008). Both of these calls are of great interest to me. I designed a study that would pull both these pieces together in order to better understand the complex factors that both immigrant women and non-immigrant women consider in deciding to leave an abusive relationship or to seek help.

The purpose of my study was to compare the importance of different types of risks and barriers that impact immigrant and non-immigrant women’s decision to leave an abusive relationship or to seek help, using Choice and Lamke’s (1997) two-part decision-making model. Rather than examine the types of factors typically included in the first part (“will I be better off?”) of Choice and Lamke’s (1997) model, factors such as relationship satisfaction, irretrievable investments, quality of alternatives, and subjective norms, I included concepts from Hamby’s (2008) holistic risk assessment. This was done in order to examine the importance of risks in addition to the risk of personal physical harm, risks such as the risk of harm to others,

and the financial, social and legal risks to leaving or help seeking. These appeared to be valuable factors to examine within the area of “will I be better off?”, since they had not been tested as predictors to leaving or help seeking before. Because previous research with immigrant women had begun to identify these risks in ways that research with non-immigrant women did not, it would also be informative to be able to make comparisons between these two groups. Additionally, in examining the second part of Choice & Lamke’s (1997) model (“can I do it?”), I was interested in learning the ways in which both personal and structural barriers influence immigrant and non-immigrant women’s decisions to leave or seek help, particularly given the research findings regarding structural barriers for immigrant women. After examining the results of my logistic regression analyses, findings point to a number of similarities and differences between immigrant and non-immigrant women’s experiences in abusive relationships, and in the risks and barriers that may interfere with leaving or seeking help. In this chapter I discuss these similarities and differences further and seek to place the findings within the context of previous research. I then identify the strengths and limitations of the study, and the research and clinical implications of the findings.

Research Question 1: Similarities and Differences in the Experiences of Immigrant and Non-Immigrant Women

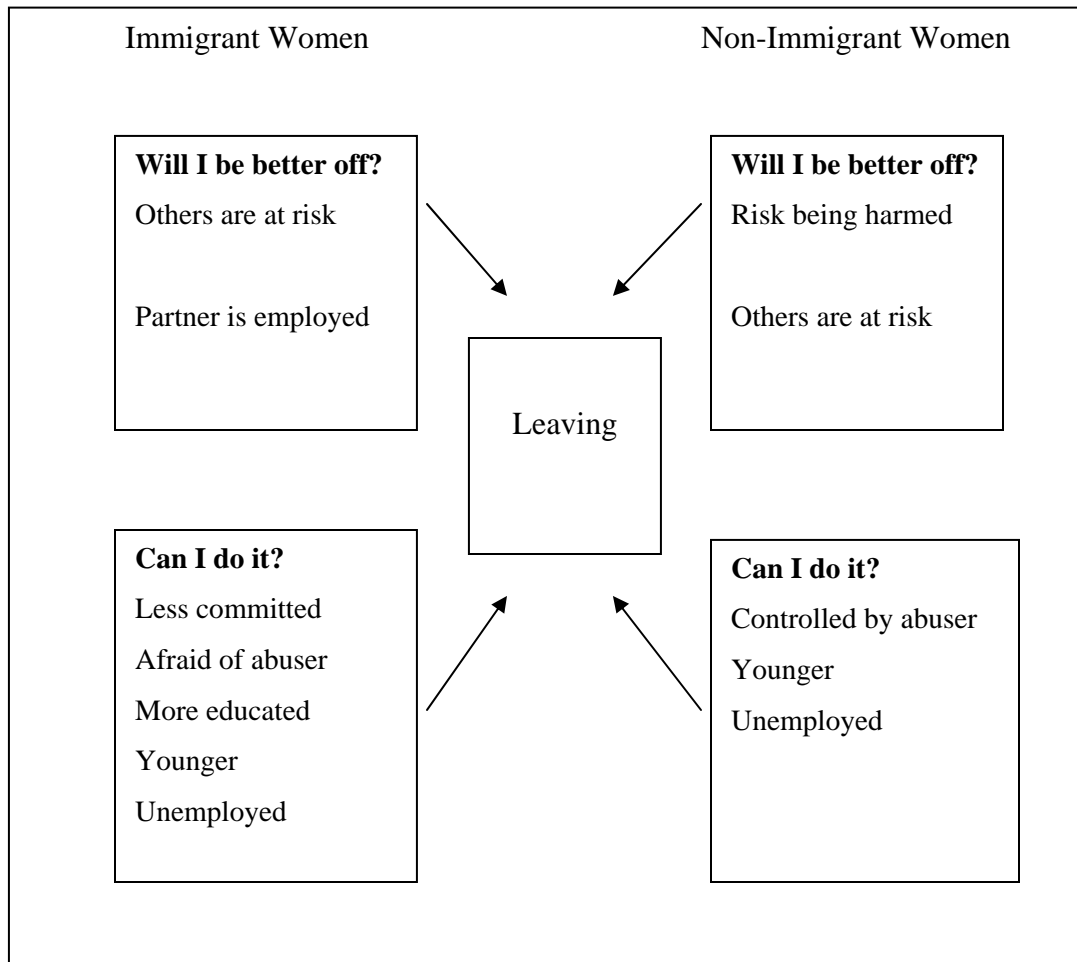
In examining the perceived risks and barriers that may impact leaving and help seeking, immigrant women appeared to face more obstacles than did non-immigrant women. Immigrant women perceived a significantly higher risk of being physically abused in the next year than did non-immigrant women, as well as reporting a higher fear of losing their children, a greater likelihood of having their partner threaten to report them to outside authorities, and a higher financial risk in that their partners were significantly more likely to have been employed than were partners of non-immigrant women. However, when effect sizes were calculated for these differences, results indicated that while differences may be significant, they may not represent an important difference between groups. Additionally, immigrant women reported significantly higher levels of fear of their abusers, of feeling controlled by their abusers, were significantly older, were less educated, and reported significantly higher rates of social isolation than did non-immigrant women, but again, effect sizes were small. Findings for immigrant women appear to be consistent with previous research with immigrant populations that have documented the

existence of these types of risks and barriers, such as the legal and financial risks (Bauer et al., 2000; Bui, 2003; Crandall et al., 2005; Dasgupta & Warriar, 1996; Latta & Goodman, 2005), and barriers in employment and social isolation (Abraham, 2000; Bhuyan et al., 2005; Dasgupta & Warriar, 1996; Sullivan et al., 2005). However, this research has not been able to compare immigrant to non-immigrant women, and while the findings of significant differences are important, the small effect sizes may indicate that differences between these groups are not as pronounced as we may have assumed based on research with immigrant populations alone. This is not to say that immigrant women do not face higher levels of these risks and barriers, but rather it might suggest that non-immigrant women also face significant risks and barriers in these areas as well. The following sections discuss the ways in which these factors predicted leaving and help seeking for immigrant and non-immigrant women.

Research Question 2: Predictors of Leaving

Findings indicate that immigrant women were more likely to leave when their partner was employed, when there was a higher risk of harm to others, when their commitment to the relationship was lower, when they were more afraid of their abuser, and when they were younger, and unemployed. Non-immigrant women were more likely to leave when their risk of physical harm was higher, the risk of harm to others was higher, when they felt more controlled by their abuser, and when they were younger and unemployed. Figure 5-1 represents these significant relationships graphically, with immigrant women's predictors on the left and non-immigrant women's predictors on the right.

Figure 5-1: Significant Predictors of Leaving for Immigrant and Non-Immigrant Women



Thus, the results of my study provides support for Hamby’s (2008) holistic risk assessment, as they indicate that the risk of personal physical harm did not predict immigrant women’s likelihood of leaving, whereas both the risk of harm to others and the financial risk did predict leaving. Research with immigrant women has rarely focused on the risk of harm to others. In focus groups with Cambodian immigrant women, Bhuyan et al. (2005) noted that participants discussed their partners making threats against and harassing other family members, but did not address whether or not this concern would be important in their decision to leave. The finding in my study that the risk of harm to others was a significant predictor of leaving provides further information about the importance of this risk in immigrant women’s decision-making.

Additionally, the finding that immigrant women are more likely to leave when their partner is employed is an interesting one, in light of the theory behind a holistic risk assessment

that proposes the possibility of losing access to a partner's employment income might increase women's risks in leaving. It also seems to contradict previous research with immigrant women that found that economic dependence on their partners kept them in their relationships (Abraham, 2000; Bauer et al., 2000; Bui, 2003). However, previous research included in-depth qualitative studies which sought to understand women's experiences of abuse, and while participants talked of economic dependence, its actual ability to predict the decision to leave was not tested. This finding should also be understood in the context of legal immigration status. For immigrant women in this sample it may be that partner employment is a proxy measure for legal status, as legal immigrants may be more likely to be employed, and thus for this sample, being more likely to leave when a partner is employed may be an indication of being more enfranchised, having more access to services, and having less fear of involving outsiders. This may explain why this risk was predictive of immigrant women's leaving while it was not predictive of non-immigrant women's leaving. Additionally, a further explanation for there being a higher likelihood of leaving when partners were employed may be that immigrant women felt less of a need to care for their partner if they were employed, or more confident in their ability to care for themselves if they were employed.

Findings also provide support for Hamby's (2008) holistic risk assessment with non-immigrant women, in that while the risk of personal physical harm did predict non-immigrant women's likelihood of leaving, the risk of harm to others was also an important consideration. Previous research with non-immigrant women suggested that when women perceived their risk of future harm to be elevated, they took steps to mitigate against that risk, such as in leaving their relationship (Heckert & Gondolf, 2004). These findings support this research. Additionally, previous research with non-immigrant women (Hilton, 1992) in domestic violence shelters found that one reason victims offered for leaving was fear for their children's physical safety. The finding in my study that an increased risk of harm to others increased the likelihood of leaving for non-immigrant women provides additional support for the importance of this risk in their decision making.

Support for Hamby's (2008) holistic risk assessment factors as predictors of leaving is limited however, since some risk elements did not predict leaving; for immigrant women these were the social and legal risks, and for non-immigrant women these were the financial, social and legal risks. This is not to say that all of the elements of Hamby's (2008) holistic risk

assessment are not useful in understanding the complexity of women's relationships with violent men, only that some of these factors, measured as they were in my study, did not predict women's decision to leave. Previous research with immigrant women has documented their social and legal vulnerabilities in leaving (Crandall et al., 2005; Dasgupta & Warrier, 1996; Latta & Goodman, 2005, Sullivan et al., 2005), but this research utilized qualitative methods including interviews with small samples or focus group research that identified women's concerns that prevented them from leaving, but did not empirically test these types of risks as actual predictors to leaving. It may be that women identify these and other types of risks as concerns, but when they actually make the decision to leave, these concerns are not as important to their decision making as are other variables. Research with non-immigrant women has not addressed the financial, social, and legal risks to the same extent as research with immigrant women has, and while the findings of non-significance for these aspects of Hamby's (2008) holistic risk assessment might suggest that they are not important predictors of their leaving, findings of non-significance may have occurred because of measurement limitations in my study. Because I was limited to identifying variables from a pre-existing data set that best fit the concept behind each of these types of risks, I may not have been able to measure these factors in the most ideal ways that would have more accurately captured the nuances involved in each factor.

Results indicate that barriers may be more important in predicting women's decisions to leave an abusive relationship than risks were, as more variance was explained for both immigrant and non-immigrant women by barrier variables than by risk variables. Like the results for risk variables, results that indicate the ways in which personal and structural barriers are predictive of immigrant and non-immigrant women's leaving also confirm some earlier research findings and run counter to others. In keeping with previous research findings (Dasgupta & Warrier, 1996; Shui-Thornton et al., 2005), immigrant women were more likely to leave if their commitment to the relationship was low. However, level of commitment was not predictive of non-immigrant women's leaving, where previous studies have identified it as a barrier to leaving (Davis, 2002; Dziegielewski et al., 2005; Rusbult & Martz, 1995; Short et al., 2000). This contradiction may have to do with differences in measurement as previous research measured commitment in terms of feelings about the relationship (Rusbult & Martz, 1995), whereas my analysis measured it in terms of marital status, which is not a complete measure of commitment and does leave out the affective component addressed in previous studies. Additionally, some previous research was

composed of focus group research which noted commitment to the relationship and love for the abuser as common themes in discussing barriers to leaving (Davis, 2002; Dziegielewski et al., 2005; Short et al., 2005) but did not test commitment as a predictor of leaving.

In terms of the other personal barriers included in my analyses, fear of her abuser has been identified as a barrier to leaving in previous studies with non-immigrant women (Kim & Gray, 2008; Short et al., 2005), but has not been studied in research with immigrant women. My study found that increased levels of fear predicted leaving for immigrant women, the opposite of the relationship that was found for non-immigrant women, while fear was not predictive at all for non-immigrant women. Fear may not have been predictive of non-immigrant women's leaving in my study because it was measured differently than in previous studies. I measured it with a question about fear of the abuser, but in Short et al.'s (2005) focus group research, it was fear of repercussions that was identified as a barrier to leaving, while Kim & Gray (2008) measured fear with 4 questions, though they did not identify the specific questions used. Higher fear may have been predictive of leaving for immigrant women as it was not specifically fear of repercussions, but rather fear of the abuser in general that was measured, and it may be that increased fear is motivating and empowering for immigrant women, rather than acting as a barrier.

Additionally, while an internal locus of control has been found to be predictive of non-immigrant women's leaving (Kim & Gray, 2008), non-immigrant women in this sample were more likely to leave when they indicated higher levels of agreement with the statement that their abuser "makes me feel like I have no control over my life, no power, no protection". Again, contradictions with previous finding may have occurred because of differences in the way that this variable was measured, as Kim and Gray (2008) used a 17-item Locus of Control scale, while my question had to do with feeling controlled by her abuser, and this is not the same as locus of control. Furthermore, as with increased fear of her abuser for immigrant women, increased feelings of being controlled by her abuser for non-immigrant women may act as a motivator to leaving rather than a barrier. Feelings of control have not been studied as a barrier to leaving for immigrant women, and my results indicate that these feelings are not an important consideration in their decision to leave. This is an interesting finding given that immigrant women reported significantly higher levels of feeling controlled by their abusers than did non-immigrant women. It may be that this factor is not a barrier to their leaving because feeling

controlled or being controlled by a male partner is more consistent with traditional gender roles within some immigrant communities, and thus is not viewed as unexpected or exceptional.

In terms of structural barriers to leaving, previous research with both immigrant women (Bauer et al., 2000; Bhuyan et al., 2005; Keller & Brennan, 2007; Sullivan et al., 2005) and non-immigrant women (Davis, 2002; Griffing et al., 2002; Johnson, 1992; Kim & Gray, 2008; Lutenbacher et al., 2003; Wolf et al., 2003) identified lack of employment opportunities and resultant economic dependence on their partners as a barrier to leaving, but in the current study, women in both groups were more likely to leave if they were unemployed. Again, the contradiction in findings with non-immigrant women may stem from methodological differences where previous studies identified economic dependence as a concern (Wolf et al., 2003, Lutenbacher et al., 2003; Davis, 2002), but did not test it as a predictor of leaving. Johnson (1992) and Griffing et al. (2002) both included larger sample sizes and conducted some statistical tests of significance; however, they examined factors that were important in returning to an abusive partner after having left and found that economic dependence was an important consideration; thus, the contradiction with these findings may stem from their focus on a different point in the leave taking process. Returning to an abuser because of economic need may not be the same thing as leaving despite being economically dependent. Finally, Kim & Gray (2008) measured both employment status and financial independence, and while they did not find employment status to be significantly related to the stay/leave decision, they did find that financial independence was significantly related to it. Their data set also included information on whether or not women were receiving welfare assistance, and it may be that because my study looked only at employment status and was not able to account for other sources of income, including participation in informal work or in government assistance programs, I did not have the most complete measure of economic barriers to leaving. Additionally, it could also be that leaving was easier for women who were unemployed because they did not have any particular ties to a job and thus had more freedom to walk away.

I did however, include other structural barriers that may be related to women's ability to earn income on their own, and found that women were more likely to leave when these variables indicated a greater possibility of earning income. For instance, I found that both groups were more likely to leave when they were younger, and immigrant women were more likely to leave when they had more education. It may be that younger women are more likely to leave because

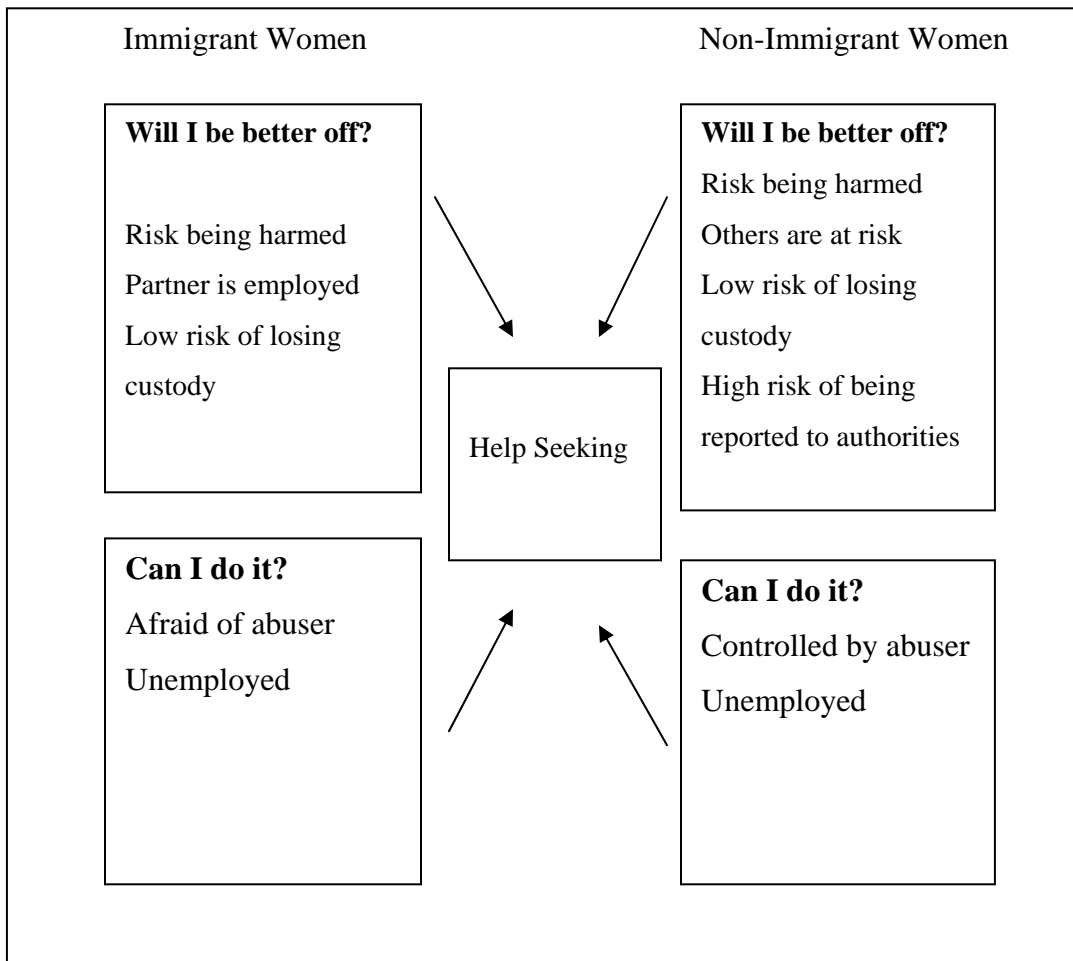
they have more income earning potential, and for immigrant women, increased education could also be indicative of more comfort or familiarity with the English language, while also being tied to increased income earning potential. Previous research with immigrant and non-immigrant women has not included these variables.

Finally, findings from previous research that indicated social isolation may increase immigrant women's risk of violence and prevent their leaving (Abraham, 2000; Bhuyan et al., 2005; Dasgupta & Warrier, 1996; Sullivan et al., 2005), were not upheld in this study as social isolation was not predictive of leaving for either immigrant or non-immigrant women. Again, this discrepancy may relate to methodological differences as previous studies with immigrant women were descriptive and exploratory, identifying social isolation as a concern, but not testing it as a predictive factor in leaving. The finding that it was not predictive of leaving for immigrant women, even when the question directly asked about an abuser preventing them from "going to school, getting job training, or learning English", is an important one. Previous research may have lead us to an assumption that immigrant women faced increased barriers to leaving because of these types of isolating behaviors often described within immigrant communities, yet my findings suggest that even though immigrant women reported significantly higher levels of agreement with this question than did non-immigrant women, this did not predict their likelihood of leaving. Thus, one conclusion to which I am drawn based on the results of my analyses, is that both immigrant and non-immigrant women in abusive relationships may be more active in leaving than is often assumed. The picture that emerges is one of women leaving when circumstances are bad (when they will be better off), despite barriers that appear to make it more difficult for them, such as when they are more afraid of their abuser, or feel more controlled by him, or are unemployed. This conclusion is reached with caution, however, given that such a small amount of variance in the decision to leave was predicted by these factors. While other factors are clearly important in women's decision to leave an abusive relationship, my results do suggest that when circumstances are bad for women in abusive relationships, they leave. Similar types of findings suggest the same conclusion with regard to help seeking, as I will explore in the next section.

Research Question 3: Predictors of Help Seeking

Findings indicate that immigrant women were more likely to seek help when their risk of personal physical harm was higher, when their partner was employed, when the risk of losing custody of their children was lower, when they were more afraid of their abuser, and when they were unemployed. Non-immigrant women were more likely to seek help when their risk of personal physical harm was higher, the risk of harm to others was higher, their risk of being reported to outside authorities was higher, when their risk of losing their children was lower, when they felt more controlled by their abuser, and when they were unemployed. Figure 5-2 represents these significant relationships graphically, with immigrant women's predictors on the left and non-immigrant women's predictors on the right.

Figure 5-2: Significant Predictors of Help Seeking for Immigrant and Non-Immigrant Women



Again, support for Hamby's (2008) holistic risk assessment was found for immigrant women, as in addition to the risk of personal physical harm, other risks including the financial and social risks were predictive of their help seeking. Previous research with immigrant women has not explored the impact of the risk of physical harm on their decision to seek help, however my finding that it was a significant predictor of help seeking is in keeping with previous research with non-immigrant women (Heckert & Gondolf, 2004). As with their leaving, immigrant women were more likely to seek help when their partner was employed, which again seems to run counter to the implication within Hamby's (2008) holistic risk assessment that women would be less likely to seek help if it meant the possibility of losing access to their partner's income. It also runs counter to previous research with immigrant women (Bauer et al., 2000; Bui, 2003) that identified their reluctance to seek help from outsiders if this might impact their partner's employment. As with the differences in findings regarding their leaving, these differences with regard to help seeking may be because of methodological differences or may relate in some way to legal immigration status. If partner employment was related to legal status, then immigrant women may have been more likely to seek help when their partners were employed because with legal status they had less fear about involving outsiders or more access to services generally. Additionally, as with leaving, immigrant women may have been more likely to seek help if their partners were employed because his employment status may have made it less likely for them to feel the need to care for their partners or more confident in their partner's ability to care for themselves.

Previous research also identified immigrant women's concerns regarding the social risks to seeking help, such as Crandall et al.'s (2005) focus group research and Dasgupta & Warrier's (1996) interviews with immigrant women which identified their concerns about losing custody of their children if they sought outside help. My finding that immigrant women were less likely to seek help when this risk of losing their children was higher provides further support for these findings.

Support for Hamby's (2008) holistic risk assessment was also found for non-immigrant women, as in addition to the risk of personal physical harm, the risk of harm to others, and the social and legal risks were also predictive of their help seeking. The finding that non-immigrant women were more likely to seek help when their risk of physical harm was higher is in keeping with previous research (Heckert & Gondolf, 2004). In contrast, previous research with non-

immigrant women seeking restraining orders found that a majority of those who also experienced threats to their children did not complete the process (Zoellner et al., 2000), yet my findings indicate that they were more likely to seek help if others, including their children, had been threatened by their partner. One reason for the difference may be that I examined help seeking generally, in terms of “ever receiving services in this relationship”; in this way help seeking would include a wider range of services than restraining orders, including services that may not be perceived as threatening for abusive partners, or could be completed without letting partners know. It could also be that completion of a restraining order process represents a second step in help seeking, beyond the first step of initiating a restraining order, and my question about ever receiving services might be more related to the first step in the help seeking process, rather than later steps indicated by the completion of the process.

While previous research with non-immigrant women has not addressed the financial, social, and legal risks to the same extent as research with immigrant women has, there have been a few studies that have examined social and legal concerns. For instance, previous qualitative research with non-immigrant women identified their concerns about facing child abuse charges or losing custody of their children if they sought help from outside agencies (Buscher & Wolfer, 2002), or did not closely follow terms of custody agreements (Shalansky et al., 1999), and the findings of my study provide more information into the ways in which the social and legal risks predict non-immigrant women’s likelihood of seeking help. While a higher fear of losing custody of their children predicted lower likelihood of help seeking, when non-immigrant women faced more threats from partners about reporting them to outside authorities, they were more likely to seek help. Thus non-immigrant women appeared to weigh these risks differently, and reach more conservative conclusions, that is, not to seek help, when the risk related directly to custody of their children, but less conservatively, toward help seeking, when the risk had less obvious, direct consequences.

Not all of the components of Hamby’s (2008) holistic risk assessment were predictive of women’s help seeking, however; for immigrant women, neither the risk of harm to others, nor the legal risk was predictive of help seeking and for non-immigrant women, the financial risk was not predictive. Again, this does not mean that these factors are not important parts of women’s experiences of relationships with violent men, only that some of the factors of Hamby’s (2008) holistic risk assessment, measured in the way I measured them, did not predict

their help seeking. Previous research with non-immigrant women has not examined financial risk, and the finding that it was not predictive of their help seeking provides us with further information about the ways in which non-immigrant women weigh these types of risks in deciding to seek help, and about how they differ from immigrant women in this area.

Additionally, as noted in the previous section, previous research with immigrant women has not addressed the importance of the risk of harm to others, and so my finding that it does not predict their likelihood of help seeking, whereas it did predict their leaving, is informative and indicates that this risk may be weighted differently for immigrant women when contemplating leaving vs. seeking help.

My finding that the legal risk of being reported to outside authorities was not predictive of immigrant women's help seeking is an important one as it contradicts previous research with immigrant women which identified legal concerns, especially regarding deportation, as important in their help seeking behavior (Crandall et al, 2005; Latta & Goodman, 2005; Sullivan et al., 2005). These studies, however, were all qualitative and exploratory studies which sought to understand immigrant women's experiences and vulnerabilities in abusive relationships, but again, they did not specifically test this risk as a predictor to help seeking, and it may be that while immigrant women are concerned about their legal risks in seeking help, when it comes to making actual decisions about help seeking, this legal risk is not as important to their decision as are other factors. Additionally, while previous research with immigrant women identified their financial, social, and legal vulnerabilities in ways which might have lead us to assume that these risks would be more predictive of their help seeking than similar risks would be for non-immigrant women, my results contradict this assumption, and again point to the importance of being able to compare immigrant and non-immigrant women within the same study. Previous findings were based on research conducted with immigrant women alone, and did not conduct comparisons with non-immigrant women. My results indicate that non-immigrant women consider the social risk to leaving in the same way that immigrant women do, and that for them consideration of the legal risk appears more important than it is for non-immigrant women.

Results further indicate that barriers may be slightly more important in immigrant and non-immigrant women's decision to seek help than risks were, as slightly more of the variance was explained by barrier variables than by risk variables. However, compared to the decision to leave, fewer barriers were predictive of help seeking for both immigrant and non-immigrant

women. This may be because help seeking itself is less risky for women than leaving is, and so the types of things that act as barriers to leaving (commitment, age and education, for example) are not as important when considering help seeking. The only personal barrier that was predictive of immigrant women's help seeking was fear of her abuser, and again, higher levels of fear predicted a higher likelihood of seeking help. Previous research with immigrant women has not studied fear as a barrier, but it has been studied with non-immigrant women. The finding that fear did not predict non-immigrant women's help seeking contradicts this previous research (Brookoff et al., 1997; Fleury et al., 1998; Wolf et al., 2003). As with findings regarding the decision to leave, differences with previous research results may stem from differences in measurement of the variable of fear, where previous studies examined fear of repercussions (Brookoff et al., 1997; Fleury et al., 1998), or where qualitative studies identified potential barriers but did not actually test fear as a predictive factor (Wolf et al., 2003).

As with the decision to leave, non-immigrant women were more likely to seek help when they reported agreement with the statement that "he makes me feel like I have no control over my life, no power, no protection". Previous research with non-immigrant women has studied locus of control in connection with leaving, but not with help seeking, but again my finding is in the opposite direction as those results (Kim & Gray, 2008), and may stem from measurement differences where my variable might not capture the concept of locus of control in the same way that others have. Feelings of control have not been studied with immigrant women, and my findings indicate that feeling controlled by her abuser was not an important predictor of their help seeking, and again this is an interesting finding given that immigrant women reported significantly higher levels of feeling controlled by their abuser than did non-immigrant women. Additionally, commitment to the relationship was not predictive of either immigrant or non-immigrant women's help seeking decision, where it has been shown to influence non-immigrant women's decision to leave, but has not been studied as a factor in the decision to seek help for either of these groups. My findings indicate that when measured in terms of marital status, which does leave out the affective component of commitment to a relationship, it is not an important consideration in deciding to seek help.

Employment status was the only structural barrier that was predictive of immigrant and non-immigrant women's help seeking. As with leaving, both immigrant and non-immigrant women were more likely to seek help when they were unemployed, and this runs counter to

previous research that has found economic dependence to be a barrier to leaving for both these groups. As a barrier to help seeking, however, economic dependence has not been included in the research, except in one study with immigrant women (Murdaugh et al, 2004) which found that immigrant women ranked “not enough money” as a barrier to seeking services for domestic violence. Again, my variable of employment status may not be a complete measure of economic dependence as I was unable to measure other income sources, such as participation in informal work or in government assistance programs. Both groups’ greater likelihood of seeking help when they were unemployed may also indicate that when women have the greatest need for outside help, such as when they have no employment income of their own, they are more likely to reach out for help, or again it may relate to their having less constraints or ties to a job that could make reaching out more difficult.

Structural barriers that were not predictive of help seeking for either immigrant and non-immigrant women included age, education, and social isolation. Age and education were variables that were included because of the contribution they might make to women’s ability to be economically independent, though these variables have been found to be more important in the decision to leave than in the decision to seek help, and as my study shows, these are not as important in the consideration to seek help as they were in the decision to leave. This may be because seeking help does not necessarily imply leaving and needing to support themselves, and so compared to leaving, they were less important considerations. Social isolation has been discussed as a barrier for immigrant women’s help seeking, as interviews with immigrant women and focus group research has described the ways in which cultural practices allowed abusers to prevent women from going to school, learning English, working outside the home, or interacting with Americans or other members of their own ethnic group (Abraham, 2000; Bhuyan et al., 2005; Dasgupta & Warrier, 1996; Sullivan et al., 2005). But again, as with the decision to leave, this research did not test the relationship between social isolation and help seeking, and my findings suggest that while immigrant women were subjected to these practices and may identify them as barriers to seeking help, they still found ways to seek help despite them. Again, as with the predictors of leaving, I am led cautiously to the conclusion that both immigrant and non-immigrant women actively make decisions about whether or not to seek help based on their determination of how bad things are for them in their relationship, and when things are bad, they seek help, despite the barriers that might exist to their doing so.

Strengths and Limitations

One of the strengths of my study is the ability to compare immigrant and non-immigrant women's decision making with respect to leaving or seeking help within the same study. As noted often in the sections above, previous research with immigrant women has identified concerns such as the financial, social, and legal risks to leaving or help seeking, as well as the structural barriers that may keep them in abusive relationships, and these findings may have lead us to assume that immigrant women faced greater vulnerabilities in these areas than do non-immigrant women. However, those studies were unable to make direct comparisons to non-immigrant women and by being able to compare immigrant to non-immigrant women in these areas, what I have found is that differences may not be as profound as we assumed, and that non-immigrant women are influenced by these factors in their decision-making processes to a similar extent as are immigrant women.

Additionally, having access to a large data set that allowed me to test for the significance of relationships between these types of risks and barriers and women's actual decisions to leave or to seek help has allowed me to demonstrate the ways in which these concerns actually impact their decisions. Previous research, particularly with immigrant women, has described these concerns, but has not actually tested their impact on decision making, and what I have found by testing these relationships, is that both immigrant and non-immigrant women may make decisions about leaving or help seeking despite facing higher risks or barriers. In this way, a picture of women making rational choices based on their own and their children's best interests emerges and calls into question previous theories or assumptions that may have cast women in a more passive light.

One limitation of my study stems from conducting a secondary analysis of a pre-existing data set. This placed constraints on the ways in which I was able to measure the components of the holistic risk assessment, the personal and structural barriers, and the dependent variables. For instance, research has identified a number of areas to consider in terms of the social risk to leaving, items such as social stigmatization, and impact on social identity, which I was unable to measure completely and could only approach with the question of fear of losing their children, which is a component of family breakup. Similarly, barriers such as commitment to the relationship, fear, and locus of control where measured differently in previous studies and my results are more difficult to interpret because of this difference. Additionally, being able to

compare groups based on whether or not they were born in the United States is an imperfect measure of immigrant status, and leaves out the variations in experiences based on length of time residing in the U.S., level of acculturation, or differences based on immigration status in terms of being temporary or permanent immigrants, voluntary or involuntary, documented or undocumented. However, the contribution that this study makes, in terms of being able to compare immigrant and non-immigrant women, even when measured imperfectly, and to test the strength of relationships between risks, barriers, and leaving or help seeking, may outweigh this limitation and my results can serve as a starting point for future research that might begin with more standardized measures of these concepts, or measures that better capture the nuances of variations in immigration experiences.

Another limitation of the study is the possibility of findings about differences between immigrant and non-immigrant women being skewed by the fact that such a high proportion of the sample was Latina/Hispanic, compared to other ethnic groups. My goal was to conduct a study that would examine how being an immigrant, in and of itself, impacted decision making, but because such a high proportion of the sample was Latina/Hispanic I cannot be sure that results are independent of cultural background. Initially, I was less concerned about this, as the majority of both immigrant and non-immigrant women were Latina/Hispanic; however, further analysis indicated a significant relationship between being Latina/Hispanic and immigration status, such that immigrant women were more likely to be Latina/Hispanic than were non-immigrant women. In order to examine the influence of being Latina/Hispanic, I conducted logistic regressions with Latina/Hispanic as a barrier variable and found that being Latina/Hispanic was a significant barrier to leaving for both immigrant and non-immigrant women and a significant barrier to help seeking for non-immigrant women, but not for immigrant women. All other results of the analyses stayed the same in terms of significant predictors, except that education was no longer predictive of immigrant women's leaving, indicating a possible relationship between education and ethnicity for immigrant women. The percentage of variance explained in the regression models increased by around 4% for those models in which being Latina/Hispanic was significant. Thus, because significance of predictors did not change, I can have some confidence in concluding that results were independent of ethnicity. It should also be noted that while the majority of the sample was Latina/Hispanic, this does not necessarily mean that there was not cultural diversity within this group. Immigrant

participants who were Latina/Hispanic came from countries in Central and South America, as well as Mexico, Puerto Rico and the Caribbean, and diversity in immigrant experiences may stem from differences in experiences in their countries of origin, or differences in cultural beliefs based on nationality or regions within nations.

A final limitation of this study is that the sample itself may have a bias towards help seeking, as participants were recruited from domestic violence shelters or agencies, and from family courts. In a sense, this is helpful in that the information that I have gained about risks and barriers that impact leaving or help seeking relate to women who may have actually left or sought help, rather than women would have expressed an intention to leave or seek help, or who have discussed, as in some focus group research, the factors that would impact their decisions, without any way to measure the impact of these factors. However, it does mean that results are skewed towards those women who seek help, and one of the reasons why a small amount of variance was explained in each of my regression models may be because I was unable to gather information about barriers, for instance, from women who have not shown that tendency towards seeking help.

Research Implications

Results indicate that Hamby's (2008) holistic risk assessment captures some of the complexity involved in women's experiences of abusive relationships and in their decisions to leave or to seek help. Future research to explore more fully the components of a holistic risk assessment would be beneficial, particularly if those studies could employ more standardized measures to better capture different risk components. Alternatively, qualitative studies to explore in depth the types of risks women weigh in deciding to leave an abusive relationship or to get help might allow us to understand the complexity involved in these different aspects of risks and how they impact women's decision making. Additionally, while some components of a holistic risk assessment are predictive of leaving or help seeking, there are clearly many other factors that women consider when making these decisions, given that the percentage of variance explained by my models remained small. Future research efforts to identify these other factors, perhaps by adding back in the factors typically studied with Choice & Lamke's (1997) model, would be helpful. Longitudinal studies to examine the factors that women identify as important in their decision making process at different points along the leave-taking process would also be

helpful. It became apparent in my findings that the factors that women identify as important concerns, may not be the factors that actually make or break their decision to leave. It would also be very interesting to examine more closely the process of leaving, to determine for instance, what it is that is helpful for women who are young, and unemployed, immigrant, and afraid of their abuser? These women do leave even when circumstances appear stacked against them, so a follow up question might be, how do they do that? What is helpful for them in that process?

Additionally, future research to compare immigrant and non-immigrant women's decision making that could be more specific or precise in terms of immigrant status, rather than being limited to country of birth, would be informative as it would capture more of the variations in experiences that result from differences in terms of legal status, acculturation, or length of residency. While my objective was to make comparisons broadly, between immigrant and non-immigrant women, comparisons between different immigrant groups, or comparisons based on immigrant status or length of residency, or acculturation levels, would also be very informative.

Clinical Implications

The findings of my study indicate that women consider a wide range of factors in their decisions to leave an abusive relationship or to seek help, and immigrant women might consider these factors differently than do non-immigrant women. Domestic violence advocates and therapists who work with women in abusive relationships could improve their services if they were able to take into account this range of factors. Advocates and therapists could also improve their services by understanding that what makes a situation “bad enough” for one woman to leave, will not be the same for another woman, and that the women with whom they work may not assess their risks in the same way as the advocates or therapists themselves would in their own lives. This means that women, both immigrant and non-immigrant, might also seek out services that would help them to stay in their relationships, while working to end the abuse. Examining the predictors to leaving also shows us that both groups of women are more likely to stay when the risk of harm to others is lower, and immigrant women are more likely to stay when their partner is unemployed, while non-immigrant women are more likely to stay when their risk of personal physical harm is lower. This is valuable information for marriage and family therapists who work with couples with a history of violence; they could improve services

provided to these couples by attending to this range of risks, and understanding what motivates women to stay in or to leave relationships with violent men.

While findings indicate that advocates and therapists need to be respectful of the choices women make and able to work with them even if they decide not to leave a relationship with a violent man, they also indicate that women leave their relationships despite facing high levels of barriers to doing so. This suggests that therapists and advocates also need to expand their ideas about what would be most helpful for women if they leave. In addition to needing space that allows them physical safety, women would also benefit from job training programs, employment search assistance, and transportation and day care services. Both groups of women appeared strongly motivated by an increased risk of harm to others. This finding may not come as a surprise to advocates and therapists who have worked with women in abusive relationships, as many of us have seen the ways in which women respond to a threat to their children's safety when threats to themselves may not be as precipitous to their leaving or seeking help. Both women who leave and those who chose to stay would benefit from service providers who were keenly aware of women's concerns about their children and the way these concerns inform their thinking about leaving the relationship. Additional risks in terms of losing custody of their children or being reported to outside agencies would also need to be examined, and while advocates and therapists may need to conduct a holistic risk assessment with immigrant women differently than when conducting it with non-immigrant women, it still appears that many of the same factors are important to consider with both groups. Factors may need to be approached differently for immigrant women however, by taking into account the ways that things like legal status might make accessing services more difficult, both their services and the types of services to which advocates and therapist might refer women for additional assistance. Something for both advocates and therapists to take away from this study would be the finding that both groups make decisions about leaving or seeking help in similar ways. Both appear to be motivated to leave or to seek help when they would be better off by doing so, and despite facing barriers to doing so. Advocates and therapists would do well to support women in finding ways to overcome these barriers, and to thoroughly assess and address the risks involved in leaving or seeking help.

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