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Stories of domestic violence from immigrant and non-immigrant women

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STORIES OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE FROM IMMIGRANT AND
NON-IMMIGRANT WOMEN

A Thesis

Presented to

The Faculty of the Department of Communication Studies

San José State University

In Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree

Master of Arts

by

Ania Goritskaia-Ivanova

December 2006

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ABSTRACT

STORIES OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE FROM IMMIGRANT AND NON-IMMIGRANT WOMEN

by Ania Goritskaia-Ivanova

This thesis explored the specific experiences of five abused women in non-immigrant and immigrant status: who are undocumented, who are H4-visa holders (spouses of H1B-visa holders), or who are American citizens. This qualitative research was conducted using in-depth semistructured interviews. Data was analyzed using the concepts of coordinated management of meaning theory and feminist critical theory. Findings indicated that two intractable obstacles confronting survivors of domestic violence trying to break the cycle of violence were financial abuse and immigration abuse. The results of this research will contribute to the ability of formal and informal systems of support, as well as policy makers throughout Santa Clara County, to better understand the needs of non-immigrant and immigrant women who seek their assistance.

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And, of course, to all the four women who participated in the interviews, whose resilience and bravery were the inspiration for my work. I would like to thank those women for opening their hearts and minds. I feel that I now have the power to speak up on behalf of all abused women by using their language. Not many survivors of domestic violence can talk about the hell they have gone through, but now I’m one of them. By talking about the issue of domestic violence openly, I will try to expand the network of women who are looking for help. Lack of knowledge about the services available for them and accepting guilt for the abuse are the factors that keep women’s voices mute. What is going on behind closed doors is very important to know in order to save women’s lives and help them to move on. It is my belief that this work will shed light on

the hidden reality of financial and immigration abuse, may offer hope to other non-immigrant and immigrant survivors, and bring illumination to those practitioners who work with this population.

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

In the current legal system—including Family and Immigration Courts—lack of social support for women residing in the United States in immigrant or non-immigrant status is prevalent in cases where domestic violence (DV) is involved. Yet, because Santa Clara County consists of a culturally diverse population, the need for services that aid victims in immigrant and non-immigrant status will never go away. While there is a huge network of services that exists in Santa Clara County, the population of women for whom English is a second language remains underserved. I decided to study this problem because of the social significance of this issue and my personal experience of DV in the United States. As a non-immigrant in the United States, I found myself facing DV at home. While seeking help from systems of formal and informal support, I encountered many obstacles, including gaps in the system structure and a lack of information. In this introductory chapter, I provide a statement of the problem and describe the purpose of the study; I give an overview of DV in terms of culture and context; finally, I conclude the introduction by presenting the significance of this study and the research questions that guide my thesis.

Statement of the Problem

Historically, the 1952 Immigration and Nationality Act implies that men and women are to be treated equally; however, in practice, this is not the case. As Wood (2004) states, “The immigration statute retained the structure of one dominant spouse who controlled the immigration status of the other” (p. 142). One of the basic procedures for the spouse to get legal status as a citizen is through marriage to either a U.S. citizen or

a Green Card holder (lawful permanent resident). In this case, he is sponsoring a non-immigrant spouse, for whom he decides whether to file a petition for citizenship. In 1994, Congress enacted legislation that permitted self-petition for legal permanent residency on behalf of victims of DV through the Violence Against Women Act (VAWA). Yet VAWA provided only a partial solution. On the one hand, women who were married to abusive spouses were no longer trapped in their marriages and were not forced to go back to their countries of origin. On the other hand, it became difficult to prevent deportation of the abused spouse. Canceling deportation required an “extreme hardship waiver” or demonstration that the spouse was “a victim of domestic violence.” A deportation order, or removal order, does not demonstrate a victim’s “good moral character,” which is necessary for establishing permanent residency through VAWA or political asylum, because the abused spouse is living as a deportable non-citizen. Furthermore, once a deportation order is issued, there are many restrictions to suspending it for battered spouses and their children.

In 2000, Congress created the U visa (victim of a crime) and the T visa (victim of trafficking) under VAWA to protect victims of DV who are present in the United States, not in lawful immigration status, and are proven to be “trafficked, victimized, exploited, and abused [by their domestic partners]” (Wood, 2004, p. 146). The U visa is available for those non-citizens who “suffered substantial physical or mental abuse as a result of certain criminal activities such as rape, torture, trafficking, and domestic violence” (p. 146). Marriage is no longer necessary for residency and the victim can petition for herself, but the removal of a deportation order is effective as long as a victim is being

cooperative with law enforcement. Specifically, the U visa self-petitioner must obtain a certification form attesting that she “has been helpful in the investigation or prosecution of criminal activity” (p. 146). However, this U visa certification form has itself become an issue. First, many victims of DV do not report incidents of crime because of the threat of being deported. Second, if the report has been made but the law enforcement officer decides not to press criminal charges against the batterer, or if the officer decides that the victim was not cooperative enough in the investigation of criminal activity, the victim still remains subject to deportation (Wood). In order to accomplish Congress’s goal, battered women need to receive a reasonable assurance that the U visa will be granted to them. Moreover, women who need protection under a U visa need to be aware of its existence. More educational programs for law enforcement agencies are needed on the subject of the U visa. Sometimes, law enforcement is not aware of how to handle simple paperwork, which creates unnecessary obstacles and an emotional burden for victims. As Wood states, “The fear of jeopardizing her immigration status and being removed to her native country is perhaps the greatest legal barrier faced by a battered woman” (p. 148).

Most women are unaware of DV Units at local Police Departments, which are responsible for processing restraining orders against sexual intimates. McFarlane et al. (2002) investigated the effectiveness of family protection orders among first-generation Asian immigrants. It was found that “women’s lack of English language proficiency, an often tenuous immigration status, and a lack of emotional support due to separation from their extended family” (p. 244) were reasons for not reporting acts of physical assault by intimates to law enforcement. Moreover, McFarlane et al. found that 12% of the

participants informed investigators that the abuser had prevented them from learning English, and 23% of women reported that the abuser had refused to process her immigration documents. Four women refused to participate in the study due to the pain from physical injuries; one woman committed suicide after participating for 6 weeks in the study (McFarlane et al.). Women in non-immigrant status “appear to be in double jeopardy: They experience [high] levels of abuse, but without the resources of English proficiency, income, and education [they still have] to deal with the abuse” (p. 249). According to McFarlane et al., after conducting their study it was reported by a local district attorney’s office that 150 women in non-immigrant status had applied for protection orders.

However, there are some gaps between immigration law and family law. Narayan (1995) reports on the problems faced by women with dependent immigration status, especially mail-order brides, who face abuse and violence within their marriages. Women are highly vulnerable to DV because of their lack of autonomy and because of the underflow of information between immigration law and state law (Narayan). There are several factors that contribute to the vulnerability of these women to abuse:

Women with dependent immigration status are often more economically, psychologically, and linguistically dependent on their spouses than wives in general. Dependent immigration status legally prohibits them from seeking employment. Many lack fluency in English, a factor that impedes their ability to negotiate the routines of everyday life without their husband’s assistance. The language barrier impedes social relationships except with those who share their linguistic background, but members of their linguistic community are often people connected to the husband, unlikely to assist against the husband’s abusive conduct. (p. 105)

To save the honor of the family, which is expected in many cultures, women prefer not to speak up rather than to make men accountable for their abusive actions.

Mail-order wives, the most vulnerable population, usually marry virtual strangers in order to immigrate to the United States. These women come from backgrounds marked by poverty and unemployment; for example, women from areas that were formerly part of the Soviet Union. This also suggests that many American men hope to find a “beautiful, traditional, faithful” wife, who will not seek to work outside the home, in contrast to local American women whom they deem “overly liberated” and “not devoted enough to their husbands” (Narayan, 1995, p. 106). Submissiveness and deference seem to be stereotypical qualities attributed to Eastern European or Russian women. When she comes here, to the United States, she acquires a conditional immigrant status for two years according to law. She cannot petition for herself and completely depends on the goodwill of her husband. If the marriage dissolves any time during this waiting period, she loses her conditional immigrant status and becomes a deportable alien (Narayan). She can avoid deportation only if she is able to file a “good cause report” through a shelter. A “good cause” report can be filed only to prove battery and extreme cruelty. If the victim does not have a police report, she will not be eligible to stay in the United States.

When a battered woman is self-petitioning for legal status, she must prove physical battery; she needs “expert testimony in the form of reports and affidavits from police, judges, medical personnel, school officials and social service agencies, and Immigration Judges must be satisfied with their credibility” (Narayan, 1995, p. 110). The

cost of this kind of report from a medical professional is over \$1000. If the victim has no means of support, she cannot afford it. Even shelters for battered women cannot provide such financial funds. A battered woman is lucky if the shelter can provide her with housing for one month. After that period of time, the victim will usually find herself on the street. Narayan argues:

Immigration policy makers should begin with a vivid sense of how many women with dependent status are present here in the US and what vulnerabilities their life situations involve. Women with dependent immigration status should also be perceived as potential citizens—women who have made often difficult choices to relocate their lives, trusting to the security of marriages made in good faith and planning to reside permanently in the country to which they move. They enter the country legally and have not broken any of its laws. (p. 112)

Any immigration policy should be truly sensitive to the issues of DV and afford maximum protection for battered women in non-immigrant status (Narayan).

Purpose of the Study

Although DV is now a widely researched subject, there are still hidden areas in terms of immigration and financial abuse that are of primary concern for this study. The broad goal of this study is to explore specific experiences of abused women in non-immigrant and immigrant status. First, my research thesis focuses on some of the cultural influences that contribute to DV among non-immigrant women; specifically, (a) women who are undocumented, and who are married to an American Citizen; (b) women who are on H4 status and married to H1B holders (neither American Citizen nor Green Card Holder with working permit); (c) women who are here on immigrant status, who came to the United States illegally, are now married to an American citizen, and became an American citizen through marriage; (d) women, who came here legally as a refugee with

their spouse, were sponsored by their spouses, and now live with their spouses as American Citizens; and (e) women who came here legally with their spouses as refugees, and became American Citizens along with their spouses. Of particular interest to this study is how women come to understand that they are in abusive relationship, and how they engage in behavior to seek support.

Second, my research provides documentation of the informal networking practices of this population, which may provide a basis for the Santa Clara County Domestic Violence agencies to develop future programs and DV prevention strategies directed at women in non-immigrant status. By collecting the stories of these women and articulating the particular challenges of their situations, I hope that my thesis will contribute to the ability of DV shelters, legal services, informal support groups (Al-Anon, Alateen, and Alcoholics Anonymous, and so on), and policy makers throughout Santa Clara County to reach the immigrant and non-immigrant women who need their assistance and thus help to break through the cycle of violence in our society. As I will describe later in my review of literature, research can form the basis for education and advocacy, which are necessary to prevent the emergence of new generations of violent families.

What is Domestic Violence?

Old English traditions permitted wife beating with a stick by her husband as a means of discipline and to maintain an image of the ideal wife. The saying “the rule of thumb” originates from the stick used for these purposes, which historically could be no thicker than the husband’s thumb. The prevalence of this saying indicates that wife

beating was acceptable in many European and Middle-Eastern countries. Due to DV and abuse perpetrated at home, safety and security is denied to many women in the United States as well. According to the National Victimization Survey, “women are about six times more likely than men to experience violence committed by an intimate” (U.S. Department of Justice, 1995, p. 1). In addition, the authors of the 1995 National Victimization Survey estimated that over 500,000 women reported sexual assaults and rapes each year in the United States, with four out of five crimes committed by their intimate partners (U.S. Department of Justice). Moreover, there is a saying in Russia: “If your husband beats you, he loves you.” Due to such beliefs, one of my friends has had half of her face surgically restructured because of the injuries caused by her husband’s attacks.

Historical circumstances and current cultural beliefs have led many in the male population to believe that they are legally sanctioned to abuse women, both emotionally and physically. There are major distinctions between common couple violence (physical abuse) and patriarchal terrorism (Johnson, 1995), both of which fall under the umbrella of DV. By definition, DV is a “behavior pattern that occurs in physical, emotional, psychological, sexual, and economic forms to perpetuate fear, intimidation, power, and control” (Hampton, Jenkins, & Vandergiff-Avery, 1999, p. 168). Johnson coined the term *patriarchal terrorism* and defined it as:

A product of patriarchal traditions of men’s right to control their women, [which] is a form of terroristic control of wives by their husbands that involves the systematic use of not only violence, but economic subordination, threats, isolation, and other control tactics. (p. 284)

Very often, patriarchal traditions and behaviors are situated in the general context of culture. Those behavioral patterns become repetitive and inherent to that culture, and are passed from one generation to another.

The Significance of Culture in Understanding Domestic Violence

Repetitive patterns of violence can also be seen to occur within the broader context—culture. Culture can be defined in many different terms and levels; it can be attributed to everything that refers to shared experiences or commonalities. Culture may be attributed to race, ethnicity, national origin, religion, or language, and a range of practices that have developed and continue to evolve in relation to changing social and political contexts (Kahn, 2006). According to Kahn, in all cultures, “contexts of privilege are created by certain norms against which all other sub groups are compared” (p. 2). If patriarchal terrorism, the right to dominate another person, is a privilege of a male group, the dynamics of abuse can easily be established. As much as patriarchal domination varies in shape and form, so do the techniques that patriarchal terrorists apply against women. Patriarchal terrorism against women is not just physical, sexual, or emotional abuse. It is also about “living in a climate of fear, misery, loss, humiliation, and despair” (Kahn, p. 2). The reason why it is important to consider culture is because it shapes the victim’s experience of patriarchal terrorism and the victim’s response to it (Kahn). Because men in patriarchal societies use patriarchal terrorism to control women, it is important to understand the nature of patriarchy. Many cultures have failed to act in order to stop different forms of family violence and control that occur within the home

(Kahn). Looking back to “the rule of thumb,” European countries have even encouraged it as part of their culture.

I raise the issue of culture in my thesis for several reasons. First, culture shapes the access to services that might be crucial to the victim. Second, cultural misinformation about DV limits society’s understanding of the concept. This is why many members of the Russian community are not aware of the concept of DV. Cultural scripts describe how most people of a group should behave. Moreover, culture justifies the mistreatment of females by their male partners. At the same time, despite the prevalence of DV, “no culture condones family violence, and all cultures contain forces within them that oppose violence and offer help for victims” (Kahn, 2006, p. 3). Kahn suggests that cultures do not inherently promote violence as a central feature of family life and relationships. However, cultural discourses can create environments that perpetuate violence, wherever there is an opportunity to exercise power of one human being over another.

Acquiring cultural competence regarding DV, and its specific form, patriarchal terrorism, is not a one-time achievement. It is a long-term process that must be applied to ensure an accurate analysis of the facts and circumstances of new forms of DV (Kahn, 2006). Since Santa Clara County is one of the most culturally diverse counties in California, service providers should recognize that individuals have diverse needs, and accept and respect their differences. Domestic violence agencies need to integrate cultural competency and address multicultural needs and strategies of prevention in their programs (Kahn). By doing so, service organizations will benefit from making their services accessible to individuals who come from diverse cultural backgrounds. Most of

the San José prevention programs are currently focused on the Hispanic population.

Integrating knowledge of other communities, such as Russian speaking communities, will help practitioners to develop new approaches for prevention.

Santa Clara County providers of DV services need to understand the importance of culture to the victim. Even now, women in non-immigrant status may not be aware that DV is a serious crime. In Russia, for example, most people accept violence as an appropriate form of behavior. Victims may lack knowledge about Santa Clara County laws. They may not be aware that legal, medical, and social services are available for them whether they choose to stay or to leave the abusive relationship. Domestic violence professionals need to consider that victims may not be fluent in English and may live in total isolation and denial. Victims may seek help from the criminal justice system and then regret the consequences of reporting the incident (Kahn, 2006). Important issues for battered women in non-immigrant status to consider include: Batterers may use culture as a means to minimize their crime; perpetrators may use a cultural stigma related to outsider or police involvement in family issues in order to prevent victims from seeking help; batterers may threaten to take the children away; dependency on the batterer for legal immigration status and money prevents women from leaving an abusive relationship; and living in fear of being deported from the United States prevents victims from seeking outside help (Kahn).

Context of the Study: Support Services in Santa Clara County

Next Door Solutions to Domestic Violence is a well-known agency that comprises a network of services in Santa Clara County, especially in the San José area.

The shelter is the first place where battered women can get food; it is a place to stay and a place where battered women can feel safe. Once a woman arrives at the shelter, she is immediately assigned a case manager, who will put her through all the programs and services available at the shelter. There are 24-hour services that provide protection and counseling for women and their children who have fled from an abusive environment. There is also a 24-hour hotline that provides immediate crisis assistance in both English and Spanish. Home Safe facilities, or Transitional Housing, provided for women in the Next Door Solutions to Domestic Violence program, include 48 units at two secret locations. Clients can stay in these safe units for up to 36 months. Sometimes, personnel make exceptions and extend a woman's length of stay, especially in DV cases where immigration issues are involved. While staying at the shelter, a woman has an opportunity to rejuvenate and put her life back on track. She has access to a telephone so that she can search for a job and new housing. There is no Internet access provided at the shelter because of the security issues involved, but the shelter provides women with a San José city library card, where women have on-line access as well as access to the library's resources.

In addition to the services provided by Next Door Solutions to Domestic Violence, the Family Violence Center is a collaborative project with the San José Police Department that provides 24-hour response to victims of DV immediately after the crime. The San José Police Department has intensive training on how to assess a victim's physical condition, especially in cases of strangulation (choking). Bilingual counseling services, in English and Spanish, are designed to help clients rebuild the lives damaged

by abusive relationships. Children's play therapy, in-school programs, and kids' clubs offer opportunities for children to heal from the damage caused by DV, and provide appropriate education and psycho-educational groups to re-build self-esteem. Mature Alternatives to Violence Environments Now is a program for mature victims of DV and provides home visits for the elderly, field trips, support groups, and community outreach. Teens Services provides a 10-week support group for teenage youth exposed to DV or at risk of developing abusive relationships. Finally, the Certified Batterers' Intervention Program is a certified 52-week, court-ordered program designed to hold batterers accountable for their actions and to teach healthy alternatives to violent behavior.

Along with the need for social, emotional, and practical support comes the need for legal services. The Social Service Advocacy Unit collaborates with Family and Children Services to provide support, translation, and accompaniment to victims of DV. Legal Services provides legal assistance with Temporary Restraining Orders (TRO) and TRO court accompaniment and translation. There are plenty of safety orders available for women: residence exclusion orders (move-out orders) for the perpetrator, stay-away orders, and personal conduct orders. The most important thing to do is to file a restraining or protection order against the perpetrator in the Superior Court. If the victim cannot afford an attorney to go with her to the hearing, there is a legal supporter available at the shelter. Getting a restraining order can contribute to the victim's feeling of safety and security although many victims state that the TRO is just a piece of paper because it can't guarantee that an abuser's attacks will stop. If there are children involved, the shelter will file a good cause report with the District Attorney's Office to protect the

victim in case her perpetrator files criminal charges against her; for example, accusing her of kidnapping.

Immigrant and non-immigrant women need additional support in relation to their immigration status. Within the Next Door Solutions to Domestic Violence network, Immigration Services assists DV victims under VAWA. Designations that are available to women who are victims of abuse include the U (victim of a crime) and T (victim of trafficking) visas, as well as legal defense against deportation. With the advent of such extensive services, women have opportunities to leave their abusive relationships and start new lives, but complex social and cultural forces may prevent important information and support from reaching the women who most need it. The Next Door Solutions to Domestic Violence personnel do their best to stop the cycle of violence and save women's lives, and communication plays an essential role in their efforts. However, there is a strong need for research, education, and advocacy related to women in non-immigrant status, which could inform women about services available for victims of DV and connect them to those services.

Significance of this Study

As a communications scholar, I am interested in investigating the subject of DV, and patriarchal terrorism in particular, for several reasons. First, patriarchal terrorism has tremendous economic and psychological effects on women. Batterers deliberately interfere with women's employment by beating them before job interviews, disappearing when they have promised to provide child-care, depriving them of transportation, turning off alarm clocks, and even harassing them at work (Johnson & Leone, 2000). As a result

of their husbands' constant control, women often experience post traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), which includes fear, terror, low self-esteem, and increased risk of suicide; PTSD is characterized by "intense fear and anxiety that is borne from uncertainty of being alive from one moment to the next" (Sundarajan, 2000, p. 2).

Related to the experiences of women in DV situations is a high mortality and injury rate, particularly for children. Each year, an estimated 3.3 million children witness DV (Peter, Jaffe, Wolfe, & Wilson, 1990). Approximately 90% of these children can recount the incidents of violence in one way or another (Peter et al.). They may not see it as it occurs, but they may hear the beating, see or hear their mother crying, or later see evidence of the violence: bruises, cuts, blood, tears, holes in the walls, broken furniture, and so on (Quinn, 2006). Living in a violent family may have dangerous consequences for children. First, they may receive injuries indirectly. They may be hurt when household items are thrown or weapons are used. Infants and young children may be injured while being held by their mother when the batterer strikes out. Mothers are also more likely to hurt their children when they are being battered. Older children may be hurt while protecting their mothers. According to Peter et al., 62% of sons over the age of 14 have been injured trying to protect their mothers, and 63% of boys from 11 to 15 years of age who commit murder, murder the man who was beating their mother.

A second point of significance for this study is related to the cultural dimensions of DV. I have informally discussed the subject of DV and its specific form, patriarchal terrorism, among Russian women who are in non-immigrant status here in the United States; specifically, (a) women who are undocumented, and who are married to an

American citizen or green-card holder; or (b) women who are on H4 status and married to H1B holders (neither American citizens nor green-card holders with work permits). What is evident from these discussions is that these women do not recognize the term “domestic violence”; they tolerate the abuse in their relationships because this is what their culture and society tell them to do. For me, this highlights the centrality of language and culture in the experience of DV, particularly in the ability of women to give voice to their experiences.

From a theoretical perspective, the third point of significance for this study is my incorporation of the social constructionist framework and feminist critical theory (FCT) to the study of DV and how the relationships become abusive. Coordinated management of meaning (CMM) theory (Cronen, Pearce, & Changsheng, 1989/90), a communication rules theory, is ideally suited to understanding the complexity involved in DV from the communication perspective, because it explores how our ways of communicating construct social realities. According to Cronen et al. (1989/90), events and objects of the social world are the products of social action, whose existence depends on their reconstruction in patterns of communication, or *repetitive patterns* (Shailor, 1995, p. 103). These repetitive patterns of communication become the resources that guide conversations or actions. In the matter of DV, couples bring resources into the relationship that initially might sanction the violence (Sundarajan, 2000).

The repetitive patterns highlighted in CMM theory are reflected in feminist theoretical frameworks that explain the perpetuation of male dominance and violence against women through cultural and societal norms. From a feminist perspective, society

sanctions men's behavior to be violent. According to Dobash and Dobash (1979), "Men who assault their wives are actually living up to cultural prescriptions that are cherished in Western society—aggressiveness, male dominance, and female subordination—and they are using physical force as a means to enforce that dominance" (p. 24). As I will describe in more detail in relation to my analysis, three problematic standards for a society may be explained by (a) the traditional concept of *natural womanhood* (Triece, 1999), (b) the attempt to situate the concept of natural womanhood within the general context of paternalistic dominance (Lerner, 1993), and (c) re-framing the concept of the natural woman into the concept of the *true practical woman* (Triece). Understanding these concepts can help shed light on the cultural dimensions of DV.

A potential outcome of this study may be to counteract the transmission of DV across generations. Living in a violent home has emotional effects on children. They learn not to take responsibility for the abuse. They live in constant anxiety and fear of abandonment. They develop a poor understanding of personal boundaries, and they learn how to violate personal boundaries (Quinn, 2006). Poor problem solving and conflict resolution skills are a result of home violence, and cause children to use violence as a technique at school, with peers and with family. Children may reenact violence with younger siblings, animals, or parents in later years (Quinn). As a result of family violence, children experience heightened suicidal thoughts and attempt or continue to use patterns of family violence in their adulthood.

Although the transmission of violence across generations is evidence of the negative impact of the coordinated management of meaning, the opposite impact is also

true. Collecting and sharing battered women's stories, and education through advocacy on the subject of DV, may generate a new reality of safety and equality as a norm within family communication. Both applications of CMM theory are relevant to my study.

Research Questions

A feminist critical approach, self-disclosure, leads to my research questions (RQ).

RQ1: What are the specific experiences and issues of women in non-immigrant and immigrant status who are victims of DV? RQ2: How might battered women's personal stories help to develop or inform prevention programs to alleviate the problems of DV for women in non-immigrant and immigrant status in Santa Clara County?

By collecting women's personal stories, I will elicit narratives about obstacles women faced when they were looking for help. I am planning to find those safety gaps in services and resources as they exist now in Santa Clara County. From my personal experience, there are a lot of resources available, but the problem is how to connect women to those resources, since every case is unique. It seems that the existing system is passive, until you ask for help. Yes, there are people willing to help, but how do women find these connections? How do women know what they can ask for? Considering that many women escaped from controlling environments, they are not able to make decisions for themselves. Empowering yet nonetheless sensitive strategies should be developed.

In the chapters that follow, I first provide greater detail regarding the conceptual basis for this study as well as the published research literature that informs it. Next, in Chapter 3, I outline how I addressed these questions by using qualitative methods of research. In Chapter 4, I provide profiles of the women who participated in my study. In

Chapter 5, I describe the findings from the cases included in this study, presented in light of the theoretical frameworks of CMM and the feminist critical theories selected for this project. Finally, in the Conclusion, I present recommendations for DV services that serve immigrant and non-immigrant women here in Santa Clara County and elsewhere in the United States.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

Communication scholars have investigated domestic violence (DV) through interviews, surveys, and ethnographic research. Prevailing studies are primarily based on interactional theories and look at the phenomenon of DV in the context of a closed dyadic system, and so these studies mostly blame men for using their society-sanctioned power and patriarchal terrorism to control their partners. In contrast, coordinated management of meaning (CMM) theory, which I will discuss further in my Analysis chapter (chapter 5), looks at the phenomenon from a 360-degree perspective, and considers it not as a private matter involving only the dyad in question. Instead, it reframes a problem that is often left behind closed doors and suggests that it should be considered a public and a societal problem. This perspective also supports why I chose feminist critical theory (FCT) as a framework for my study. To break through the cycle of violence, every citizen is responsible for preventing the severe consequences of men's behavior and to increase women's awareness of the possibility of leaving an abusive relationship. By doing so, we can develop informal channels and rhetorical spaces for support and empowerment.

Because family violence is a common problem and is accepted among different cultures, citizens who learn violent behavioral patterns at home may then practice learned abusive patterns in different contexts, such as engaging in wars and national terrorism. It is clearly a communication pattern of interaction that is reproduced across generations and contexts. People became participants in a violent dynamic of interpersonal relationship first. Interpretation of communication processes in DV is meaningful and

worthwhile because it serves both as an explanation and as guidance for prevention of violent relational systems.

To date, communication research literature has contributed to the understanding of DV from a variety of perspectives, which I will describe in this chapter throughout this review of literature. First, communication research provides us with definitions of DV and describes patterns of violence in intimate relationships. These patterns include the differences between gender-neutral common couple violence (CCV) and gender-linked patriarchal terrorism (Johnson, 1995; Johnson & Leone, 2000), and the role that aggression, violence and abuse play in defining intimate relationships (Olson, 2002b). A second major theme in the communication literature is the impact of communication patterns on DV (Olson, 2002a; Olson, 2004; Olson & Braithwaite, 2004; Peled, Eisikovits, Enosh, & Winstok, 2000; Sagrestano, Heavey, & Christensen, 1999; Wood, 1999). Third, communication research also investigates the role of cultural factors in understanding DV through patriarchy (Haj-Yahia, 1998), sexism (Sakalli, 2001), and women's attitudes towards violence (Yoshihama, 2002). Fourth, communication research investigates contextual factors offered to DV interventions, including the role of shelters in the construction of women's identity (Vaughn and Stamp, 2003).

Defining Domestic Violence and Violent Interactional Patterns

Gender-Neutral Violence Versus Gender-Linked Violence

Communication researchers have identified different forms of DV; particularly, they make a distinction between patriarchal terrorism and common couple violence. Johnson (1995) analyzed data from a national survey sample and interview data from

battered women in shelters to find distinctions between *patriarchal terrorism* and *common couple violence*. From both sources of data, Johnson found that a large number of women, as well as men, suffer from occasional outbursts of violence, or common physical abuse, termed common couple violence. Common couple violence is a gender-neutral phenomenon, while patriarchal terrorism is gender-linked. Moreover, the term *battered husband syndrome* was coined by Steinmetz (1973, cited in Johnson, 1995) to suggest that, “women’s violence against men represented the same sort of violence as the male violence” (p. 285). From a large random sample survey, Johnson found that a significant number of women are terrorized by systematic male violence, or *patriarchal terrorism*.

The nature of patriarchal terrorism lies in the degree of control one partner has over another. In cases of physical abuse, a male is motivated by a need for control in specific situations. In contrast, the causal dynamic of patriarchal terrorism is rooted in patriarchal traditions and men’s desires to control *their* women by any means and to remain totally in charge of the relationship. Unlike CCV, patriarchal terrorism was proved to be gender-linked (Johnson, 1995). Patriarchal terrorism is difficult to distinguish and to prove because it is created through abusive and oppressive communication rather than physical abuse. Pence and Paymar (1993, cited in Johnson, 1995, p. 288) developed a graphic representation of tactics that can be used by a patriarchal terrorist. There are eight tactics of patriarchal terrorism: (a) using coercion and threats; (b) using intimidation; (c) using emotional abuse; (d) using isolation; (e) minimizing, denying, and blaming; (f) using children; (g) using male privilege; and (h)

using economic abuse. For example, a man can use economic abuse by making his wife ask for money and not allowing her knowledge of the family finances. When a man uses isolation, he controls what his wife does, what she reads, and where she goes, and he uses jealousy to justify his actions. When a man uses emotional abuse, he puts his wife down, makes her feel bad about herself, calls her names, humiliates her, and makes her feel guilty. Pence and Paymar's study was useful because it demonstrated that patriarchal terrorism and common couple violence can be differentiated from one another (Johnson).

In a related study, Johnson and Leone (2000) conducted random sample telephone interviews in order to interview women who were victims of stalking, emotional abuse, and physical assault. Their research addresses several hypotheses:

H1: Patriarchal terrorism does more damage to the physical health of its victims than does common couple violence; H2: Patriarchal terrorism does more damage to the psychological health of its victims than does common couple violence; H3: Patriarchal terrorism interferes more with daily activities than does common couple violence; H4: Patriarchal terrorism is more likely to drive its victims to leave the relationship and to seek help. (p. 3)

Results of the study indicate that women who are victims of patriarchal terrorism were more than twice as likely to be injured as those experiencing common couple violence. Moreover, "victims of patriarchal terrorism are more likely to use tranquilizers or anti-depressants than are those who experience common couple violence" (Johnson & Leone, p. 12). The study also found that "Patriarchal terrorism interferes more with daily activities than does common couple violence," and that victims of patriarchal terrorism "are twice as likely to have left their husbands as are those experiencing common couple violence. . . . They are more likely to get their own places or to go to locations that are

safe either because of security (safe houses) or secrecy (hotels)” (p. 14). The research suggested that in cases of patriarchal terrorism, the negative effects of DV are more dramatic than in cases of CCV.

Aggression, Violence, and Abuse in Intimate Relationships

Domestic violence has also been defined through the concepts of aggression, violence, and abuse in intimate relationships. The purpose of Olson’s (2002b) study was to investigate the different types of DV. She proposed a research question: “Of those individuals from the general population who experience violence, what are the most commonly reported communication patterns used during their conflicts involving aggression?” (p. 107). Conflict tactics questionnaires were administered among participants and several communication patterns were identified: “aggression,” which involves low and medium levels of aggression; “violence,” which involves medium or severe acts of aggression, such as physical violence and severe verbal abuse; and “abuse,” which involves medium or severe acts of aggression. Three types of relationships emerged from the analysis. According to the study, an “aggressive relationship” was characterized as a relationship with equal distribution of power and a mild form of aggression between intimate partners. A “violent relationship” was defined as a relationship in which both partners had a tendency to reciprocate with severe forms of aggression. An “abusive relationship” was defined as a relationship where one partner had total control over another partner and severe acts of aggression were not reciprocated. Abusive relationships were found to be very close to patriarchal terrorism as defined by Johnson (1995); however, by renaming patterns of patriarchal terrorism as “abusive

relationships,” attention becomes focused on power and control issues rather than on the gender characteristics of the pattern.

Olson’s (2002b) study offers several theoretical and practical contributions to the area of DV. First, from a practical perspective, this study can “help communication scholars and mental health practitioners better understand the communicative behavior within different types of violent relationships and determine the [right] treatment” (p. 117). Second, theoretically, we can recognize that violent couples and abusive couples are not the same and they have communicative differences.

The Impact of Communication Patterns on Domestic Violence

In addition to defining DV, the communication literature also identifies communication patterns within violent relationships. Several different communicative tactics are identified; including, (a) optimizing, shifting, minimizing, maximizing tactics (Olson, 2002a); (b) integrative and destructive tactics (Olson & Braithwaite, 2004); and (c) perceived power and demand/withdraw interaction (Sagrestano et al., 1999). Communication researchers also describe (d) battered women’s identity construction in violent relationships (Olson, 2004), and (e) explain why women stay in abusive relationships (Peled et al. 2000; Wood, 1999). I will discuss each of these in the paragraphs that follow.

Optimizing, Shifting, Minimizing, and Maximizing Tactics

Olson (2002a) examined the relationship between communication competence and aggression, and the relationship between communication incompetence and destructive behaviors, such as relational violence. She asked: “How do individuals

experiencing aggression during conflicts evaluate their own communication competence?” and “How do individuals experiencing aggression during conflicts evaluate their partner’s communication competence?” (p. 176). Olson employed a Retrospective Interview Technique to identify first, how couples assess their own communication competence, and second, their partners’ communication competence (p. 178). Once a critical incident that involved aggression was identified through the interview, the interviewer asked series of questions, such as:

Please describe what happened during this conflict episode. What did you [and your partner] do and say? How appropriate do you think your [and your partner’s] actions were during the conflict episode? How effective do you think your [and your partner’s] actions were during the conflict episode? (p. 179)

The answers were coded and four dimensions of communication competence were identified: “*Maximizing* (effective-inappropriate), *Sufficing* (ineffective-appropriate), *Minimizing* (ineffective-inappropriate), and *Optimizing* (effective-appropriate)” (p. 179). Maintaining self-control by not engaging aggressively in the argument was one of the couples’ most effective means of communicating. Conflict avoidance was found to be inappropriate. The most effective behaviors were calmness, respectfulness, nonaggressiveness, listening, and seeking for understanding.

It is interesting to note that some participants viewed aggression as an ineffective form of communication, while other participants justified the use of aggression because it was a good fit for the situation. “Confrontative communicators believed that aggressive behaviors were inappropriate, but justified it, because it was the only way to get the other partner’s attention, when the partner used avoidant behaviors” (p. 183). Moreover, participants assessed their partner’s communication competence by a similar method.

Aggressive responses were found to be appropriate as a self-defense mechanism during resolving conflicts. Another instance when participants justified aggressive behavior as appropriate was when it was considered to be a learned behavior or inborn characteristic. Some of the respondents still judged aggression as an ineffective method because it caused their partners to shut down.

Integrative and Destructive Tactics

Communication patterns of DV may also encompass integrative and destructive behavioral tactics. In their research, Olson and Braithwaite (2004) examined the new communication patterns of individuals in violent relationships who had obtained counseling for the abuse, reported the violence to the police, or sought the assistance of shelters or medical professionals. The purpose of their study was to investigate which conflict management tactics, both verbal and non-verbal, individuals in romantic relationships use during conflicts involving aggression. Three conflict strategies were identified: *avoidant* (working away from the partner), *distributive* (working against the partner), and *integrative* (working with the partner). Compared to the previous research done by Olson (2002a), knowledge about integrative and distributive tactics was expanded. Three new categories of integrative behavior were identified: *Descriptive Statements* (which explain), *Disclosive Statements* (which reveal feelings), and *Soliciting Disclosure* from the partner. In general, those three integrative patterns together are called *Analytic Remarks*, because they are not hostile in tone but instead are constructive attempts at resolving conflict with their partners.

Olson and Braithwaite (2004) also identified four distributive tactics: *Personal Criticism*, *Hostile Imperatives*, *Presumptive Remarks*, and *Rejection*. The Personal Criticism tactic was used to verbally insult a partner's self-concept or their family members. Specifically, this tactic included many instances of name-calling or verbal put-downs such as "cheater," "asshole," "selfish," "inconsiderate," "useless," "jerk," "son of a bitch," "stupid," and "lazy" (p. 278). Hostile Imperatives, or threats, included such statements as: "If you hit me again, I'll hit you back." Presumptive Remarks are responses to another partner's statements that are typically accusatory in nature and beyond the conflict issue itself. For example, if your partner accused you of wanting to sleep with your past boyfriend, you may defend yourself with a Presumptive Remark: "I wasn't even thinking of that" (p. 278). Rejection might include antagonistic statements against the participant, or aggressive denial of the other partner's ideas, thoughts, or feelings. For example, when you and your partner are arguing over family issues, your partner may reject your opinion because you are not a blood relative.

Distributive tactics of conflict management such as Personal Criticism, Hostile Imperatives, Presumptive Remarks, and Rejection definitely underlie the concept of patriarchal terrorism (Johnson, 1995). When the patriarchal terrorist is trying to intimidate by using looks, actions, gestures or by smashing things around, he is using Hostile Imperatives tactics. By name calling and putting down his spouse, he is using Personal Criticism and Emotional Abuse (Pence & Paymar, cited in Johnson, 1995, p. 288). Olson and Braithwaite's (2004) research is particularly useful because, if communication scholars continue to learn more about conflict resolution, more

opportunities will arise for practitioners to develop prevention strategies, to prevent acts of DV, and possibly to save women's lives.

Perceived Power and Demand/Withdraw Interaction

The relationship between patterns of DV and coping strategies is also reflected in the communication literature. In their study, Sagrestano et al. (1999) examined the relationship "among perceived marital power, the demand/withdraw interaction pattern, and the use of verbal aggression and violence" (p. 65). The participants were couples who completed several self-report questionnaires in which they discussed two areas of marital dissatisfaction. To assess perceived marital power, "husbands and wives each responded to four items regarding (1) potential to influence, (2) confidence in ability to influence, (3) likelihood of doing what the partner wants, and (4) an overall rating of who has more influence" (p. 67). The results suggested that verbal aggression among partners was associated with the presence of two factors: lower wives' income and lower husbands' marital adjustment due to perceived lack of power in the relationship. Samples in this study reported violence that was likely to represent common couple violence rather than patriarchal terrorism (Johnson, 1995). Both perceived power and the demand/withdraw interaction pattern were proved to be important predictors of verbal aggression and violence. Hence, this research may also help to develop prevention strategies and stop couple violence by helping spouses to cope with their aggression.

Battered Women's Identity Construction in Violent Relationships

Another area in which communication research provides knowledge about DV relates to the construction of battered women's identities. In an autoethnographic study,

Olson (2004) explores how her identity was constructed during her personal abusive relationship through narrative and rhetorical criticism. Olson discusses the four phases of the construction of an abused women's identity through the batterer's rhetoric: the entrapment or "hook" phase, the battered woman phase, the emergent woman self-identity phase, and disengagement. First, Olson explores how a subjugated identity is created during the entrapment phase and, second, how a woman's sense of self emerges. The hook phase of a violent cycle occurs when a female victim accepts her batterer's ideology and responsibility for the abuse. This research made a great contribution to the understanding of psychological and sociological reasons for abuse; including, which factors prevent women from leaving destructive relationships. Olson identified the entrapment phase, or "hook" phase, when a woman accepts an abuser's rhetoric of blame. At this stage, the perpetrator constructs a woman's subjugated identity. The abuser alters the victim's view of reality through control and manipulation. Olson points out that one trap of this phase may be a social network that heavily influences the construction of a battered women's identity. For example, friends or relatives might persuade you that you and the abuser are the perfect fit according to your horoscope. Or they might tell you to focus on the good qualities of the abuser, because nobody is perfect. This is when the violent relationship begins, and it occurs before the battering phase. Intervention strategies used by health care professionals at this stage increase the likelihood of a woman's self-removal from an abusive relationship (Olson).

In this autoethnographic study, communication scholars can see the contradictory nature and dark side of an abusive relationship. The brutalization women experience

every day in the United States and around the world is vividly described in Olson's personal story, which should increase a theoretical understanding of DV, provide an opportunity to intervene in abuse during its early stages, and challenge blame-the-victim ideologies (Olson, 2004). Only by focusing on the abusers' rhetoric will scholars be able to maintain the image that domestic assault is specifically a women's issue.

Why Do Women Stay?

Lastly, a common question asked by those who have never experienced DV is "Why do women stay with abusers?" The literature related to communication patterns sheds light on why women stay in abusive relationships. Wood (1999) conducted interviews among women who were no longer in abusive relationships and who were neither in support groups nor in counseling. Two forms of violence dissociation were found. The first is the idea that when perpetrating violence against these women, the abuser *was not himself*, and the second is the *beyond his control* concept. The first concept can be described through the following story:

After Charles battered her face, Beverly said, "That wasn't the real Charles. . . . This wasn't the Charles I first met, the guy I fell in love with. It was just that he wasn't himself, you know?" After her husband had drugged her and then permanently damaged her genitals, Vivian recalled that "he was so nice it was basically like when I first met him." When her partner begged her forgiveness after forced sex, Denise said, "I could tell he was really upset and that he didn't like how he had acted when the bad side came out . . . so the Gerald I loved was back." (p. 84)

The second concept, *beyond his control*, was accomplished by justifying the partner's violent actions as a result of "drinking, using drugs, [being] angry, or losing control" (p. 85). In this case, women didn't hold their partners responsible for violent actions. This finding supplements previous knowledge of how women make sense of

violence from their romantic partners. Previous work has highlighted other strategies, most notably *minimizing the violence* and *blaming one's self for provoking the violence*. The study of sense-making patterns of women currently involved in violent romantic relationships may clarify how the dissociation phase develops (Wood, 1999). There is still much work for clinicians to identify sense-making patterns under a range of circumstances—such as economical and immigration status—of women who are currently involved in a violent relationship.

In a related study, a constructivist model for empowering battered women who choose to stay in abusive relationships was proposed. Peled et al. (2000) examined the reasons why battered women stay in abusive relationships through a critical examination of the professional literature. According to Peled et al., a batterer can construct his partner's act of staying by *entrapment* (disempowering), for example, because she has no place to go; or by the *victim's own choice* (empowering). "The first construction is disempowering, as the woman's need (to stay) is perceived as denying her rights (to live in a violence-free context). The second is empowering as her need to stay is balanced against her rights" (p. 10). To better understand the phenomenon of staying with violent partners, an examination of the various social construction processes is needed, such as reality perception, meaning creation, and operational implications in a variety of ecological and situational contexts; for example, social, institutional, interpersonal, and individual (Peled et al.). According to the first model, *entrapment*, battered women are trapped in the relationship against their will, because of the perpetrators' threats, women's low self-esteem and "traumatic attachment" (p. 13), and a non-supportive social

network (Peled et al.). I would like to reiterate that a lack of alternative place to stay and economic dependency on the batterer are issues to consider on the entrapment stage.

According to the second model—staying in the abusive relationship as a choice—women’s decisions can be explained by social-exchange theories, in which women will weigh benefits and costs of the relationship. Empowerment-based approaches, such as clinical-individual (for helpless and alienated individuals) and political-social (to empower clients to control their own lives, make their own decisions and choices), will contribute to a number of intervention strategies after separation from a perpetrator (Wood, 2000). On the individual level of the suggested constructivist model, women’s empowerment strategies should entail a shift on the perceptive level, “from self-blame and self-perception as victim to self-acceptance” (p. 17).

It also requires women’s realistic assessment of responsibility for the violence, as well as a realistic evaluation of personal resources available for fighting. Women’s ability to choose to stay (or to leave) would be further enhanced by being morally, emotionally, and practically supported in their decision, rather than being left alone and isolated. In addition, women who choose to stay will have to overcome a sense of social stigma by believing that their decision is a legitimate and socially sanctioned possibility. (p. 14)

Taking all this into consideration, understanding these dimensions will help to develop empowerment strategies for battered women, especially those in non-immigrant status, and create a tendency to leave their abusive relationships.

Cultural Factors and Domestic Violence

In this section, I will review how cultural beliefs and values justify DV as a normal part of family life. I review three studies that took an explicitly cultural focus in their investigation; Haj-Yahia (1998), who examined patriarchy in Palestine; Sakalli

(2001), who conducted a study with Turkish students; and Yoshihama (2002), who investigated the experiences of immigrants who had been in violent relationships.

Haj-Yahia (1998) investigated the impact of the patriarchal perspective in Palestinian society on DV. He found six predictors that justified DV as a normal part of family life: (a) attitudes toward women, (b) sex-role stereotypes, (c) sexual conservatism, (d) religiosity, (e) familial patriarchy beliefs, and (f) marital-role expectations (p. 598). The results revealed the strongest approval of wife beating in the following situations: if she is “sexually unfaithful,” “if she insults him in front of his friends,” or “if she challenges his manhood” (p. 602). The lowest degree of approval was expressed for the statements that a wife deserves to be beaten “if she does not respect her husband’s relatives” and “if she constantly refuses to have sex with her husband” (p. 602). These results indicate that there is a strong patriarchal ideology in Palestinian society. The men are still masters of the castle and they have the right to maintain their status through physical force. Women are expected to express such personality traits such as warmth, concern, and connection with others. Men, in contrast, are expected to have a high degree of “agency” (p. 615). This study provides a cultural framework for understanding how female subordination in Palestinian society is internalized and reproduced.

Another cultural framework for justification of DV as a normal part of family life is described in a study of Turkish College Students. Sakalli (2001) describes how “hostile sexism (HS), and benevolent sexism, influence Turkish College students’ attitudes toward wife beating” (p. 601). According to Sakalli, HS characterizes women as inferior and deals with traditional prejudicial attitudes toward women. Benevolent

sexism, on the other hand, focuses on admiring, protecting, and favoring women. The results of questions related to women's taking responsibility for the abuse were found to be inconsistent with the results of the previous study done by Haj-Yahia (1998).

According to Sakalli's study, Turkish females didn't take responsibility for physical abuse. In Haj-Yahia's study, Palestinian women accepted blame for abuse they suffered when they didn't perform household responsibilities. This difference can be explained by the sample's difference in the level of education, age, and marital status. Positive attitudes toward wife beating in Turkey were still consistent with earlier studies by Haj-Yahia. It was found that "men had a greater tendency to accept the use of physical violence than did the women" (Sakalli, p. 605). Participants who were high on HS "were more positive toward wife beating than those low on HS" (Sakalli, p. 605). Sakalli's study expanded knowledge of communication scholars about the attitudes toward wife beating in Middle Eastern Countries. These findings may be replicated in further studies, based on samples from different populations such as American and European societies. Moreover, the distinction between two concepts, hostile sexism and benevolent sexism, might be helpful to understand the role of benevolent sexism in gaining compliance in sexist cultures, such as Europe or Russia. In the case of benevolent sexism, by putting women on pedestals in homes and private lives, by making them masters of the kitchens, society constructs a fake idea of women's importance. In this situation, women's opinions have significance only within boundaries set up by men.

Women's attitudes play an important role in developing coping strategies when dealing with DV. Yoshihama (2002) investigated the complex relationship between

individuals' immigration status and their choice of coping strategies when dealing with DV. In this study of battered women, coping strategies were dichotomized as "active versus passive" (p. 429). Active/engagement strategies were defined as "confronting the partner, seeking help from friends, leaving temporarily, suggesting that the partner seek help, seeing a counselor, and seeking information" (p. 435). Passive/disengagement strategies were defined as "focusing on the positive aspects of the partner or relationship, minimizing the seriousness of the situation, avoiding potentially violent situations, and using alcohol and drugs" (p. 435). Yoshihama found that U.S.-born respondents were more likely to use active strategies, whereas their Japan-born counterparts used passive strategies.

Clearly, an important variable that influences coping strategies is culture. In some cultures, active strategies may be discouraged. For example, divorcing an abusive partner is culturally incongruent in Japan even though a victim of DV understands that abuse is detrimental to her psychological well-being (Yoshihama, 2002). If Japanese women perceive the passive strategies to be effective, they may serve as a protective factor for psychological distress in the short run (Yoshihama). This study may contribute in professional consultations for therapists, who are not familiar with the cultural background of the battered women. They need to advocate to their clients coping styles that are culturally congruent, to reduce the level of psychological distress, and avoid the potentially lethal nature of DV (Yoshihama). Since health care practitioners are mandated to report certain types of DV, "pro-arrest and pro-prosecution policies" (Yoshihama, p. 439) are helpful in order to gain a cultural competence on DV. These

might help to alleviate a victim's level of psychological distress, where reporting to the police might be a contradictory approach to some women's cultural beliefs.

Contextual Factors and Domestic Violence

Because DV should be viewed as a social problem and not merely a relational one, another significant theme in the communication literature is the role of contextual factors in DV intervention; specifically, the role of shelters and legal policies. In their case studies, Vaughn and Stamp (2003) investigated the role of DV shelters in the creation of the self-identity of battered women. Although a purpose of DV shelters is to empower women, the shelters sometimes may in fact disempower women and establish a stronger subservient self-image. Vaughn and Stamp conducted interviews with four employees from different shelters for battered women located in a Mid-western state. During the interviews, participants described their duties and discussed their general interactions with clients at the shelter where they worked. After the interviews were listened to several times and transcriptions of the interview were read, the researchers conducted line-by-line analysis. From the themes that emerged through their analysis, two research questions were proposed to investigate the power structure of the staff/client relationship. First, they investigated the properties that define the power structure of the worker/client relationship in the shelter. Four different properties were identified: *circumstantial dichotomy, contrasting experiences, asymmetrical roles, and resource control.*

Circumstantial dichotomy included the emotional state and financial circumstances of battered women. Emotional dichotomy became a normal part of life in

the shelter, because the majority of the clients were depressed women with low self-esteem and in a state of personal detachment, while the shelter's workers were in their non-depressed state (Vaughn and Stamp, 2003). Moreover, the clients were not allowed to work, often felt like prisoners in their own home, and were not allowed to have any social life. The second type of dichotomy observed was economic. The typical shelter's clients were economically disadvantaged whereas the shelter's workers were employed and receiving a regular income. It has been noted that clients had been depressed more from being economically disadvantaged than from being abused.

The second characteristic of the power structure of the staff/client relationship is contrasting experiences. There was a state of separation between workers and clients because of their unique lived experiences, even though personnel were genuinely concerned about the clients' misfortune. The personnel's lack of direct experience with DV, and their own experience, which was limited to observations of the clients and material they had read, contributed to the contrasting experiences (Vaughn and Stamp, 2003). The third component of the power relationship between staff and client is their asymmetrical roles. The workers viewed themselves as "rescuers," "helpers," "advocates," "confidantes," and "advice givers" (Vaughn & Stamp, p. 170). By changing their clients' lives, the workers again placed themselves in a position of dominance over clients. The final predictor of the power structure of the staff/client relationship in shelters is resource control, which is concerned with control over three basic life necessities: housing, telephone access, and food (Vaughn & Stamp, 2003).

This study indicated that a shelter's clients have very little control over their resources. Hence, a shelter, although created for the purpose of empowering women, may disempower them through the power structure present in the staff/client relationship, which is "naturally inconsistent with the shelters' goals of empowerment" (Vaughn & Stamp, 2003, p. 165). Further exploration of the ways in which shelter personnel can communicate a sense of equality between themselves and clients is needed. Relationships between personnel and clients should be based on equality of communication (Vaughn & Stamp). Moreover, battered women need to spend more than 30 days at the shelter. Considering their circumstances, a shelter's clients need more time than that to rejuvenate.

Chapter Summary

In this review, I have described four major themes in the communication literature: (a) the definition of different forms of DV that represent diverse communicational patterns, (b) the impact of communication patterns on DV, (c) the role of cultural factors in justifying DV as a norm in family relationships, and (d) the contextual constraints for the prevention and intervention of DV in our society. Because each of these aspects of the literature locates the phenomenon of DV differently, it is worthwhile to investigate DV from a research-based and practical perspective in trying to understand the phenomenon and intervene in the cycle of violence. From a feminist critical perspective, "Women's [rich experiences] provide [great value] for women's lives" (Kaseman, 1998, p. 51). Recovering women's equality in society can be initiated through shared experiences and told narratives. Promoting a feminine style of discourse

will offer an empowering alternative to patriarchal modes of reasoning. Moreover, it will provide new sources for empowering women in immigrant and non-immigrant status through formal and informal support, in order to break the cycle of violence and move beyond the abuse. This feminine style of conversation is an integral aspect of my qualitative research design, which I outline in detail in Chapter 3.

CHAPTER 3: METHODS

The specific aim of this study is to employ a qualitative, interview-based method to uncover the particular experiences of battered women in non-immigrant and immigrant status, grasping the full depth of their challenges from their perspective. This chapter reiterates the purpose of the study and research questions, and describes the qualitative research design, selection of participants, and process of data analysis.

As a result of this thesis project, I would like to increase community awareness of domestic violence (DV), especially among the non-immigrant community, and through the sharing of personal narratives, support lobbying, and advocacy efforts to develop an appropriate response to DV by the government. As my statement of the problem in chapter 1 showed, there is an information underflow between state and federal law. In chapter 2, I discussed contextual factors of DV, the concept of circumstantial dichotomy (Vaughn and Stamp, 2003), and the emotional state and financial circumstances of battered women. As a result of the second type of circumstantial dichotomy, economic dichotomy, I noted that clients in the study were more depressed from being economically disadvantaged than from being abused. Revealing non-immigrant women's personal experiences will help me to develop educational programs and fill in the information gaps. I would like to connect women's needs with the services already available for them. If new needs arise as a result of these research conversations, I would like to put all my efforts (including education and personal experience) into creating services to meet those needs. There is a possibility that, within the organizational frameworks of DV agencies and informal support groups, I will be able to use my thesis

as a warrant for lobbying and political campaigns in Santa Clara County to protect victims of DV and to create a healthy community free of violence.

Research Questions (RQ)

RQ 1: What are the specific experiences and issues of women in non-immigrant and immigrant status who are victims of DV?

RQ2: How might battered women's personal stories help to develop prevention programs to alleviate the problems of DV for women in non-immigrant and immigrant status in Santa Clara County?

Qualitative Research Design

In order to explore the specific experiences of battered women in non-immigrant and immigrant status, I employed a qualitative research strategy. Qualitative methods enable us to explore the lived experiences of women and elicit their unique personal stories. As opposed to quantitative research, qualitative research methods can elicit the emergence of new themes by allowing participants to affect the research process. Thus, I decided to conduct in-depth semistructured, face-to-face interviews to elicit women's unique stories (Wengraf, 2001). The purpose of these interviews was to gain understanding of specific experiences of women in non-immigrant and immigrant status who experienced DV here in the United States, and of the various coping strategies they used in the face of their situations. I collected personal stories from 4 women in either non-immigrant or immigrant status in Santa Clara County who have sought assistance from DV agencies and informal support groups, such as Al-Anon. In addition, I participated in a similar interview with my thesis advisor serving as my interviewer. The

interview questions were open-ended, so that research collaborators had the opportunity to give rich, descriptive answers. For example, one of the questions was “Please tell me about your experience of DV since it became important in your life—how things happened up to now.”

In addition to prepared questions, some of the questions emerged through the course of the interviews. Each interview took approximately 90 minutes and followed a method advocated by Wengraf (2001; see Appendix A). There was no need to accommodate the linguistic needs of the research population; however, translations of the consent forms were verified by faculty in the Department of Foreign Languages. All interviews were recorded on digital voice recorder and transcribed. Once the data was recorded, I transferred it to my notebook computer and made several copies. Later on, I worked only with the copies and kept the original data in a safe place. While recording, I also took brief notes in order to document details of nonverbal cues that may assist in interpreting the data. I completed the interview with my advisor in January 2006. I conducted interviews with research collaborators and transcribed them personally during summer session of June-August, 2006.

My Personal Involvement in the Project

I included my personal story in the form of an interview rather than in the form of a personal narrative for the following reasons. First, when I was interviewed by my advisor, I used speech acts to represent my experience of DV. These speech acts were triggered by thoughts, and my thoughts were triggered by the interview questions. The sequence of the events I described represented my experience of the abuse in a natural

way, through dialogue. Second, by presenting my personal story as an interview rather than as a narrative, I approached my own story on an equal footing with research collaborators of my study in terms of describing the abuse as well as the verbatim recording, transcription, and analysis. Approaching my own story in this way also assisted the incorporation of my story into the rest of the document by adopting a similar language style.

Before I began data collection with the participants, I had already completed a 40-hour Domestic Violence Advocacy Training course at San José Next Door Solutions to Domestic Violence. Most of the lectures were designed around the basic power and control wheel of power (Pence & Paymar, 1993, cited in Johnson, 1995, p. 288). I received solid education and training on the following topics: programs and services available for victims of DV, mental health issues and disabilities involved in DV, children and teen programs designed to stop violence in dating relationships, sexual assault and DV, substance abuse and DV, LGBTQ (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer) populations and DV, police response to DV and strangulation (choking), and peer advocacy.

Many of the principles I learned about peer advocacy were relevant to the conduct of my research project. For example, from the beginning, the advocate should decide not to judge the client, should listen, ask the questions, paraphrase, and use active listening all the time as well as body language and concept checking. Being open to experiencing the person is important to understanding the choices the victim has, the resources that are available, and the possible outcomes of utilizing particular resources. Then, the advocate

should discuss with the client those actions that can put her in the least danger, and how she feels about potential choices. Lethality assessment and safety planning are challenges for the advocate.

There are some other important things for the advocate to consider, particularly, taking care of self while working with women on the edge of crisis. The role of advocate is limited and there is a bottom line. The advocate's task is not to save the victim, but to provide her or him with resources, support, and access to help. The shelter is the first place where a woman seeks help; hence, the advocate is only the first line of intervention, "he/she is the broker, not a savior" (Krenek, 2006, p. 1). Being respectful of the woman's pace and paying attention to the aspects of behavior that might be upsetting are the keys of successful counseling and intervention. Not taking responsibility for the abuse, not feeling rejected if the victim does not accept your advice, and not taking things personally are also issues that need to be considered (Krenek).

Being an advocate includes a lot of responsibilities. It means to hear and understand the voice of the victim (Krenek, 2006). Advocacy should be described through the victim's perspective, depending on needs and desires. Some clients of Next Door Solutions to Domestic Violence are seeking help or information, or just want to talk. The challenge for an advocate comes when services or personal boundaries need to be set up for the well-being of advocates themselves and for the clients (Krenek). Some clients almost want the advocate to replace the abuser as the controlling force in their lives, especially if they have had little experience with making their own decisions and running their own lives. "There is an important thing to remember for an advocate: be

the *voice* for the client, not another *being* for the client” (Krenek, p. 1). The types of boundaries the advocate sets with the client are determined in some ways by the boundaries the advocate sets with co-workers and according to the position within the agency.

There are three types of advocates: (a) an advocate who will do whatever the client asks, never says no, becomes overwhelmed, and is at risk of becoming an enabler or pleaser; (b) an advocate who will assume a controlling influence in the client’s life and who could push the client into decisions she might not want to make; and (c) an advocate who balances both characteristics (Krenek, 2006). In order to balance those characteristics, an advocate should let people know that they are not alone and that there are resources and people in the community that are there for them. It is an advocate’s responsibility to get the client connected to those resources. Given both my personal story and the intimate nature of the methods I have chosen, it was important for me to recall these guidelines as I recruited and conducted interviews.

Research Collaborators and Participants (definitions)

Throughout the thesis, I use the terms “research collaborators” interchangeably with “participants” in my study, as traditionally established for the purposes of qualitative research (Rzepka, 2005). The use of the term “research collaborators” is intended to recognize the participants for their significant contribution to the study and to acknowledge the partnership between the researcher and the survivors (Hoff, 1990). I would like to emphasize the departure from the traditional long-distance power relationship between the population that is being researched and the researcher (Rzepka).

Selection of the Participants

Purposive sampling was used to recruit 4 non-immigrant or immigrant women who have been living in the United States from 4 to 30 years, had an intimate heterosexual relationship, experienced DV, resided in a shelter, sought help through local law enforcement agencies, or attended informal support groups, such as Al-Anon. Interviews were held at the participants' convenience in places such as their homes, office, or church. Maintaining confidentiality was a central concern in the recruitment and ongoing involvement of participants in this study.

All procedures for this study were approved by the Human Subjects Review Board of San José State University as well as by the directors of the shelter prior to participant recruitment (See Appendix B). The protocol was submitted on April 6, 2006 to SJSU's IRB committee along with a letter of support from the Director of Housing Services at Next Door Solutions to Domestic Violence, San José. The Director of Housing Services, Nalini Shekar, acknowledged in the letter of support that the Next Door Solutions to Domestic Violence agency was willing to collaborate in the recruitment process of women in non-immigrant status in order to address my first research question: "RQ1: What are the specific experiences and issues of women in non-immigrant status who are victims of DV?" Moreover, I had recruitment agreements with Christine Hagion-Rzepka, the Founder and Director of The Ripple Effect (an organization that developed a Public Health Approach to Domestic Violence in Santa Clara County); with Jenifer Sweney, Director of the Green Book Project, National Approach to Domestic Violence; and with Milina Jovanovic, Immigration Relations

Integration Services, representative of the Office of Human Relations, County of Santa Clara.

In order to develop additional contacts with non-immigrant participants, I attended Al-Anon, a support group for spouses of alcoholics. Also, I was invited to attend a round table discussion at the Domestic Violence Council of Santa Clara County, and other conferences related to the DV issues in immigrant and non-immigrant communities throughout the summer of 2006, where specific issues concerning immigration and DV in Santa Clara County were addressed. This gave me the grounds to address my second research question: "How might battered women's personal stories help to develop prevention programs to alleviate the problems of DV for women in non-immigrant status in Santa Clara County?"

My goal was to reach this vulnerable population in an indirect and appropriate way. I was looking for professionals who were working with the immigrant and non-immigrant populations directly. Once a woman agreed to participate in my study, I met with her personally. Research collaborators were assured that their participation was voluntary and unrelated to the services of the shelter. I distributed consent forms to provide all the details of this study, to gain permission from the participants, and to ensure participants that their information and privacy were protected and would remain confidential. Although I designed the interview to ensure an appropriate and sensitive exchange, participants were free to terminate the interview at any time. All respondents were asked whether they would need to speak to a counselor; however, no referral for counseling was requested or made by the time the interviews were completed.

Recruiting

At one of the board meetings on immigrant survivors of DV held at the shelter, I made an announcement about my desire to interview women in non-immigrant and immigrant status. The shelter personnel were interested in my study, because they would be able to use my findings from the study for advocacy, lobbying and political campaigns. I provided shelter employees with a written invitation outlining the nature and scope of the study (see Appendix B). We had a verbal agreement, that once women decided to become participants in this study, they would contact me directly via e-mail or phone or through the Director of Housing Unit of the shelter.

My first understanding was that Next Door Solutions to Domestic Violence would be interested in my services, because they were doing their own research on non-immigrant and immigrant women, who were facing difficulties of getting social security numbers, social security benefits, and driver's licenses. Even after I made several announcements at the meeting at the Next Door Solutions to Domestic Violence, and sent numerous follow up e-mails, nobody from this agency contacted me regarding my study. However, I was able to recruit three research collaborators indirectly through the shelter while attending their DV support group. I was able to recruit the other two research collaborators through personal networking at Al-Anon groups.

Description of the Research Collaborators

The final pool of research collaborators consisted of 5 women, including myself, ranging in age from 27 to 60 (see Appendix C). All women lived in California at the time of the interview. Two of them, in non-immigrant status, had lived significant

periods of their lives outside of the United States and came to America 4 years ago. Three of them, in immigrant status, have been living in the United States for about 30 years. Two of the women who are present in the United States in non-immigrant status (undocumented and with H4 visas), left their abusive relationships. The length of time since we had left our abusive relationships ranged from 7 to 10 months. At the time of the interview, all were involved in Family Court proceedings in regards to spousal support, Juvenile Court proceedings in regards to child custody and child support, and Immigration proceedings in regards to re-adjusting their own legal status separate from the abuser under WAVA and U visa deferred action. Three of the women who are present in the United States in immigrant status (American citizens with the legal right to work) were still in abusive relationships. Two of them were in the process of making a decision to leave an abusive relationship, whereas 1 out of the 3 women never thought of leaving her abuser. Those 3 women were active participants in the Al-Anon group for about 12 years. Four out of 5 women have children with the abusers.

The group was diverse in terms of race and ethnicity, and included one Russian (myself), one Ukrainian, one Portuguese, one Mexican, and one Pole. Four out of 5 women did not know their partners very well when they married. One of the 5 women had never seen her husband before coming to the United States; she was a mail-order bride.

The educational level of the group was also heterogeneous. One of the women had a master's degree, one of the women had a DDS, and 3 of the women had completed high school. The woman with a master's degree was unemployed due to her immigration

status. One of the women who completed high school was employed as a housing manager at the senior center, and was working on a certificate in counseling; moreover, she was very active in the DV field and volunteered as a hot line assistant at the shelter. She was also planning to get her real estate license. Another woman who completed high school worked when she first moved to the United States, but at the time of the interview she was unemployed. The other woman with a high school diploma was also unemployed; she had never worked and had never looked for a job in the United States. I had a medical degree from my country of origin, and I was in graduate school at the time of the interview.

In terms of their relationship history, 2 out of the 5 participants reported no prior direct experience of abuse before becoming involved romantically in a relationship that later became abusive; however, I witnessed my dad physically abusing my mom as a child. Another participant had a very controlling mother. The 5th participant reported having been abused in multiple relationships, and in her previous marriage specifically.

For all the women, the DV relationship occurred in adulthood and ranged in length from 4 years to 30 years. In these relationships, all research collaborators told of financial, physical, emotional, and verbal abuse. Four out of the 5 women told of sexual abuse. One woman told of spiritual abuse. Financial abuse came in many different categories: withholding of money, extortion of houses and other property from the victim, taking away credit cards, not paying off the victim's credit cards to thus create huge monetary debts for the victim, hiding income, and many other tactics. All 5 subjects were emotionally and psychologically abused with tactics including: threatening to kill

the victim, preventing the mother from seeing the children, destroying the victim's flower garden, using the victim's bedroom for storage, threatening to report the victim to immigration services, and kidnapping. One of the 5 women was kidnapped with her daughter by her husband's friends and sent to Immigration Jail. Her husband paid his friends \$1000 for each hostage to kidnap them and take them to jail.

The range of services available for the research collaborators to help them to move beyond the cycle of violence varied greatly. One woman was able to use the services of a safe house at the shelter. She lived there for 3 months, and then she moved out to an apartment. Another woman sought assistance at the shelter, but her application was rejected due to her financial situation: Her name was on the mortgage papers along with the abuser's name. One of the 5 women was able to withdraw money from the joint bank account and rent a room in a private house. The other 2 women never tried to leave. Three of the women were using Al-Anon support groups as an empowerment strategy for their oppressive situation.

The group of women who participated in the study was very diverse in terms of ethnicity, race, culture, level of understanding of their abusive situation, and assessment of their safety plan. Counter to my expectations, the women who were present in non-immigrant status with no legal right to work in the United States left their abusers, while the women who were already American Citizens and had all the legal rights to work still stayed in their abusive relationships. However, their experiences of the abuse were quite dissimilar in some aspects, and very similar in others.

Process of Data Analysis

I used qualitative interpretive methods to analyze the interview data. As a conceptual framework, I applied feminist critical theory (FCT) analysis, victim's support-seeking behavior (VSSB) analysis, and coordinated management of meaning (CMM) theory. Right after each interview session, I constructed "debriefing notes" (Wengraf, 2001, p. 142) in the same place where the interview was conducted. For 30-60 minutes, I wrote everything that I remembered about the narrative. Immediate debriefing, note taking, and recording enabled me "to recreate the atmosphere in which each conversation took place; and feel the presence of the participants" (p. 143).

To produce notes, memos, thoughts and reactions, I applied a line-by-line transcription, which is a detailed analysis of every distinct word or phrase. I conducted the same process of data analysis on my own and other's interviews. When listening for the first time, I transcribed each interview in full in the middle column of the transcript matrix. When listening for the second time, I noted down only key words and phrases along with the notes taken during the interview in the side columns. I numbered each transcript, quotation, and keyword using physical line units. While listening, I paused and re-played portions of the interviews in order to record memos on how intonation structured and influenced the delivery of meaning. After I had listened to the interviews and read the transcriptions several times, I conducted open coding procedures and labeled the phenomena. I applied analysis based on the following criteria: "repetition, which exists when key words, phrases, or complete sentences are repeated verbatim" (Reich,

2002, p. 299). After identifying individual themes in each transcript, I undertook to identify the relative significance between the themes.

I put some of the ideas on index cards and compared them in order to generate categories (themes) particularly related to the experiences of women in non-immigrant status. I reassembled themes that emerged during the open-coding process and connected those categories into a conceptual framework (Vaughn & Stamp, 2003) that addressed my research question: “RQ 1: What are the specific experiences and issues of women in non-immigrant and immigrant status who are victims of DV?” Once the repetitive patterns were identified, I analyzed them in the light of the feminist critical theory by applying the following framework: (a) evidence of natural womanhood (Bartholomeusz, 1999; Triece, 1999) assumptions, (b) links between the concept of natural womanhood and the general context of paternalistic dominance (Lerner, 1993), and (c) evidence of natural woman within the concept of the true practical woman (Triece). Following the FCT analysis, I applied VSSB analysis to address my RQ 2: “How might battered women’s personal stories help to develop prevention programs to alleviate the problems of DV for women in non-immigrant and immigrant status in Santa Clara County?” To conclude the process, I looked for examples that illustrate the role of CMM theory in the women’s told narratives and behavioral seeking patterns. I explain these conceptual frameworks in more detail at the beginning of chapter 5.

Chapter Summary

In order to address my general research question RQ1, “What are the specific experiences and issues of women in non-immigrant and immigrant status who are victims

of DV?,” I used a qualitative research design. Qualitative methods enable us to explore the lived experiences of women and elicit their unique personal stories. “Qualitative research interviews can provide a setting for catharsis. . . . [Face-to-face] interviews can give ‘a voice to voiceless,’ as some who may never have been able to tell their stories are finally heard” (Campbell, 2002, p. 141). My intent was to acknowledge my participants by any means possible, and to create for research collaborators a safe environment to share. I completed training to acquire active listening skills and to understand what it takes to be a good DV advocate, which was necessary for successful interviews and completion of my thesis. I designed the interview questions to ensure an appropriate and sensitive exchange.

In order to address research RQ2, “How might battered women’s personal stories help to develop prevention programs to alleviate the problems of DV for women in non-immigrant and immigrant status in Santa Clara County?,” I used a complex theoretical application of two theories: Coordinated management of meaning theory and feminist critical theory. While giving the reader a theoretical foundation to explain the perpetuation of violent behavior in the family relationship, I also incorporated a practical theme: VSSB that emerged through researcher-participant face-to-face interviewing. Finally, I explained the thorough process of data analysis that gave me insights into CMM theory and FCT as explanations for the phenomenon of DV. Following this chapter, I present portraits of research collaborators in order to frame the themes that I describe in Chapter 5.

CHAPTER 4: PORTRAITS OF THE RESEARCH COLLABORATORS

In this section, I summarize the stories of the research collaborators, followed by my personal story. Following Rzepka (2005), the stories are presented in the form of “a brief narrative to give [the reader] a flavor of their [lived] experiences of the abuse” (p. 206; see also Appendix D). Quotations from our life narratives are presented verbatim—as spoken—except for the corrections I have made to assist the reader with clarity. While summarizing the research collaborators’ stories, following Rzepka I made every effort to recount our lived experiences in a respectful way, not minimizing the important events or turning points, and taking into account the participants’ confidentiality by changing details that might identify them. Research collaborators consented to having their life histories made public, although pseudonyms are used to protect their identities. I will present the emergent themes regarding specific experiences of battered women in non-immigrant and immigrant status in chapter 5. Summaries of each of the research collaborators’ stories are presented prior to data analysis so that, rather than focusing on the stories as data, each participant will first be presented as a whole person. This approach reflects my commitment to honor the participants’ contributions to this study (Rzepka). It also acknowledges the complex specific cultural contexts of battered women in non-immigrant and immigrant status, in which domestic violence (DV) occurs.

Svetlana

Svetlana is Ukrainian. She is 31. Svetlana grew up in a middle class family in a little town near Kiev, the capital of Ukraine. She came from a very loving and caring

family. She was very successful at school. She reported that she had been raped when she was 18. As she describes her relationships with men before marriage, Svetlana suggested that she can easily become sexually involved. She has been married to her husband for 4 years and separated from him for 6 months. She has two children from two different marriages, and has had one child with an abuser. Her husband is an American citizen, but his parents are from Ukraine. She met her abuser on the Internet, and she came to the United States as a mail-order bride in 2001 with no legal right to work. Her first husband died and she endured financial difficulties in Ukraine. Moreover, she wanted to have a stepfather for her daughter. This is how she described her relationship with her second husband:

I was like very alone. Bad time, but I got Internet, I got computer. I was in ICQ and chat. One day, I remember, it was June 26, 2001, he just sent me "Hi!" I replied "Hi!" and we started our conversation. At the beginning he was very interested to talk with me. He wanted to know everything. He looked like and seemed like a very good conversationalist, who could understand me, who could feel sorry for me. I told him about my situation, I told him about my life. We started to talk a lot and then he called and we found many, a lot of common [ground] between us. And he asked me if I would like to come to the United States, and of course I would like to come and see different country. I agreed. He said he can arrange this arrival to the United States. He also told me that he owns company and he may invite me through his company. And if I like it here, he will transfer my status, my visa, to working visa, or student visa. And of course I agreed, because it would open many doors for me. It would give me a chance to change my life to the better. And of course in him I saw a person that I connect my life with. And my daughter wanted to have a father and she believed that somebody may substitute a real father for her.

After Svetlana came to the United States with her daughter, she became trapped in her relationship. Her husband hid from her his criminal past, the fact that he was married at the time of Svetlana's arrival, and that he had a lot of other love affairs in Ukraine. He

was very physically and emotionally abusive to Svetlana and to her daughter. He made Svetlana feel crazy:

I could not understand what happened because from my side I was the same person; I was caring about him; I loved him. I tried to do my best, not to make him upset, angry, and at that time I could not understand what is going on. He started blaming me that I had changed, that I am not that good in bed anymore. Actually, it was accusations without any base, without any reason. And it was not like very dramatic at that time. I could not recognize that it may lead to something more.

While Svetlana was in the United States, her husband decided to file immigration papers for her through asylum. Taking advantage of Svetlana's lack of proficiency in English, he made up immigration papers for her, which Svetlana signed without even knowing what was in the papers. As a result, Svetlana became subject to deportation from the United States:

My application was not basically rejected. Finally, he hired the lawyer. And the lawyer [was] like: "Guys, it is [a] very weird case. You will not succeed with this. It is better for you to take a voluntary departure. Get some time, and try to find another solution, or go back to your country."

When Svetlana started to realize that she was in an abusive relationship, she began looking for help. First, she looked to her doctor during an office visit when she was 8 months pregnant. He made a referral to a counselor, but Svetlana was afraid to talk to anybody, because she was an undocumented illegal in the United States. Moreover, she was dependent on her husband for financial support. The first person she talked to about the abuse was a school principal:

I told the Principal how he treats us, how he abuses my daughter, physically and emotionally. I cried and I did not ask for anything. I just wanted to know how is my daughter progresses [sic] at school. Is she a good child or bad? I told him that for me she is a very best child. I love her unconditionally. After talking to him, I called my friend and told him that I communicated with her school

Principal and she warned me that he is a mandatory reporter and by the law he must contact [Child Protective Services] CPS. What is CPS? And I have been explained what . . . CPS means. What consequences it may lead to. Next day, I got a call from the Principal. [He told me that he made] a report to CPS. And the nightmare has started because I was so scared. They called me and proved everything that I told to the Principal, but I was crying and I was scared. If it cause any troubles for my husband, I was afraid of consequences. They asked me not to tell him. But being afraid of him, I let him know that Principal contacted CPS, and they contacted me. He got just furious. He yelled at me and he said that I am stupid and I don't understand that it may cause troubles with CPS and immigration. And he told me that they may take our son from us. Because me, not having any status in America, and him, having felonies and convictions . . . it may look very bad. And they definitely . . . they will deport me, he will go to the jail, and my son will go to the foster home.

After that incident, Svetlana's case was closed, because her husband persuaded her daughter to tell the officials that everything happened by accident. On November 11, 2005 Svetlana secretly left her husband with her son and her daughter. She was staying at the shelter. When her husband found out, the agency moved her from California to Virginia. By the time Svetlana was filing her good cause report, her husband had already filed papers with the family court and District Attorney's Office. Svetlana was accused of international kidnapping and marriage fraud. She had no money and no place to go. She stayed at the shelter for 3 months. She owed her lawyer \$30,000 for family and custody proceedings. The judge never ordered any spousal support for her. Her son was taken away from her and later on the judge ordered supervised visitations. On one of those visitations, Svetlana and her daughter were kidnapped:

On May 11, I should meet with my son with presence of my parents-in-law in San Francisco. That day, I called my husband. We got in fight over the phone. And after that, I talked to the evaluator; she knew that I need to go to see my son. And I came to his parents' house. . . . So, I came to the front door and the car just pulled over right in front of me and my daughter. They basically cut my way to the front door. One black guy, he got out of the car and told me I am arrested. He handcuffed me; my daughter started crying too much. I asked them who they are.

They did not represent themselves like it supposed to be. So they put us in a car. They told me that they are [Immigration and Customs Enforcement] ICE officials. They told me that they have an outstanding deportation order, which I knew about. And basically those guys told us that they are going to turn us [in] to ICE to have us deported. It was so painful. It was so stressful. And the first thought in my head was, “how he could [do] so?” Because it was obviously because of him. Only him [sic] knew that I supposed to be in the certain place at the certain time. And what I was most afraid of—it happened.

Svetlana described her experience in the immigration jail with a lot of humor.

The Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) officials, responsible for deportation of illegal or criminal immigrants, were very nice and polite to her and to her daughter. They put them in the Hilton Hotel and ordered them full room service. They ordered ice cream and pencils for her daughter. The next morning, Svetlana had an appointment with an Immigration Officer at the immigration jail and the first question Svetlana was asked was “Where is your husband?” That was very strange to her because she had a deportation order. During her conversation with an Immigration Officer she was told that the ICE was not looking for her, and they didn’t send anybody to arrest her; the kidnapping was arranged by her husband. He had hired illegal bounty hunters. He paid \$1000 each for Svetlana and her daughter. It was a federal crime. Since Svetlana had a deportation order, ICE put her in a special program, house arrest. She was wearing a special bracelet; ICE was monitoring her every minute by using a special detector. She promised to be cooperative and follow the rules. They made a police report about the kidnapping and initiated a federal investigation of the crime.

After I asked Svetlana, in her opinion, what should be improved about existing services for battered women in non-immigrant status in order for their survival, she was very enthusiastic:

America, it's a country of immigrants. Family Court need to be more informed [about] immigration system. Because [those] two courts, they do not communicate. Like Federal Court, [should have] more jurisdiction over family court. [When you file the documents to the Family Court], it's not just a piece of paper. It's not just case. It's [people's lives], it's kids' [lives]. It's not being in the courtroom and just looking at the declarations, and believing that the one who can speak better can have better representation I am not satisfied with this system. Because everybody say "California State protects women." But not in my case. . . . Every woman that comes to this country, she needs to realize that [she cannot merely] depend on her husband. She needs to be more informed. She [needs] to be more prepared for taking this journey, adventure. And maybe each country needs to take care of this, need[s] to prepare more information for women who are going abroad. Just give them sources they can turn to and ask for help. Provide them with, like, hot line numbers. So it should not be like in my case.

At the time of the interview, Svetlana's husband was arrested by ICE on family matters. She got full custody over her son later on. Svetlana was under house arrest in her one-bedroom apartment, and was monitored by ICE. She wore a special detector on her right leg that looked like a bracelet. She was not allowed to leave her apartment after 7:00 p.m. Svetlana was undocumented, but was able to file her application for an Employment Authorization Card. Knowing Svetlana's financial situation, the ICE officers made her pay \$180 for processing her papers. Svetlana felt uncomfortable talking about how she supported herself financially in the meanwhile.

Claudia

Claudia is Portuguese. She is 62. She came to the United States as an alien in 1967 and got her legal status through family reunion with her brother. She sponsored her husband with legal status through marriage. She was raised in a poor family on a small island in Portugal. As Claudia described her childhood, her mother was very controlling:

My mother was the controller. My father was quiet. I remember . . . my mother had a lot of anger toward my father in some ways. My father was a very nice

person in front of others with everybody. But I don't know behind the scenes what he did.

When Claudia met her husband, all her family didn't like the idea of dating. They were very controlling and patronizing:

When I came back home, it was a telegram from my boyfriend. . . . And my mom was very upset with that telegram, because she opened it. She signed up and she saw that some guy was wishing me a happy birthday. She gave me a bad time and I didn't know what to tell her, what to do. I tried to get out of the situation with my mother. . . . And I felt bad because, when I grew up, you know, I was afraid to do anything. Everything I did, I thought was a sin. I thought that I was gonna be punished by God. So, that was a scary [sic] what I believed in. And I lived a life kind of always very careful. I was afraid to talk to guys . . . and I was afraid to laugh. If I talked to [guys], [my mother] would get upset with me because that is not what the good girls do. Because if [I] talk to them, people will think bad about [me].

Claudia describes her husband as very charming and manipulative after living with him for 39 years. She tells me that she didn't know her husband well before the marriage. The only thing she knew about him was that he was Catholic and went to church on Sundays. The reason for her marriage was escape from a controlling and unhealthy environment at her parents' house. She was very depressed, and she saw marriage as an opportunity for relief from her oppressive situation.

Claudia described her suffering from the abuse and how she found out about the Al-Anon support group. She had a lot of challenges in her life: a man she wasn't intimate with, a new country, and a new language. One of her girlfriends told her about Al-Anon:

One of the girls, she told me that she had gone to meetings, Because her son was having problems with drugs. My life was not complete. I felt like something was missing in my life. It was not a life I wanted to live. I felt [that] because I wanted to be able to talk to my husband and not being [sic] afraid. It was not happening. Every time I tried to communicate with him, he was mad. Because that's not what he wanted to hear. And I was speaking my truth. And what happened? I start stuffing [inward] all things that I could not communicate with him. And I

didn't feel like I should tell the other people because those [are] things we [are] suppose[d] to communicate with each other. It was important for our relationship. And I went to the meeting. And the people were so calm. They were talk[ing] about their lives. And they were so serene. And all I wanted is [that]. Oh my Lord! This is what I needed, to come here and to listen to these people. Because those people were all together and my life was so unmanageable.

Claudia is in a "self-exploration" stage. She is very happy about the new changes in her life since she started to attend Al-Anon meetings 2 years ago. She started to do things for herself: going to aerobics three times a week, swimming, and meeting new friends. She realized she had never felt good before and always put other people first. She was not scared of her husband anymore.

At the time of the interview, Claudia maintained a very positive attitude. She was going to celebrate a 39-year wedding anniversary with her husband the next month. Her husband still had drinking problems. She was able to maintain healthy relationships with her friends and she could recognize social boundaries.

Maria

Maria is 47. She is Mexican. She came to the United States illegally by crossing the border in the late 1980s. She became an American Citizen through marriage. She has seven kids, four of them by her present abuser. Maria experienced a lot of DV in her family. The first time she married she was only 13 years old. Her mother in Mexico sold her into the wedlock of a 60-year-old man. When she became pregnant, her mother wanted her to have an abortion. Maria escaped from home and gave birth to the baby. When her daughter was one year old, her mother decided to sell Maria into the wedlock of another old man. She threatened to take Maria's daughter away and was able to make this threat because, when the baby was born, her mother had registered her under her

name, not under Maria's name. Maria's second husband was 50 years old. She had twins with him. She lived with that man for more than 10 years until he was killed.

Maria experienced a lot of DV in that marriage:

My husband was a policeman. When he coming home drunk, [he used] to beat me. And [he was] kicking me, and [woke] me up and [pulled] my hair. He [wanted] me to make dinner.

After her husband was killed, Maria left her three children with her mother in Mexico. She came to the United States to work. And after a year she met her third husband. He really liked Maria because she was a hard worker. He told her that he was in love with her and after 6 months they got married. Maria's third husband happened to be very controlling and manipulating in every aspect of Maria's life:

I used to have a very, very beautiful garden. One day, I brought my friends from Al-Anon. We [made] a baby shower for a friend of mine. He was so mad the next day. He brought his workers to destroy all my garden. All my garden. He open all the doors, because I do have birds. And he opened the door, the door of the kitchen, so they can flew [sic] away. He let all my birds flew [sic] away. And he completely destroy my garden. And he was laughing when I [asked] him, why he [did] that; he [said] "Now, I [don't] wanna see you bring your Mexican friends. And they don't speak English. I do not want people who speak Spanish in my house."

Maria's husband used drugs to manipulate her. He was buying pain relievers in the local pharmacy, such as Vicodin, under her name. He threatened to call Immigration to send her and her kids back to Mexico. He used Maria as an object for sexual pleasure once in 4 months. There also was cruel financial and emotional abuse in the relationship:

In the afternoon, when I coming [sic] back from work [I was] going to [put] a [complete] set in the bedroom. A bedroom set. [My son] was very excited. And when I coming [sic] home in the afternoon, my husband [played] a game—five of the workers put all the furniture and all the heavy, heavy equipment into the bedroom. I cannot . . . move it by myself. When I told the workers, he told the workers NOT, because I don't have money to pay them. And he is not gonna pay

for it. And so the workers didn't want to help me to move all that stuff outside of the bedroom. So, when my son saw that, what his father did, he was crying. He was crying and then he [said]: "I can't believe that my daddy can do that." He is very afraid of his father. My son is still peeing in the bed; he is already 13. He trust me, and he talk to me all the time. But when his father didn't see him, he always told me that he [loved] me very much.

Very recently, Maria found herself a victim of financial abuse and her husband's financial manipulations. First, when she came to the United States, she was managing her mother-in-law's apartment building and was paid \$300 per month. Second, her husband persuaded her to quit the job, because he has been a very good provider; the estimated income of their family is \$50,000 per month. Third, when her husband was re-selling properties, he registered everything under Maria's mother-in-law's name. In fact, there is nothing under Maria's name after 15 years of working hard as a property manager for the family real estate company. Fourth, Maria's husband took away all her credit cards and anytime she needs to fix the car, she has to beg for money. Fifth, her husband made only minimum payments on her credit cards. Now she owes \$20,000. When Maria told him that she is going to file for a divorce after 2 years of separation, her husband pretended that he was his mother's employee with a salary of \$2500 a month. Maria was living in the family house that is under construction. This place belongs to his mother-in-law. Her husband came to that house to destroy things: to break the heater, air conditioner, and garbage disposal. Maria is working right now at several places to make ends meet. One job is providing her with a three-bedroom apartment free of charge, where Maria can move in with her kids.

Maria describes sexual abuse in her relationship:

One day he come home with 24 bites on his body. From his neck to his legs. And I ask him [about it]. He told me: “Yes, so what?” Mexican people are people who come to the United States and the only things [sic] they can do [is] selling the bodies, because they are worthless. He always told me that there is a thing for him—a woman. And every woman has a price. Any time he cheated on me, he buy me a big piece of jewelry. Can you imagine, how many pieces of jewelry I have? I got more than a hundred pieces of jewelry! Some of them are very expensive. I got some set, when he [disappeared] for two weeks, he buy me a sapphire and diamond necklace for like a \$50,000. And the next time he cheated on me, he buy me like a bracelet to match with a necklace. Anytime he cheated on me, he give me a piece of jewelry. I just laugh and I look at him. And took those pieces away. I know what happened, but I don’t have the courage, the money, the guts, and the access. I don’t have anything to move on. But I know that I need to prepare myself and 10 years ago I start going to a school.

Maria’s husband always threatened to kill her many times and put a gun to her head. She was looking for safe housing at the Next Door Solutions to Domestic Violence, but her application was denied because she possessed a house in Mexico and because here, in the United States, she has access to the family house, even though it is still under construction. In response to her question: “What are you waiting for? When he kills me?” she was told by a victim’s advocate at the shelter, “I am sorry Ma’am; it’s the system.”

Maria speaks very highly about Al-Anon groups as a source of empowerment:

I start going to Al-Anon 12 years ago. And a year after being in Al-Anon I decided to go to . . . school. And I start learning more English, how to read or [sic] write. And keep going to the school all the time. And being in Al-Anon and going to college to make decisions, I could not make him stop the way he treat me. Because he used to treat me with the worse [sic] words ever existed. Al-Anon also give the courage to call the police and let them know what happened.

And I know for a fact, that I don’t wanna go back to that situation anymore. And I think I can do better.

I am suffering! I am tired to be abused. I am tired to be at the corner crying. I am tired! Nobody is gonna come over and give me a hand. Many times I try to kill myself. Many times I try to poison myself. Many times I was trying

to jump over the bridge with the car. Many times! But I keep reading, I keep praying. I put my knees on the floor and ask God for another day. You know, ask him. I know I am not alone. I was always believing in God. And no matter what happen, he is always gonna be there. I think I was [too] tired to cry. Honestly, I just all the time wake up with my eyes . . . I really swallow. My mouth feel like a [gargoyle is] in it. I was always very sick. Being in Al-Anon and being in a program. I mean two times a week. I never going away from the program. Even [if] I got all my family against me, all my kids against me. I know the program is really saving my life. Because I am learning the way to be happy.

Maria is very enthusiastic and constantly looks for help to escape from her abusive situation. She doesn't have any money to hire a lawyer to file for divorce, while her husband has a family lawyer and is paying him a salary of \$3000 a month. She is applying for different jobs, including a position as an on-call manager for PMI for \$12 an hour. As soon as she gets her divorce, she wants to learn to be a real estate agent. She is also thinking of becoming a counselor at Next Door Solutions to Domestic Violence. At the moment, she is also an Alateen sponsor and helps teenagers to deal with alcohol and drug abuse.

At the time of the interview, Maria was separated from her abuser, but was still in close contact with him. She had several jobs, and one of the jobs provided her with a three-bedroom apartment at no charge, so that Maria could live there with her kids. As a result of living in an alcoholic and abusive environment, her kids have different types of disorders: depression, learning disability, drug abuse, bed-wetting, homophobia, high risk of suicide, unhealthy social boundaries, sexual promiscuity, and engagement in abusive relationships. Maria is very determined to get out of the abusive relationship and provide a healthy life for her kids.

Anastazja

Anastazja is 57. She is Polish. She came to the United States in the late 1960s with her husband as political refugees with the legal right to work. She came from a poor family and she used to live in a village. She has two children with the abuser. She reported not having experienced DV at her parents' house. Her mother always taught her about compassion and empathy towards people. This is how she describes her relationship:

We were dating and then we got married. It was pretty quick because I was pregnant with my son. So, I didn't have a choice. At this time in Poland. . . . So it wasn't like here in United States. That you can raise your child by yourself. When you have a child and don't have a husband, you are very bad woman. So, actually, I have to do this. So, it wasn't my choice actually that I married my husband; it's [sic] just happened. It was my stupidity. But I wanted to have very good marriage. I wanted to have husband, a good husband. I wanted to be a good wife, I wanted to have . . . children. And I thought that my husband will be just any other decent man.

After one year of marriage, Anastazja saw her husband drunk. He became very verbally and physically abusive. She still felt a lot of compassion toward him, because he was deeply abused by his parents in his childhood. Anastazja believed that she could change him. Anastazja experienced a lot of verbal abuse in her relationship:

I always not good enough for him. His children were behaving badly for him, even they were very nice children. He never had . . . time for us. And his priority wasn't home and children. No matter what I cook it wasn't like his mom. He wanted cooking like his mom was cooking. He was always superior . . . he was saying his sisters, how they are smart, how they are beautiful. How is his mom superior cook. . . . And he actually like the idea of spanking the children. I told that you must talk to your children first. Not just spank them. He yelled at them all the time. But he used to say they will beat me up when they grow up, my children. My husband use to say it all the time.

Anastazja describes abuse of her mother-in-law:

We went to visit [my mother-in-law]. My mother-in-law couldn't stand [that my son couldn't drink milk]. "How could child cannot drink milk?" So, she spank him. He was like 15 months old. Just baby. Just spank him. I went to the other room, and I hear my son is crying. And she is spanking him like this.

Anastazja was living in constant fear. Her husband was always angry at her. He yelled at her for hours, and it was her duty was to stand and listen to his arguments. If she did not want to listen to him, he would physically abuse her. She even had to ask permission to go to the bathroom during those arguments. She felt relieved when her husband left home for work. Anastazja tried to leave her alcoholic abuser several times. Every time she tried to leave, she felt financially insecure: How was she going to support herself because she doesn't have any money, any insurance, or any friends? She heard internal voices all the time: "You [are such a] bad woman and even your husband doesn't want to be [with] you." Even though she knew that her husband was so bad, for Anastazja, it was about what other people would think. And if a woman gets a divorce, it brings shame upon the whole family.

Year after year, her family relationship got worse and worse. Five years ago her son suggested that she leave. Later on, her son brought her to an Al-Anon group:

My son came from Los Angeles. Los Angeles, where he lives. And took me to the Al-Anon meeting. I didn't know about this. I've heard something. But I wouldn't call myself. I was so scared about everything. It was just like paranoid. I just, I don't know. I was scared about everything. I wanted nothing for myself, just to be quiet. . . . I [am] attending the Al-Anon meetings [for] almost one year. And they change me a lot. A lot. Because before I thought I can change, or I can help to change my husband. That he can stop drinking. He start to be nice. I always thought if you getting older, you will get wiser. But . . . he can get worse and treat me not like human being. I started to think about myself. What I want? Who I am? And [his] looks [will go] away. It change my life. I feel some power, not much but some. Before I was so powerless. I was just: O Gosh! I feel so

sorry for myself, how could I go so long? But it gave me a lot of power. Even this is not much, but means a lot. I go to these meeting no matter what.

At the time the interview was conducted, Anastazja was in a relationship with her alcoholic abuser. She was sharing her story for the first time and she was crying during the interview. She was planning to leave him a week after the interview. She developed her safety plan and was planning to file for divorce in the near future. Her son was going to pick her up and bring her to a secret location. Later on, when things had settled down a little bit, she was going to look for a job.

Ania

Here, I represent my personal story and write from the first person. I am Russian. I am 27. I was married for 6 years to my husband, who is also Russian. I have no children with him. I came to the United States on an H4 visa, which is a spouse visa that allowed me to stay in the country and to study. I had no legal right to work, whereas my husband did. I was dependent upon my husband who had an H1B visa, which is a working visa. I grew up in a middle-class family in St-Petersburg, Russia. My father was in the navy and my mother was an engineer. My father was an alcoholic, and I, as a child, witnessed how my drunken father abused my mother once:

I remember, my dad, when he came home, he was very drunk. I was very scared, and lock myself in my room. Then I remember hearing a slapping sound, and my mom was screaming. After that, nobody talk to me about that incident. Many years later, my dad quit drinking, and he has been sober for 11 years. He quit drinking, but he never recovered. We never talk about what happened. My mom was ashamed to talk about that event. I was living in the house with my parents in fear of talking openly about issues and my personal concerns. My mom refused to give me any love and attention; my dad was never home and working hard. I lived in a traditional androcentric family. That was [a] very unhealthy family environment. I felt rejected and unloved. As result I got a lesson—a husband can hit his wife, and a man has all the authority in the relationship.

I was living in constant fear of doing something wrong, and I wanted to be a good daughter. Then I met my husband at a nightclub on February 14—Valentine’s Day. We dated for about a year and a half and he was very abusive and controlling even before the marriage.

I did not want to marry him because I felt some gut feelings that this not the right person, but I just could not explain . . . why. I was not happy with him, because of the abuse, but I could not explain; I could not put my words into it.

When my father found out that I was sexually involved with my prospective husband, he pushed me into the marriage, threatening to kick me out of the family house and calling me names that implied “slut” or “dirty woman.” I was pushed into a shotgun marriage. My husband didn’t let me finish my residency after graduating Dental School and I followed him around to different countries as a spouse, including the Czech Republic, countries of the European Union and, eventually, the United States. I felt very isolated and unloved. My husband and I were on different schedules and we never saw each other on weekdays. On weekends, my husband was very abusive and controlling. I had no friends, and all my time I spent studying English. The first time I talked about the abuse in my relationship was when my husband left to go to Russia to attend his father’s funeral. I was able to talk about the on-going abuse with my friend in Santa Cruz:

She is a psychologist. That girl, she told me if you need to stay, you can stay if you don’t want to go back. I was trying to explain, to tell her what he did. She told me: “This is domestic violence. You should set up rules: no hands, no touching, you know, you call 911. You should tell him.” She was the first one who talked to me that way. Because before, the people [with whom] I was trying to share, like Russian, the Russian woman told that this is my fault. If you are staying in this relationship, it means that I am using him: “You are using him. Go and sleep under the bridge, on the street. It is up to you.”

In the summer of 2005, I was accepted to a graduate program at SJSU. While my husband was in Russia, I was able to withdraw money from the bank account to pay my tuition, but I was constantly searching for the right moment to exit my abusive relationship:

The other thing, I took a class at SJSU. And we learn all those theories. And when I was reading the social-exchange theory, there was a research done, based on women, who were in abusive relationship, and a violent relationship. It's been done in Palo Alto. And I was like, "WOW! It's about me; it's about my relationship." I found a lot of common themes. And it was written: "A woman should leave relationship." It was in the book. And I am like, "WOW! I need to leave my relationship." Then I made a presentation on domestic violence. I was so scared. I was so scared to take it out of my chest, because I didn't know how the people [would] react. It was so scary and at the same time I was desperate. It's been like "I need to talk about this! I need to talk about this!" I just realize "OK, I just do this! I wasn't the only one." Eight out of 12 presentations was [sic] on domestic violence.

In November 2005, I separated from my husband. It was in the middle of my fall semester at SJSU. I was able to pull half of the money from the joint bank account to support myself while I was at school. I rented a room near the campus. I was constantly looking for new channels of information in order to end the violence, file for divorce, and readjust my immigration status:

Obviously all my life happened here during Fall semester 2005 at SJSU. People were very helpful. I was still seeking, looking for help. One of my best friends, he wrote a letter for me and we have two lawyers at the Department; I talked to one of them and he told me: "He is obliged to support you! He is not doing you a favor. Here in California we have a very good law, who [sic] protects dependents like you." And he told me never sign . . . anything that I don't understand. He asked me "Are you thinking of divorce?" I said "YES." He said "just don't sign anything."

While looking for help, I came across a lot of obstacles concerning immigration issues. I talked to a lawyer and later on, with an attorney at the District Attorney's

office:

He told me that stuff is not very egregious. Because nobody wants to listen to it. I think it is still difficult to break through the wall, immigration wall. It's a trap. For me to prove that I was abused. They want to see the blood, the bruises. And one woman told me, from district attorney office, she told me: "Why shouldn't you call the police right away?" And I said, "Because he hid my cell phone. He locked me in the bathroom." "Why? What took you so long to file the police report?" "Because we separated and I was scared. I was his financial dependent. If I called the police, he would kick me out from the house. I'm his dependent. I have no source of income and my legal presence depends on him. I was scared, because he threatened to send me back to Russia. I made a police report after I escaped from him, one week after we separated."

DA Officer told me "Next time it happens . . . , call the police the same day."

Me: "Next time it will never happen again!"

I felt so desperate. And I had no place to go. And I don't know what kind of rights do I have in this country. I know that I can study. And I don't know anything else. I don't know that I will file the report; I don't know if I can call the shelter. I don't know. I don't know anything. They don't know who I am, what kind of visa do I have. And thanks God my visa is still year and a half, till July 2007. So I can do some steps. I am not afraid if anything, if anybody asked me. Nobody asked me yet. But many women, undocumented women, they are afraid. Because they think, one day they show up somewhere, and the police will send them away.

I tolerated my husband's abuse for 5 years. At the time of the interview, I was separated from my husband for 6 months; I was doing very well in graduate school, and I filed my application to Immigration Services as a victim of crime under U visa deferred action. I got my Employment Authorization Card in May 2006. It took me 6 months to get my legal employment in the United States. According to my U visa status, I can't leave the United States for 3 years, but after those 3 years I will be able to apply for a green card or permanent residency.

Chapter Summary

In this section of my study, each portrait of the research collaborator was presented in general terms, without identifying details, and through our own words wherever possible. This reflects the complex experiences of women in non-immigrant and immigrant status who are victims of DV. The following chapter presents themes that emerged from the victims' stories. A thorough analysis of the data follows, in which similarities and differences between the themes are presented in the light of coordinated management of meaning theory, feminist critical theory, and victim's support-seeking behavior.

CHAPTER 5: ANALYSIS

In this chapter, I present my analysis of the interview responses in light of my research questions (RQ):

RQ1: What are the specific experiences and issues of women in non-immigrant and immigrant status who are victims of domestic violence (DV)?

RQ2: How might these stories of women in non-immigrant and immigrant status help to develop prevention programs in Santa Clara County?

Before presenting the analysis, I present a review of the theoretical frameworks I employed for the analysis—coordinated management of meaning (CMM) theory and feminist critical theory (FCT). Following this review of theory, I organize my analysis around the essential components of CMM theory. First, I discuss women's *reality construction* and abuser's *reality denial* (Cronen, 1995); specifically, how the language and actions through which participants constructed their own reality and, at times, denied the reality of the abuser. It is important to note that reality construction occurs through *repetitive patterns* (Shailor, 1995). In the remainder of the chapter, I describe how, under the assumptions of CMM theory, two repetitive patterns for women's reality construction can be identified through the lens of FCT: (a) the traditional concept of *natural womanhood* (Triece, 1999), and (b) the attempt to situate the concept of natural womanhood within the general context of paternalistic dominance (Lerner, 1993). I also use CMM theory to identify repetitive patterns in the denial of the abuser's reality, specifically, in (a) re-framing of the concept of natural woman into the concept of the true practical woman (Triece) and (b) in the victims' support-seeking behavior (VSSB). The

latter theme, VSSB, emerged as an original concept through the process of researcher-participant face-to-face interviewing and it directly applies to my analysis of the interviews in relation to the second research question; specifically, how women's stories can contribute to prevention services in Santa Clara County. I begin by describing the theoretical framework for my analysis.

Theoretical Framework for the Analysis

Theoretical Framework for Analysis: Coordinated Management of Meaning Theory

Coordinated management of meaning theory and its capacity to explain communicative patterns is key to understanding DV. The phenomenon of female subordination is explained through the central tenet of CMM theory that language creates our realities and behavioral patterns. Cronen (1995) states that communication is the primary social process; "how people think depends on the ways of thinking they construct in the course of social life" (p. 20). Social life is constructed of habits, or *grammatical* rules. We learn grammar while interacting with others. If we place a phenomenon in a grammar or action, it will have implications for further development in practice. Even if we have an idea about how a person acts, but we find that we cannot express it in a useful way in order for other people to understand, we may be advised to change our idea even though it is coherent to a particular point of view. Unfortunately, not everything that makes sense can be expressed in language. The rules of language games in society can be based on the absence of clarity and deliberate distortion (Cronen, 1995). People may experience pain and cruelty but, as a psychological notion, experience can be explained differently in various cultures, which leads to disembodiment

of discourses and reality denial. For example, the phenomenon of DV in Afghanistan can be explained to women as a way their husbands love them and a normal part of family relationships.

Disembodying of discourses occurs when conversations follow grammatical abilities and unwritten scripts. Shailor (1995) investigates how our realities are co-constructed through communication. “Events and objects of the social world are the products of social action whose existence depends on their reconstruction in patterns of communication, or *repetitive patterns*” (p. 103). Those repetitive patterns of communication become the existing resources that guide conversations or actions. In the matter of DV, couples bring resources into the relationship that initially might sanction the violence. Repetitive patterns of violence occur within these contexts, as cultural scripts. Scripts are unwritten rules to achieve a desired outcome. Cronen (1995, cited in Shailor, 1995), defined these unwritten rules or scripts as *grammatical abilities* that emerge from multiple stories from the past including those of parents, family, and culture.

According to Cronen et al. (1989/90), a common structure of resources is a *stable hierarchy*, when a person feels compelled to do or say something because he or she feels that it is the only option for that particular situation. Learned grammatical abilities create scripts for particular behavior. Scripts pass over from one generation to another and become a context or culture. When an individual finds himself or herself in the situation, he or she has already seen the behavioral patterns performed by his or her parents. The incentive that makes an individual copy the behavior is called the contextual force.

Contextual force, which is the sense of obligation that derives from the definitions of self, other, and relationship that one brings into the situation, supersedes the logical force of meaning and action (Shailor, 1995). Although the person knows that physical abuse is a crime, he will do it anyway because this is the behavior he learned.

Coordinated management of meaning theory provides a convincing explanation of how contextual force serves as a drive for abusers' behavior towards their intimate partners. Cronen and Lang (1994) identified the term *conjoint action*, when two persons not only exchange messages but are coupled by communication. They argue that language is the central process of human action and "action is entirely dependent on the actions of others" (p. 1). In other words, when two people communicate together they create "who they are, their social abilities and a social world" (p. 2) and, in turn, conjoin to construct their social reality. Cronen and Lang argue, "Persons and society do not exist by communication, but exist in and through communication. Communication is the process by which we co-create what we are. Language is part of an emergent process whereby social realities are created by persons in joint action and not primarily a metaphorical representation of something deep and hidden" (p. 2). Through prior participation in lived practices, we have already developed a sense of social pattern—what is acceptable and what is not in society—through ongoing conversations. We all follow the rules, grammatical abilities, and ways of living. The grammatical abilities become multiple stories; multiple stories became family stories and pass over from one generation to another. If violent language becomes a repetitive pattern, and passes over

from generation to another, then DV becomes an acceptable form of behavior in the society.

One way in which this pattern of meaning is most evident in DV is in the transmission of violent behavior from one generation to the next. Domestic violence is a learned behavior, not a mental illness. Two myths exist that should be dispelled: “I really don’t think he can hurt anyone” or “He must be sick” (Daniels, 2006, p. 1). The first myth implies that many abusers are not violent in other relationships and can be charming in social situations, yet be extremely violent in the privacy of the home. The second myth implies that viewing the abusers as sick excuses them from taking responsibility for their choice to use violence. Most abusers experience abuse as a child and the message they get from society is that violence is an easy way to get power and control over their partners’ behavior. Men who batter choose their behavior consciously.

Theoretical Framework for Analysis: Feminist Critical Theory

Another potential key to understanding of DV is feminist critical theory. Central to this perspective is the perpetuation of asymmetrical gender roles and gender role expectations. There is an emphasis on how women are expected to perform their roles in the society. Feminist critical theory is an attempt to explain the legitimization of male control in society that has been used as normalization for centuries: An attempt to question women’s inferiority by demonstrating that recovering women’s positions in society is possible by means of questioning social and political inequality.

In one body of feminist critical theory, three problematic standards for a society are identified as: (a) the traditional concept of *natural womanhood* (Triece, 1999), (b) the

attempt to situate the concept of natural womanhood within the general context of paternalistic dominance (Lerner, 1993), and (c) re-framing the concept of natural woman into the concept of the true practical woman (Triece). According to the concept of natural womanhood, the wife/mother role is a preferred status for women. The traditional concept of natural womanhood was built upon the dependent-arising theory, a theory that focused on women's roles as wives and mothers (Bartholomeusz, 1999). The central aspect of the dependent-arising theory is motherhood, and that relationships are developed around "the understanding of responsibility, cooperation and compassion" (Bartholomeusz, p. 211). Moreover, according to dependent-arising theory, a woman's behaviors may be viewed as "being continuous, dependent, and without autonomy" (Bartholomeusz, p. 211). French philosopher Jean Jacques Rousseau (cited in Lerner, 1993) gave a vision of a "future wife" that mirrored this idea of natural womanhood: "Women are framed particularly for the delight and pleasure of man" (Bartholomeusz, p. 211). Historically, women are seen as submissive and domesticated. They are seen as homemakers who feed and clothe their families within limited means, and they are not allowed to go out. In existing patriarchal society, this is the way that young women are brought up and taught.

The second problematic standard of our society is an attempt to situate a concept of natural womanhood under the umbrella of paternalistic dominance (Lerner, 1993). Specifically, paternalistic dominance can be described as "the relationship of a dominant group, considered superior, to a subordinate group, considered inferior, in which dominance is mitigated by mutual obligations and mutual rights" (Lerner, 1986, p. 239).

In a typical paternalistic family, as head of the family and breadwinner, the father holds absolute power over all the members of his household. He serves his duty as financial provider and protector. In exchange, he expects from his woman sexual services and obedience. In typical patriarchal society, men have certain rights with respect to the domination of women, and the concept of natural womanhood justifies these rights and subsequent inequality of women.

The third problematic standard of society is the transformation the concept of natural woman into practical true womanhood (Triece, 1999). The discourse of practical true womanhood is ascribed to women who were to be domestic, but needed income for their survival. Injustices of the economic and social status quo motivated women to alter such conditions (Triece), yet the origins of the natural woman as a subservient remained embedded in the new role; for example, as women in non-immigrant status who are present in the United States, but came from Western Cultures. They have been raised in androcentric families and taught to be subservient to men. When exposed to DV situations here in the United States, they needed financial support and safe housing to escape. Those women faced the struggle of being exposed to two contrasting cultures, and probably a confusion of which domestic role to perform. On the one hand, they are good wives and homemakers; on the other hand, they are independent and reject the subjugation of their previous abusive relationships. Exposure to a new democratic culture in the United States can also lead to a transformation into a true practical woman.

There are still cultural standards in our society that encourage violence in relationships, such as male authority and male domination, and using aggressiveness as a

tool to demonstrate male identity. All these serve as a premise to justify women's battering as an expression of institutional oppression of women. Nevertheless, there is still hope for women. Using self-disclosure, personal narrative and stories as a tool of feminist rhetorical action can consolidate an attempt to offer alternatives to patriarchal modes of thought and reasoning. Felski argues that the ornamental feminine style of conversations that uses emotionalism, elaboration and self-disclosure is another "model for analysis of the diverse forms of recent artistic or cultural activity by women in relation to the historical emergence of an influential oppositional ideology which [sought] to challenge the existing reality of gender subordination" (cited in Dow & Tonn, 1993, p. 299). Generating critiques of cultural values from women's standpoints will shed light on their marginalization in society and, in the case of this study, may help to address specific injustices related to DV.

Repetitive Patterns in Women's Reality Construction

My first research question, "RQ1: What are the specific experiences and issues of women in non-immigrant and immigrant status who are victims of DV?," is answered by interpreting the data in the light of CMM theory, FCT, and VSSB. I used the following CMM theory concepts in the interpretation of data (see Appendix E): *women's reality construction* and *denial of abuser's reality through repetitive patterns* and *cultural scripts*. I identified repetitive patterns and cultural scripts through the following concepts of FCT: (a) evidence of natural womanhood (Bartholomeusz, 1999; Triece, 1999) assumptions, (b) links between the concept of natural womanhood and the general context of paternalistic dominance (Lerner, 1993), and (c) evidence of natural woman

within the concept of true practical woman (Triece). To clarify the concepts for the reader, by the term *women's reality construction*, I mean how battered women in immigrant and non-immigrant status created their own realities and their ways of being by having been exposed to the culture in their countries of origin. By the term *abuser's reality denial*, I mean how battered women in immigrant and non-immigrant status rejected the abuser's reality when the abuser's reality, which is representative of the country of origin, became conflicting with the reality and the way of being in the foreign country, the United States.

Natural Womanhood Assumption

The first repetitive pattern that I identified throughout the interviews reflects the natural womanhood assumption. As I explained earlier, the traditional concept of natural womanhood was build upon the dependent-arising theory (Bartholomeusz, 1999), a theory that focused on women's roles as wives and mothers. All the research collaborators applied traditional androcentric and gender-biased rhetorical language during their interviews. They demonstrated perfect examples of how women should look, behave, think, and feel in order to be accepted by patriarchal society. In my examination of the specific experiences of women in immigrant and non-immigrant status, the cult of natural womanhood (Triece, 1999) is uncovered, where women saw themselves as submissive (physically and intellectually weaker than men), domestic (seen as homemakers who fed and clothed their families within limited means), and domesticated (easily tamed as animals).

Maria stated that she really did not need to make the money because her husband was a very good provider, and she didn't pay attention to it while raising *her* little kids. From a rhetorical perspective, it was very interesting for me, as a novice rhetor, to note the possessive term "her kids," not "their kids." It seemed that she was the one who was raising kids, so the kids were "hers" and he, her husband, was making money, so the money was "his." These types of delineated gender-stereotypical roles contribute to the natural womanhood assumption.

Another research collaborator perceived her future husband as a financial provider. Svetlana, before coming to the United States as a mail-order bride, wanted to change her life for the better, and it seemed very easy for her to be dependent for money and for legal status. By meeting her future husband on the Internet, she decided to take her chance:

At that time, economic situation in my country was very hard. And I was not paid on time. He introduced himself as a very successful businessman, because by that time at age only 24, he already had a house, he had the good paid job, he had the airplane or two of them. He told me that he could transfer my visa into student or working visa. And of course, it would open a lot of doors to me. At that time he was the person who could predict my thoughts, who could amuse me, whatever I want, whatever I said, everything was right. In him, I saw the person who understand me and who supports me. It was like the night from the miracle. It sounded too good to be true. It would give a chance to change my life to the better. And of course in him I saw a person that I connect my life with.

There are three sub-themes that emerged throughout my analysis of the natural womanhood assumption (Triece, 1999): (a) financial abuse, (b) sexual abuse, and (c) the connection between benevolent sexism and financial/sexual abuse (Sakalli, 2001). I describe each of these sub-themes in the paragraphs that follow.

Financial abuse. The first significant sub-theme that I would like to discuss is financial abuse as a result of the natural womanhood assumption (Bartholomeusz, 1999; Triece, 1999). Androcentric types of families permit a man to be in charge of finances, while a woman becomes dependent on her husband for finances. A male holds all the power over the members in the family and, in exchange, he owes them financial protection. When a man's desire for power and control becomes overwhelming, he abuses his power in the financial sphere of family relationships. I found the following types of financial abuse while transcribing the interviews: (a) overt; specifically, making the victim beg for money, making a victim work for free for a family business, or taking away any means of financial support from a victim; (b) covert; specifically, hiding information about family income, removing a victim from the joint property's legal documents, leaving a victim with debts on her credit cards, denying a victim access to the family's financial resources, not allowing the victim to participate in major financial decisions, not allowing the victim access to family transportation, and so on; and (c) third-party abuse; specifically, giving money to the children to undermine the mother's authority.

Overt examples of financial abuse were evident in a variety of episodes in the interviews. Maria stated that any time she wanted to buy something, such as school clothes for the kids or something for the house, her husband got really mad. Maria also reported that she had been working as a housing manager for her husband and her mother-in-law for \$300 per month for 18 years. When her husband and she re-modeled

real estate, they re-sold it. When all the properties were sold in her mother-in-law's name, Maria had no legal right to acquire the value of those properties after her divorce.

Abusers also used covert tactics of financial abuse. For example, when Maria bought a house in Mexico, her husband found out about the purchase and he accused her of stealing money from the joint bank account. He demanded that she sell the house and give the money back to him. He also got angry when Maria started working again. He demanded a paycheck from her because, in his opinion, he was the one who was making payments on credit cards. Maria decided to take charge of that by herself. Maria's husband also prevented her from employment many times. Finally, when she quit her job and was busy raising the children, her husband started abusing her verbally by saying that she was "a piece of garbage," she was "worthless," and she was the only one who was eating all the food in the house. Although he had a monthly income of \$50,000, Maria's husband pretended to be broke. He refused to put his daughter with a learning disability into a special program. As Maria stated, it was a specific turning point in her understanding of being in an abusive relationship—her husband did not have any mercy for his own daughter. For Maria, financial abuse was a hallmark of her being in an abusive relationship:

And I don't even know that the way we make business is that we buy some old properties and we remodel them and we re-sell them. So, I never hesitate to sign papers. Cause is the way we do the business. And I never realize what he was doing—he put everything under his mother's name. All the properties going back to his mother's name. And I sign it because I was not aware of what he was doing. Right now, I separate from him for 2 years. But I don't have a place to go.

Maria had nothing under her name; even the car she was driving belonged to her father-in-law. Finally, Maria found herself with massive debts on credit cards under her own name. Maria explained:

I discovered then my husband did not pay my credit cards for 3 years in a row. He was only making the minimum payment. He also cancelled accounts that we have together. He take away all the credit cards that we have under his name and my name. The money that I am making is very little just to make a minimum payment on the credit card that I owe. I owe more than \$20,000 to the government. He [took charge of the finances] . . . and now he is laughing on me . . . I start to realize that where I was in a . . . how deeply I was in an abusive relationship.

Another covert strategy was denying victims access to family financial resources. All research collaborators, Svetlana, Claudia, Maria, Anastazja, and I, didn't know about the financial situations in our families. Svetlana stated that while she was in a relationship with her abuser, they spent a lot of money, but she didn't have any access to it. Because she didn't make any money, she was trying to compensate for it by doing her household responsibilities. Some research collaborators didn't have their own money at all, and a pattern of unconventional behavior at the grocery store could be easily recognized: When a woman was standing in line at the counter, at the moment it was time to swipe a credit card for payment, she would call her husband on the cell phone and her husband would come from the parking lot and swipe his card to pay for the groceries.

The last covert strategies that I identified through my analysis are the victims not participating in major financial decisions and the victims not having access to family transportation. Claudia's husband, for example, was making all the major financial decisions by buying properties without letting her know and she kept saying during the interview that they were poor and didn't have any money. Anastazja didn't have a car,

and she went to the grocery store on foot for several miles and carried all her heavy bags on her way back.

A third example of financial abuse—abuse through third-parties—was enacted through Maria’s husband giving enormous amounts of pocket money to the children. Maria’s husband spoiled all seven kids in the house by giving them enormous amounts of money weekly at some point in their childhood. He showed them how to spend money, but not how to make it. As a result, Maria’s kids didn’t know how to take care of themselves. They were easily involved in destructive behaviors. Subsequently, Maria’s husband abused them verbally: “I told you, my dear, all your daughters will be whores, and all your sons will be drug dealers.”

Sexual abuse. The second sub-theme related to evidence of the natural womanhood assumption is sexual abuse. In compensation for financial security, the husband’s sexual demands often came into play in order to enhance his property and status. The husband’s love took the form of sexual violence as a form of possessiveness and control. Women became sexual slaves. This sexual asymmetry reflected unequal societal roles of men and women. Women’s bodies and their sexual services were at the disposal of their husbands (Lerner, 1986); thus, sexual abuse as a result of the natural womanhood assumption is enforced by severe paternalistic dominance (Lerner, 1986; Triece, 1999). Sexual abuse was described in many different stories during the interviews; the marriage structure set up the stage for sexual abuse, sexual slavery, women’s perception of themselves as sexual workers, the abuser’s cheating, the abuser’s

threats for not having sexual intercourse, and the abuser's control over the victim's sexual desires and sexuality.

Some of the stories suggested that the marriage structure sets the stage for sexual abuse. For example, one of the research collaborators was forced to marry because of a pregnancy, or to save face, so that she was cut off from opportunities to learn and grow.

Anastazja decided to get married because of the social stigma of being a single mom:

We were dating and then we got married. It was pretty quick because I was pregnant. With my son. So, I didn't have a choice. At this time in Poland . . . so it wasn't like here in United States. That you can raise your child by yourself. When you have a child, and don't have a husband, you are very bad woman.

I also disclosed during the interview that my father pushed me into the marriage because I had a pre-marital sexual relationship. He threatened to kick me out of the house if I didn't get married. Maria was sold into marriage as merchandise to two old men when she was 13 years old and again when she was 18. Large age differences between her and her husbands set up a power dynamic that led to sexual violence.

I also identified a story in which one woman was entangled in what could be described as sexual slavery. Traditionally, women were exchanged in marriages because men had certain rights in relation to women that women did not have in relation to men (Lerner, 1986). For example, the first time Maria got married was when she was only 13 years old, when her mother sold her into wedlock. When she became pregnant and her mother wanted her to have an abortion, Maria escaped and gave birth to her baby. When her daughter was 1 year old, her mother decided to sell her into the wedlock of another older man. Maria's second husband was 50 years old.

One of the women described sexual abuse in her relationship through perceiving herself as a sexual worker. Svetlana described her on-line chat with her future husband:

At some point, conversation came to talking about sex. He was trying to ask me a question about like, what I like, what I don't like. It was too fast. We were not even close people, but he convinced me to talk to him openly. And . . . at that time he was the person who could predict my thoughts, who could amuse me, whatever I want, whatever I said, everything was right.

The abuser's cheating was prevalent in two women's narratives. In the participants' stories, the abusers' adultery constituted sexual abuse. Maria's husband was cheating on her throughout her 18 years of marriage:

I know for a fact, that he has a couple of girlfriends. . . . One of them he brought . . . over to the house. He was very scenic. And he always, always put me down. He told my daughters [that they] are going to be prostitutes. Mexican people are people who come to United States . . . [can only] sell . . . their bodies, because they are worthless. He always told me, that there is a thing for him—a woman. And every woman has a price. And he was drunk all the time.

Svetlana caught her husband cheating on the Internet:

He spent much time on the Internet chatting with somebody. And one day I figured out that he was chatting with one woman, but he did not tell that he has a relationship. He lives with me and with my stepdaughter. I wish to say he lives with his wife at that time. He did not tell that woman; he said that he is single, and he is looking. He told his story how successful he is. That he has airplane, businesses, good job and the house. I was able to read all those conversations. About their sexual fantasy. And I felt obnoxious [sic] after I read all this because . . . he wished all his fantasies come true. That woman she supported him. They were dreaming together. And I remember that time when he was spending a lot of time talking with her by one or two a.m. And then he was coming to my bed and we had sex. Everything was perfect and great.

The abuser's threats of retaliation for not having sexual intercourse were emergent themes among two women's stories. When Maria refused to have a sexual encounter with her husband, he told her to leave. My husband threatened me by saying that he would bring a prostitute to our home and have sex with her.

The last theme of sexual abuse is related to the abuser's control over the victim's sexual desires and sexuality. Sexual abuse as a desperate desire to control and manipulate the female partner became an epidemic in these marital relationships. I described how my husband used sexual abuse as a form of manipulation:

He accused me of not being a virgin when we had a first sexual encounter. Another attempt to control my behavior and self-identity was when my husband began to take charge of my body. He forced me to douche. He made me to take birth control pills, because he didn't like to use the condoms during intercourse. During foreplay he made me do blowjob for him. After getting sexual gratification, he went to sleep without taking care about my pleasure. Sex was unpleasurable for me and painful. He thought it is ok to get a sexual gratification through another person's subjugation. He kept telling me that I'm not attractive, fat, I don't have a taste in fashion, and I look ugly in my clothing. After not seeing me for months, he rejected my sexual encounter. He told me that he didn't like my body scent and forced me to use fragrances which I'm allergic to.

In this way, like financial abuse, sexual abuse became a way for men to subjugate women either for their own pleasure or to exert further control over their spouses. Such treatment was seen as a natural extension of women's place within the patriarchal hierarchy.

Benevolent sexism. While analyzing sexual and financial abuse, I identified that the abuser, or patriarchal terrorist, could be very skillful in using benevolent sexism as a means of fake empowerment of a victim (Sakalli, 2001). While providing a woman with luxury and a convenient life, giving her money and buying her expensive jewelry, the abusive spouse in fact was using it as a means of patriarchal domination and control. It is very interesting to note some themes that came from Maria's and Svetlana's interviews. Maria's husband was buying her very expensive jewelry when he was cheating on her with another woman. While putting her down as his wife and soul mate, he would

substitute for love and compassion the opportunity for her to shine in diamonds and sapphires. The whole idea was to put her on a pedestal and show off to the rest of the family how financially secure she was, and that this was all she could want in a marriage.

The other interesting example of the connection between benevolent sexism and financial abuse I found is when Maria's husband was selling all the family properties to his mother, and nothing was left under Maria's name. While he was abusing Maria financially, he was empowering his mother. Maria reported that her mother-in-law was very powerful and manipulative. Maria's mother-in-law stated that, "even to breed, Maria needs to ask for her permission." And, in her mother-in-law's opinion, she possessed the lives of every member of the family. When it came to the point of taking care of his mother, the abuser left her lying in the hall between the bathroom and the kitchen. The old woman had a stroke, and couldn't move for a few days. Nobody came to take care of her. After Maria's threats to call the police and to report elder abuse, Maria's husband removed his mother to the bedroom. While in one respect he appeared to take care of the women in his life, Maria's husband merely used money and gifts as a means of control.

Concept of Natural Womanhood and the General Context of Paternalistic Dominance

Returning to the concept of repetitive patterns as described in CMM theory, the second main category of repetitive pattern that I was able to identify was the situating of the concept of natural womanhood under the general idea of paternalistic dominance (Lerner, 1993). As my FCT analysis shows, women in immigrant and non-immigrant status shaped their lives and acted under the umbrella of patriarchy. Specifically, the

communicative patterns they lived in can be described as paternalistic dominance, “the relationship of a dominant group, considered superior, to a subordinate group, considered inferior, in which dominance is mitigated by mutual obligations and mutual rights” (Lerner, 1986, p. 239). This concept came from family relationships that developed under patriarchy. “Patriarchy is a more wide definition and implies that men hold power in all important institutions of the society, while women are deprived of access to such power” (Lerner, 1986, p. 239). In a paternalistic family, “the father held absolute power over all the members of his household. In exchange, he owed them the obligation of economic support and protection” (Lerner, 1986, p. 239).

Financial abuse. Throughout my analysis, women’s subordination was co-constructed through situating a natural womanhood assumption into the general context of paternalistic dominance. In other words, women formed their rhetoric in order to adapt to a general man-made language of patriarchy. For example, when I started questioning my husband’s inappropriate behavior, my mother-in-law told me:

He is a difficult person, but he makes money. What else do you need? You have such a nice clothes, you can travel, and you can eat in expensive restaurants. He is making money—is the most important thing in the world.

Maria’s family was also against her decision to divorce him, because her husband supported all her family financially:

My sister is not talking to me, because they says [sic] my “poor husband.” It’s a victim of me, because he is a very good person, because he pays for whatever they need. Because he has the money.

As I stated in my interview, there was a rigid patriarchal system that existed in my country of origin. This is what I wrote to Immigration Services in order to re-adjust my immigration status as a victim of crime:

It is extremely hard for me to return to my home country. My safety will be compromised. In Russia, domestic violence is not recognized as a serious crime; it is acceptable. No law enforcement authorities would come and arrest him, because they view domestic violence differently; they have a notion that it is a women's [sic] fault. Since it is accepted by culture, if police officer is an abuser himself, he would never put his buddy into the jail. If I had to go home, there are no shelters for me where I can seek immediate medical attention, no domestic violence support groups, and no counseling services at shelters. There is no shelters for battered women, because domestic violence is acceptable.

Although the women in the interviews recognized the unfairness of the assumptions around them, most did not have the resources to argue against the logic that since a man is a provider, he therefore cannot be an abuser. In my case, I realized that I would not be able to return to a society that did not recognize the reality of spousal abuse, and that would reject the reality I knew to be true.

Immigration abuse. Since the United States Immigration legal system is structured so that the husband is usually the primary status- or visa-holder, his spouse depends on him for legal status. Immigration abuse, or the abuser's threats related to the victim's deportation, is very prevalent in families where the abuser is sponsoring the legal status of the victim. Svetlana's husband promised her that he would re-adjust her status from fiancée to student or H1B visa. Then, he decided to file for asylum on her behalf.

Svetlana's asylum application was denied. He started to blame Svetlana for this. She was already under a voluntary departure order when she was pregnant. She took a risk and decided to stay in the United States as an undocumented immigrant. Her

husband's threats escalated throughout the marriage. Eventually, when Svetlana secretly left her abuser with the two children, he threatened to report her to Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) while they were in divorce proceedings. Family Court officials, the judge, and attorneys were aware of those threats and did not take any proper action to protect the victim. Eventually, Svetlana's husband executed his plan—Svetlana and her daughter were kidnapped. Her husband hired people to handcuff them and to put them in an Immigration Jail. All Family Court officials were aware that Svetlana was on her supervised visitation to see her son, and no further actions were taken. Svetlana reported that she was very afraid of immigration consequences for her and her daughter.

I came to the United States as a spouse on an H4 visa. A friend of mine wrote a letter on my behalf to government officials with a description of my immigration abuse:

I have been a prisoner. My husband has all the power in our relationship and abuses this power through domestic violence. He is here on H1B work visa and this allows me to attend school here, but not to escape. I need to obtain a green card so I can be free from this repressive situation. I am powerless to stop this violence. I am an educated woman with DDS from the University of I. P. Pavlov in St. Petersburg, Russia. I also am a Master's degree student at San José State University so I can be a productive member of society. The only thing I need now is a green card. A green card would free me from a violent home, and an internal struggle from which until recently I thought there was no escape. Only when I came to San José State University did I think there was hope for my situation. I have no opportunities other than school and thus no way to better my life. I ask you to please help me to obtain a green card. This would make it possible for me to live and work in this country as a legal resident. What this action would signify is an end of violence at the hands of an unfeeling man. It would signify the end of abuse and the start of a new life.

Unlike other themes in this analysis, which may overlap significantly with the experiences of women who are legal residents and citizens who suffer DV, immigration abuse is a specific form of patriarchal terrorism that affects women who are immigrants

or in non-immigrant status in the United States. Often, immigration abuse compounds the other forms of abuse because the women are legally dependent on their partner and have severely limited opportunities to leave the relationship.

Denial of Abuser's Reality

Because the participants in this study had all made moves to escape or resist their abusive partners, this section will discuss how the abuser's reality was denied through another two repetitive patterns that were evident in the women's stories. Specifically, in some of the stories, the feminist concept of the true practical woman (Triece, 1999) could be identified in the women's rhetoric; and VSSB, in which the women engaged as they moved towards a new life and a new understanding of themselves.

Evidence of Natural Woman within the Concept of True Practical Woman

According to the feminist critical theory, the discourse of practical true womanhood is ascribed to women who were to be domestic but needed income for their survival. Injustices of economic and social status motivated women to alter such conditions (Triece, 1999). In four out of five cases in this study, financial dependency on the abuser and immigration abuse served as catalysts for immigrant and non-immigrant women's transformation from natural woman into practical true woman (Triece). Women's internal struggles to escape from their oppressive situations came in the form of getting employment authorization cards, developing job seeking strategies, and developing a safety plan.

Employment authorization card. As a part of my U visa application package, I also applied for an Employment Authorization Card. On May 25, 2005 I received my

employment authorization card and I could work as a legal resident. My attempt to file the U visa application package provides evidence that I was both aware of the expectations of the natural womanhood but was also moving beyond that model to seek independence.

Job-seeking strategies. Maria was struggling with her severe economic situation. She had nothing under her name, and she had no resources to file for a divorce. She was very determined to find a job and an apartment to live in with her kids. She described in the interview:

I am applying for a different job right now. I am waiting for them to answer me. And I am going to be working in the afternoon as an on-call manager for PMI. And they gonna give me a free apartment. I will be making \$12/hour. This not enough. But my goal right now, it's as soon as I got divorce I want to learn how to do some kind of real estate business. And also certified counselor for a domestic violence. And I give couple hours a week to answer the phones. I am also an Alateen sponsor that deal with teenagers and once a month I go to Juvenile Hall.

I was in graduate school, and decided to look for a job in 6 months after I graduated. I was passionate about being an actress, a politician, or a schoolteacher. Like Maria, I was very active in DV and substance abuse counseling activities. I decided to devote a large amount of my time to teach alcoholic and substance abuse families to created healthy models of behavior for their kids. Coming from an alcoholic family myself, I was determined to create functional families with good role models and a society free of violence. In the meantime, I was living off savings that I was able to withdraw from a joint bank account at the time I separated from my abuser, and my parents were sending me a monthly allowance from Russia.

Safety plan. Anastazja developed her safety plan thoroughly; her son was going to pick her up and move her to a secret location. She knew where her husband was hiding her immigration papers and passport; she was planning to file for divorce and to look for a job at a restaurant. While I was in the relationship with my abuser, I started secretly saving money. I was able to save \$1000 to open my own bank account. For Maria, developing a safety plan meant establishing financial security first through job-seeking strategies.

Svetlana didn't think about developing a safety plan carefully. After her separation, she was still living in the cycle of financial abuse and dependency. She was looking for financial providers who could pay the rent for her apartment once she had used up her time at the shelter. Once new expenses arose, she found a new man who could afford to pay her expenses, including paying her immigration attorney \$ 7000 and buying her a car. During the term of the interview, Svetlana changed boyfriends three times. She was trapped in a very tight situation, still waiting for her employment authorization card, which usually takes about 6 months to receive. Meanwhile, she was trying some under-the-table odd jobs, including house cleaning. In the future, she planned to continue her MBA program in the United States and find a stable job as an accountant.

Another research collaborator, Claudia, never developed a safety plan, since she never tried to leave her abuser. At the time the interview was conducted, she was still sharing a bank account and property with her husband. I attribute the difference in Claudia's story to her being in earlier stages of understanding the abuse in comparison to

the other research collaborators, who had already made steps to move beyond the abuse by any means possible. As I mentioned earlier, Claudia was in her self-exploration stage. She had just started talking about the abuse and started living her own spiritual and healthy life while still remaining in the abusive relationship.

Victim's Support-Seeking Behavior

Also related to the emerging patterns of denying the abuser's reality is the victim's support-seeking behavior. The following section of my analysis serves two purposes. First, VSSB analysis serves as evidence for transformation from natural woman to the true practical woman. While enduring that transformation, women in immigrant and non-immigrant status started to deny their abusers' reality, since they became exposed to new sources of information: new repetitive patterns and new cultural scripts. The second purpose of this section of the chapter is to address my RQ2: "How might battered women's personal stories help to develop prevention programs to alleviate the problems of DV for women in non-immigrant and immigrant status in Santa Clara County?" I will address this question more thoroughly in chapter 6, where I discuss practical implications of my findings.

While analyzing victims' seeking behaviors among women in immigrant status and non-immigrant status, two major themes emerged: (a) using informal systems of support and (b) using formal systems of support. Formal systems of support included assistance-seeking behavior from professionals, such as Next Door Solutions to Domestic Violence, the District Attorney's Office, Police Departments, Family Court, School, ICE, and Immigration Jail. Informal systems of support included assistance-seeking behavior

from friends and neighborhood communities that I do not discuss specifically in this section, although I would like to point out for the reader that this theme is interwoven throughout the VSSB analysis. Instead, I focus on an important theme that emerged from the stories; specifically, the women's use of informal Al-Anon support groups as a way to overcome their violent relationships. Informal Al-Anon meetings were used as a means of empowerment necessary for the survival of women in immigrant and non-immigrant status and for breaking through the cycle of violence. In all, I identified three sub-themes related to VSSB: formal systems of support that hindered the women, formal systems of support that helped them, and one informal system of support in particular that helped, Al-Anon.

Formal systems of support that hindered. In this section I describe services of formal support that were evident in the light of VSSB analysis. Many research collaborators had bad experiences with the following services while they were trying to escape from their abusive situations: Next Door Solutions to Domestic Violence, the District Attorney's Office, Police Departments, and Family Court.

Preventions from the shelter agencies, such as Next Door Solutions to Domestic Violence, are not always beneficial or welcome. Maria explained how one such prevention program hindered her freedom:

Two years ago I start applying for a shelter to move out with my kids. But at the shelter with Next Door I make all the requirements, I take all the papers. And I was ready to move. . . . And they tell me that they cannot to help me because I own the house. Because the house was on his name and my name, and I have so much access. They say that I do have money and I don't qualify for a shelter. And it was very desperately [sic] for me, very frustrated. I told the girl: "what, are you gonna wait? For me to be killed and you gonna realize that I am in abusive relationship?" And she says, "I am sorry, it is the system." My daughter

told me: “Mommy, let’s get out of here, I don’t care about the money. Just let’s get out of here!” and I couldn’t. Because I don’t have even . . . shelter denied me. I was very desperately [sic] for my situation and my daughter . . . she is very mad at me. Because she says that I always promised to take her away. I never did it.

I was not eligible for any benefits with my H4 status at the shelter. However, I did obtain beneficial advice on how to get a divorce, about property separation, and about spousal support. Before my separation, I collected all of my husband’s pay stubs and used them as evidence when I asked for spousal support in court. My husband couldn’t dispute it when he pretended that he was unemployed.

Svetlana was able to stay at the shelter for 3 months. After that, she could no longer stay. She reported that there is a lot of bureaucracy and control over the resources on behalf of personnel. She was waiting for someone to take care of her immigration situation, but nobody really took care of the immigration papers. She was told that they have a case overload, and they just let her go back on the street with no legal documents.

The San José District Attorney’s Office, especially its Domestic Violence Unit, should aim to actualize battered women’s rights through advocacy and direct prevention functions, rather than facilitate women’s re-victimization and re-wounding. The Domestic Violence Unit of the District Attorney’s Office is the agency that decides whether to press charges against a perpetrator. In my case, the police officer made a strong recommendation to prosecute my husband under the 243.5 Penal Code (spouse battering), but the District Attorney’s Office informed me that they did not have enough evidence to prosecute my husband. Moreover, an officer of the District Attorney’s Office accused me of not being cooperative with law enforcement, because I had not called the police until 2 months after the events had occurred. The District Attorney officer did

listen to my explanations for the delayed report of the crime and told me that if the abuse happened again, I should call the police immediately. I stated that it would never happen to me again.

As a result of the rejection of my case by the District Attorney's Office, they disempowered me and limited my choices of coping with the abuse. Although I made a choice to leave an abusive relationship, they trapped me at the *coping with the abuse* stage. Since the District Attorney's Office claimed they had no grounds to prosecute my husband under the 243.5 Penal Code (spouse battering), the Victim Compensation and Government Claims Board rejected my application for compensation for injuries caused by acts of physical abuse. I had no medical insurance, and was not eligible for any welfare programs because of my non-immigrant status.

There is a lack of education on the subject of immigration issues, on the U visa specifically, among Police Departments. I encountered a lot of challenges with the Police Department when it came to the point of my immigration issues. I went there three times to have my U visa certification form signed. The police officer who took the initial report of physical abuse refused to sign the form due to lack of knowledge about the U visa Interim Relief for victims of certain crimes. He sent me to various county services. Eventually I was informed at Congresswoman Zoe Lofgren's office that the police officer is the only one who is responsible for signing the U visa certification form, as long as a police report is issued within 12 months from the date of signing this form. Eventually, the sergeant-on-duty acknowledged in the U visa certification form that I was cooperative in the investigation of the crime and put every available stamp on the form.

Maria also had a bad experience reporting abuse to the police, which she ascribed to racial discrimination by the police officer. She described the incident in this way:

And the same police came the second time I call. Because I get up again and it was two a.m. in the morning. And what I tried to ask the guy, the policeman, for the report. He told me "SHUT UP! Don't talk to me, I don't want to listen to you! I don't care what you have to tell me. I am not gonna listen to you." So I ask him for the badge number, and I ask him for his name. He refuse to give me that. But he was very friendly with my husband. Because my husband, he is American, I can see . . . the discrimination right in there.

When Svetlana's son was kidnapped by her in-laws, she contacted San Francisco Police, Contra Costa Police, and Foster City Police:

Nobody, nobody wanna deal with this. Police didn't want to take the case. Police didn't wanna make any report. They were bouncing me from one county to another county. They told me because you live in San Mateo County, you can't file a missing person report in San Francisco. I went here in the morning; I stayed till the evening. And the police report haven't been finished yet. Nobody was looking for my son yet. And nothing was done. It was like a long weekend, and nobody wanted to do anything. Nobody passed the case to the detective for an investigation. Nothing was done.

Inadequacies in the Family Court system to address specific needs of women in non-immigrant and immigrant status also emerged in the study. Throughout the research collaborators' stories, a recurring theme was the inability of the current Family Court system to address the non-immigrant survivor's needs. The huge gap between immigration court and family court was evident in the disregard of the threats of deportation on behalf of the abuser and in the lack of any action to enforce spousal and child support.

Disregard of the immigration abuse of the victim in determining visitation orders had led to the victim's kidnap and incarceration. Even though there is a California Rule of Professional Conduct, saying that "A member shall not threaten to present criminal,

administrative, or disciplinary charges to obtain an advantage in a civil dispute,” Svetlana was threatened by her husband with deportation several times. Svetlana and her daughter were kidnapped by bounty hunters hired by her husband and wrongfully jailed.

Inaction by the court, specifically their failure to enforce spousal support and child support orders, resulted in victims being left with no means to live. There was a period of almost a year when Svetlana’s and my ex-husbands paid neither spousal nor child support. In my case, there was court ordered spousal support, but no action was taken by the court against my ex-husband for nonpayment. Moreover, the judge doubted the Santa Clara County Jurisdiction over the divorce case when DV was involved, because my ex-husband filed the divorce case in Russia to avoid payments. He claimed that due to my Russian citizenship, the divorce case was under Russian court jurisdiction. However, both of us were present in the United States, in the State of California, residing in Santa Clara County for more than 6 months, which made us both residents of the State of California and made California law effective over our divorce proceedings. My ex-husband served my parents in Russia with divorce papers illegally, while he knew that I was living in California. I endured extra fees to hire a lawyer in Russia, while I already had a lawyer in California. My ex-husband hired a Russian-speaking lawyer in California so that he would be able to do divorce proceedings in both countries, in Russia and in the United States. He claimed that I didn’t need spousal support because I was not planning to stay in the United States and was going back to my country, that I had inherited property in Russia and my parents could support me, and that I had bribed a Russian judge to have the Russian divorce case dismissed. As for Svetlana’s case, the

judge ordered neither spousal nor child support until the divorce case was transferred to the Juvenile Court after she and her daughter were kidnapped and sent to Immigration Jail.

In summary, the formal systems of support that were accessed by the research collaborators in this study often hindered, rather than helped, their efforts to escape from their abusive situations. Part of the problem lies in inadequate communication and understanding across the different systems that are involved when women of immigrant or non-immigrant status seek assistance for DV.

Formal systems of support that helped: school and Immigration and Customs Enforcement Bureau.

I was in graduate school at the time I separated from my abusive husband. I learned about social theories and how they explained DV. I remembered seeing in a textbook that a woman should leave an abusive situation; it is dangerous for a woman to stay with an abuser:

People were very helpful. I was still seeking, looking for help. One of my best friends, he wrote a letter for me to Governor Schwarzenegger and Anna Esho, the Congresswoman. And we have two lawyers at the Department. I talked to him and he told me: "He is obliged to support you! He is not doing you a favor. Here in California we have a very good law, who [sic] protects dependents like you." And he told me never sign . . . anything that I don't understand. He asked me: "Are you thinking of divorce?" I said "YES." He said "just don't sign anything."

Svetlana opened her heart to a school principal, when she came to his office to find out how her daughter was progressing in school:

I just went to my daughter school to the principal and talked to him. I went to him not as a school principal; I went there to him as a person to talk to. To open heart, to open my soul. And maybe just to cry on his shoulder. From the way he was talking to kids, what he was doing for school, or kids, he seems to be and

seemed to me a very good guy. I went to him, and asked basically, what I want to know. Is my daughter really bad [as my husband] is trying to tell me. At that time I talked to him for a long time. I cried and I did not ask for anything. Next day I got a call from the principal. He asked me to come to the school and he told me: "Svetlana, sorry, but being mandatory reporter I should make a report to CPS. They gonna contact you. [It will be for the best of you and your daughter. They remove the children for a while, but later on you can get the full custody.]"

Immigration and Customs Enforcement and Immigration Jail were very attentive to a victim's story and made every effort to provide support to a victim. Svetlana and her daughter had been kidnapped during her custody visitation and then incarcerated. She recounted the conversation she had with an Immigration Officer:

My husband is a criminal; I am a battered woman. I spent 3 months at the shelter. I was fighting for custody of my son. I was without money, without any support. Trying to break the wall, open the door. Which is locked. I have a lot of information against him. I was cooperative. I know there is some kind of relief. It's just pending investigation. [I am] eligible to get an employment authorization. And just to survive in this country during this investigation. It's a suspension of deportation. But it gives me the right to work, maybe temporary, but to help me somehow to survive in this country. Please let's look at this problem. And if I need to leave the country, it's fine. But help me to leave the country with my son.

Svetlana reported with a sense of humor that there was a lot of misinformation in regards to the location of her kidnapping; ICE officials mixed up two locations—San Francisco and Sacramento. Eventually, ICE released her and placed her under house arrest and monitored her while her husband was on the federal list of most wanted criminals. Eventually, they helped her to file papers for an Employment Authorization Card.

Informal systems of support that helped: Al-Anon. Al-Anon's program is a spiritual fellowship program designed for family members of alcoholics: wives, husbands, lovers, sisters, brothers and so on, who do not drink. Designed for all people

whose lives have been affected by someone who has drinking problems, this recovery program is based on the Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions of Alcoholics Anonymous. It consists of non-professional mutual support recovery meetings, usually held at a church for an hour and a half. The attendees voluntarily share their personal stories and problems and all the members gain insight into dealing with their own situations. The meetings usually open with a moment of silence and a Serenity Prayer, written by Reinhold Neibuhr:

God grant me the serenity
to accept the things I cannot change,
Courage to change the things I can,
And wisdom to know the difference.
Living one day at a time;
enjoying one moment at a time;
accepting hardships as the pathway to peace;
taking, as He did,
this sinful world as it is,
not as I would have it:
Trusting that He will make all things
right if I surrender to His Will;
that I may be reasonably happy in this life
and supremely happy with Him forever in the next. Amen

The leader of the group is usually the most experienced member, also called the secretary. The secretary discloses his or her personal story of living with an alcoholic abuser. Then he or she addresses the topic that he or she wants to discuss. Volunteers from the rest of the group can reflect upon it or share their personal stories. There are no fees to attend Al-Anon meetings; however, they accept donations on a voluntary basis. They serve coffee, tea, and refreshments at each meeting. There is also a time for newcomers to introduce themselves. For some people, these meetings are the only place where they can feel safe to talk about their problems. The golden rule of Al-Anon

meetings is anonymity: What you hear there stays there. After going for a while to these meetings, a new member of Al-Anon can ask a member who has been there longer to be his or her sponsor or personal counselor in order to re-enforce personal recovery and to continue sharing personal feelings.

Although Al-Anon has a history in Christian temperance movements, the program has no affiliation with any specific denomination. It is based on the idea that every person can depend on his or her Higher Power, in order to solve personal problems and reach peace of mind, or serenity. Reflecting on each step and tradition of the Twelve Steps and Traditions helps to put concrete situations or challenges into a clear perspective. Day after day, repetitions of all Twelve Steps and Traditions, including reading the professional literature, serve as reinforcements on a subliminal level. People create safe and healthy rhetorical spaces for themselves, which become the realities they start to live in. It is a very powerful technique to detach from the verbal, emotional, and spiritual abuse of DV.

As my portraits of the research collaborators suggest, Al-Anon meetings served as a means of empowerment and raising self-esteem for one immigrant woman, and as a tool to make a decision to leave an abusive relationship for the other two immigrant women. All the Al-Anon techniques teach how to focus on people's principles, rather than personalities; how not to accept responsibility for the other's people misdeeds; and how to differentiate between compassion toward a situation and enabling that situation. People listen to each other's stories with open minds and with no judgment. They reach an understanding that they are not unique, and have the same obstacles and challenges as

the people around them. Al-Anon fellowship helps to build self-confidence and self-esteem, which are necessary for the victims of DV in particular. It helps people from isolated and oppressive environments to speak up and break the cycle of abusive power.

All the members of the meeting circle around and hold hands. They finish the meeting with the following words: "Please keep coming back. It works!" The following sub-themes emerged from the analysis of VSSB through Al-Anon support groups: breaking the cycle of violence, breaking the cycle of immigration abuse and financial abuse, and disembodying unhealthy communicational patterns and rejecting the abuser's reality.

Al-Anon helps to break the cycle of violence. After attending an Al-Anon meeting, I received a profound understanding of my abusive situation. Since my application for Victim of Crime Compensation had been rejected by the government, I found this group therapeutic and a very safe place to disclose. Al-Anon groups have a tremendous impact on empowering women in abusive relationships. Designed for the families and spouses of alcoholics, Al-Anon groups teach how to focus on people's personalities and on raising their self-esteem. This is how I described my personal experience with Al-Anon:

What I have learned at Al-Anon, is an internal call to my Higher Power and making choices for myself. I can choose to be a victim, or I can choose to be a survivor. I can choose to be happy, or I can choose to be unhappy. Healing on the spiritual level is very important and it is a final process of healing as [a] whole after the abuse. The sharing and self-disclosure at the Al-Anon groups is another environment I exposed myself to in order to find answers to all my internal questions. As a survivor of domestic violence I found Al-Anon groups very therapeutic.

Unlike traditional counseling and therapy, the power-control relationship doesn't exist in Al-Anon. There is no one to impose decisions on you. Sharing is voluntary, and learning is achieved by listening and watching other people grow. Attending Al-Anon is free and there is a huge network of such groups in Santa Clara County. Rather than advice and strategy, simple listening and crying are the best therapeutic strategies. People in the group who have already been through abuse and have endured all the stages of the healing process are the best examples to follow. Attending the Al-Anon group made a huge impact on me personally:

What I learn in Al-Anon, is that coming from an alcoholic family, I was not taught how to feel and explain my feelings, and that all the feelings are important. If I was experiencing bad feelings, such as pain or shame, nobody explain me how to deal with it. Nobody told me that it is ok to go for a walk or go and clean your room. I was under high risk of exposing myself to destructive behavior, such as drinking and unhealthy relationships. I was looking for love, intimacy, and I wanted to belong to some place. I was so un-centered and easy to manipulate. I could easily felt [sic] in love with someone who would make me a favor or help me with advise [sic]. And all this happened to me just because I felt unloved and unwanted at parents' house. I was confused and mislead by the disease, called alcoholism. My dad stop drinking, he has been sober for 11 years, but he never recovered. He never talked to me about it, and never explained his behavior. When he was drunk, he hit my mom, I have heard the slapping sound and my mom's screaming. My mom was ashamed to talk about this. She felt guilty. She didn't want to undermine my dad's authority. As a result I got a lesson: a man can hit a woman, and I can't undermine the authority of a man.

Al-Anon can also help to break the cycle of immigration abuse and financial abuse. Maria explained how she got her citizenship:

I am a citizen right now because I marry my husband. My husband is American. And he didn't let me make my legal status here. He didn't want me to be a citizen. He always used to threat me that he was going to send me back to Mexico. I [could become] citizen after 7 years marriage. Because I don't know how to do the process. I don't have any money to do the process. And I don't know anybody. So, it takes me so many years being in Al-Anon. And start

meeting people, and start taking recommendations from people to help me how to do my citizenship. And I did it. And now I am a citizen.

Claudia reported that at every meeting of Al-Anon she attends, members of the group make a donation into her *freedom* basket.

Al-Anon disembodies unhealthy communication patterns and helps to reject the abuser's reality. Anastazja was very grateful to her son for bringing her to an Al-Anon group:

I had such terrible problem to call somebody and even now. To call somebody else and talk about my problems. I used to sit at home, get scared every day. And [my husband] says: "You are nobody, you are trash, you are piece of shit, you are piece of garbage." If you listen to this for so many years, you will [get] used to it. You would agree with this. You behave like this.

So, I change a lot. Really. And I think this is the freedom. The most important things. To be for yourself. I wasn't for myself ever. And right now I try to be for myself. And now I am a very hopeful person right now. And I can say this. I change a lot, really. I am still scared. I am scared about my husband, I am scared about my future. But, I [am] also hopeful. That everything will be for the better for me. I know.

Summary of Findings

My first research question, "RQ1: What are the specific experiences and issues of women in non-immigrant and immigrant status who are victims of DV?," was addressed by semistructured, face-to-face interviews with 5 research collaborators: Svetlana, Claudia, Maria, Anastazja, and myself. I used my own interpretation of what they said, and applied CMM theory to the interpretation of the interviews; specifically, I examined non-immigrant and immigrant women's reality construction and denial of abuser's reality through repetitive patterns and cultural scripts. I identified the following repetitive patterns and cultural scripts that contributed to non-immigrant and immigrant women's reality construction, through the feminist critical theory: (a) evidence of the concept of

natural womanhood (Bartholomeusz, 1999; Triece, 1999) assumptions, and (b) links between the concept of natural womanhood and the general context of paternalistic dominance (Lerner, 1993). The repetitive patterns and cultural scripts that contributed to the denial of the abuser's reality were (a) evidence of natural womanhood assumptions within the concept of the true practical woman (Triece), and (b) VSSB.

Immigrant and non-immigrant women's reality construction in their own countries of origin was accomplished through (a) natural womanhood assumptions (Bartholomeusz, 1999; Triece, 1999) and (b) links between the concept of natural womanhood and the general context of paternalistic dominance (Lerner, 1993). Operating under natural womanhood assumptions, financial and sexual abuse were justified by their spouses and often by those connected to their country of origin. Financial abuse came in many forms and I identified the following categories: (a) overt, such as making the victim begging for money and taking away any means of financial support from victim; (b) covert, such as hiding information about family income, removing a victim from the legal documents for joint property, making a victim work for free for a family business, leaving a victim with debts on her credit cards, denying a victim access to the family financial resources, disallowing a victim to participate in major financial decisions, and denying a victim access to family transportation; and (c) third-party abuse to undermine a mother's authority, such as giving enormous amounts of pocket money to the children. Among sexual abuse I identified the following themes: Marriage structure sets up the structure for sexual abuse, sexual slavery, women's perception of self as sexual workers, an abuser's cheating, an abuser's threats of

retaliation for not having sexual intercourse, and an abuser's control over the victim's sexual desires and sexuality. The marriage structure in the women's countries of origin was the leading sub-theme and set the stage for sexual abuse and other controlling forms of patriarchal terrorism. One of the research collaborators was forced to marry because of pregnancy, to save face, so that she was cut off from opportunities to learn and grow as a human being.

All research collaborators reflected upon the idea of getting married and having a financially secure lifestyle as a normal part of their culture. I remember that my supervisor at the dental clinic told me, "[The] business world is a man made world. You [had] better get married." Those repetitive patterns became cultural scripts of the patriarchal society. Women live with the idea of getting married, or the idea of being attached to a man. All life is built up around men in androcentric families. A woman cannot question the authority of a man; she needs to serve dinner when he comes home, she can't have girlfriends, and she becomes his servant. Why, then, should women marry if married life is so miserable for them? Is it just for the sake of marriage? Women start living in the cycle of financial abuse and, later on, sexual abuse. All the women experience is living with financial security, which turns to financial abuse at some point, and sexual abuse as a normal and appropriate life style, accepted by their societies.

Since transgression of financial and sexual abuse from generation to generation was normal, the immigrant and non-immigrant women in this study were hoping to find intimacy and happiness, but found themselves in a trap of misery and torture. Even though they started questioning the happiness of their relationship, they experienced the

reality distortion of repetitive patterns as a representation of cultural scripts, such as: “Woman sometimes can be treated as a human being,” or “You are so smart for a girl, how can you live like that?” Those sayings are all over the place in Russian culture, for example. With the passage of time and cultural brainwashing, desperate women try to escape unloving homes and controlling parents in hopes to find loving and caring husbands. But there is another trap. She gets something that she didn’t really expect, but the cultural scripts serve as reinforcement: “If your husband is cheating on you, then you are not a good wife” or “You need to try your best to keep him around you.”

Concepts of natural womanhood (Bartholomeusz, 1999; Triece, 1999) and its embeddedness within the general atmosphere of paternalistic dominance (Lerner, 1993) justified the women’s duties as homemakers and mothers and crafted through rhetorical strategy, repetitive patterns, that became cultural scripts, and a tradition. “*Tradition* is a strategy that relies on naturalization, a process by which ideas, beliefs, or practices specific to a particular time period are framed timeless, and thus inevitable like nature itself” (Triece, p. 47). This was the way the young women were brought up and taught. Patriarchal power and control kept immigrant and non-immigrant women in financial isolation and reality distortion. The only breadwinner of the family was a man. If the man died, all the rest of the family would be left with no source of income. And for women, it was the only way to be. I remember 4 years ago when I was trying to leave my abuser for the first time, I met a man who wanted to marry me and save me from the abusive relationship. But in time, he started calling me “slut,” prevented me from meeting my friends, made me cook for him, and wash his laundry. There is a traditional

saying in Russia: “I don’t want to get married because I don’t want to wash my husband’s socks!” I recognized that the same patterns were being repeated in a new relationship.

It can become a tradition for a woman to live in the cycle of financial abuse. One of the research collaborators, after her separation from the abuser, still lived in the cycle of financial abuse: she exchanged sex for the apartment she was living in, for attorney’s fees, and for cars. Once a man could not afford something for her, she would find another one who could provide for her. One of the victims reported that her father would stop sending her money because he wanted her to come back to her country of origin. Then he told her that he would buy anything she wanted—from an expensive car to an apartment. Women had to travel from one *protector* and *provider* to another. When I was looking for help, my girlfriend told me: “If you want to get out of the relationship, go and sleep under the bridge. He is not responsible to support you. Otherwise, go and find another man.”

The experiences of these five women in immigrant and non-immigrant status, including my personal experience, represent how disembodiment of discourses occur when conversations followed grammatical abilities and unwritten scripts. It is interesting to note how grammatical abilities and unwritten scripts became repetitive patterns of communication, and how those repetitive patterns of communication became the existing cultural scripts that guide conversations or actions. Women in immigrant and non-immigrant status had been living with the clear reality in their minds: “This is how relationships work and this is what couples normally go through.” That was their repetitive pattern, the message that traveled from one generation to another.

Immigrant and non-immigrant women's denial of their abusers' reality was achieved through (a) evidence of natural woman within the concept of the true practical woman (Triece, 1999) and (b) VSSB. Transformation into true practical women (Triece) and freeing themselves from oppressive situations came in the form of getting employment authorization cards, developing job seeking strategies, and developing safety plans. Construction of a new reality and hope for a new way of being was also achieved through the VSSB: using formal systems of support—such as Next Door Solutions to Domestic Violence, school, the District Attorney's Office, Police Departments, Family Court, ICE, and Immigration Jail—and informal systems of support, such as Al-Anon support groups. Through analysis of VSSB by means of Al-Anon support groups, it became clear that Al-Anon enabled the women to break the cycle of violence, to disembody unhealthy communication patterns and reject the abuser's reality, and to break the cycle of immigration abuse. Coordinated management of meaning theory can help to explain these findings.

Coordinated management of meaning theory—specifically, how its concepts of repetitive patterns and cultural scripts play significant role in women's reality construction and denial of abuser's reality—explains (a) how abusive patterns of interactions are sustained through the rules of language games by disembodiment of discourses and victim's reality, and (b) how abusive patterns of interactions are broken apart to move beyond the cycle of abuse when a women is exposed to the reality of a new culture. Women in immigrant and non-immigrant status have a double challenge; they need to overcome language barriers to understand they are in abusive relationships, and

they also need to move beyond the abuse by breaking the cycle. The phenomena of female subordination and female financial dependency are perfectly aligned with the notion that language creates our realities and behavioral patterns. Cronen (1995) stated that communication is the primary social process; “How people think depends on the ways of thinking they construct in the course of social life” (p. 20). These social processes contribute directly to the subordination of women.

At the same time, because social life is constructed of habits, or grammatical rules (Cronen, 1995), we can learn a new grammar while interacting with others. As one of the research collaborators, after reading about DV in a textbook, I realized “A battered woman should leave a relationship”; and after going to Al-Anon meetings, I was exposed to a new reality in which physical abuse was seen as a crime. Through exposure to new repetitive patterns and cultural scripts, battered women in immigrant and non-immigrant status in this study were able to move from their reality construction stage through cultural scripts of their country of origin, to the denial of the abuser’s reality stage as constructed by the new culture, the United States.

CHAPTER 6: IMPLICATIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

In this final chapter, I discuss theoretical and practical implications of my research findings. Furthermore, I describe limitations and directions for future research.

Theoretical Implications

My research study examined the experiences of women in disadvantageous situations. My interpretive analysis of immigrant and non-immigrant women's stories was conducted to show what it feels like for a woman to be mistreated, put down, or discriminated against because of her gender. Applying feminist critical theoretical analysis to immigrant and non-immigrant women's narratives of abuse was a good opportunity for me as a novice feminist critic "to challenge the myth that keeps women down, to unpack the mystiques of femininity and masculinity, to focus on the role of conventions in discourse" (Dow, 2004). Moreover, by doing this critical analysis of immigrant and non-immigrant women, I introduced a feminine style of conversation as an alternative to the conventional patriarchal discourse. By unpacking women's discourses and applying coordinated management of meaning (CMM) theory, I was able to identify the repetitive patterns, cultural scripts and distorted reality construction that occurred in their own countries of origin and, later on, the denial of their abuser's reality when they were exposed to repetitive patterns and cultural scripts of the foreign country, the United States.

Immigrant and non-immigrant women's rhetorical discourse was fully developed through personal abuse narratives that created a powerful *rhetor-audience relationship* (Dow & Tonn, 1993). The rhetor-audience relationship was achieved through the sharing

of female experiences through a feminine style of storytelling by using self-disclosure (Dow & Tonn). The hallmark of the feminine style of conversation was the women's personal narratives. Communication strategies of these immigrant and non-immigrant women reflected the tasks they were expected to perform in the private sphere. The women's rhetoric "celebrated strategies regarded traditionally as feminine: the use of experience in testing generalizations, the importance of trusting personal reactions, and the applicability of wisdom from private sphere to the public sphere" (Dow & Tonn, p. 292). In contrast, personal narratives from within typically androcentric families stereotypically portrayed males as breadwinners and family protectors, while "the traditional construction of women as wives, mothers, and homemakers [was] largely [achieved through their concern] with private rather than public matters" (Parry-Giles & Parry-Giles, 1996, p. 346). In the study, the use of personal self-disclosure and elaborate style of conversation were strategies to highlight values and experiences peculiar to immigrant and non-immigrant battered women's culture. Moreover, the use of self-disclosure also functioned as a critique of the exclusion of women's modes of reasoning from public life (Parry-Giles & Parry-Giles). Through revealing personal stories and narratives, these women described the essence of female life in a public way.

This feminine style of conversation was ornamental and elaborated; it served as a tool to build trust among women and develop the women's support networks. Through rhetorical analysis in the light of the feminist critical theory (FCT), CMM theory, and victim's support-seeking behavior (VSSB) in the women's personal narratives, I demonstrated that there was distinction between private and public modes of discourse

and thought, and there was a distinction that has devalued women's rhetorical contributions. There was little hope in patriarchal society to develop the language that might be informant of these women's experiences.

In this study, self-disclosure as a hallmark of feminine style was used to challenge the power of patriarchy and was a necessary attribute to the "personal, organized in inductive or non-linear patterns, stylized and ornamental, reliant on anecdotes and examples, [that were] likely to encourage identification between a speaker and audience" (Parry-Giles & Parry-Giles, 1996, p. 339). Women's rhetoric in my research study was simply adaptation to obstacles posed by the patriarchal regime (Parry-Giles & Parry-Giles). There were no alternatives offered to patriarchal modes of thought and reasoning in immigrant and non-immigrant battered women's countries of origin. Thus, the rhetorical analysis of women's narratives could contribute to the critique of existing patriarchal language. Critique of patriarchal society, not merely analyzing the feminine style of discourse, may contribute to expanding the language boundaries and give the opportunity for the rhetors to work outside of traditional discursive and institutional forms (Parry-Giles & Parry-Giles). The use of rhetoric in the conversations should not be restricted to masculine discourse.

Practical Implications

Implications for Research Collaborators

In this section, I discuss the benefits of this study for the participants. Research collaborators were excited to participate in my research, and several benefits for them

were apparent. Campbell (2002) explained the advantages of participating in qualitative research:

1. Qualitative research interviews can provide a setting for catharsis.
2. Such interviews provide the participant with an opportunity for self-acknowledgement and validation of her experience.
3. The participant may feel a sense of purpose in relating her experience, in the hopes that it may help others.
4. These interviews often enable a participant to gain a new perspective on the situation.
5. Sharing her story is empowering.
6. Participation in the study can be emotionally therapeutic.
7. [Face-to-face] interviews can give “a voice to voiceless,” as some who may never have been able to tell their stories are finally heard. (p. 141)

I observed most of these research collaborators’ benefits during face-to-face in-depth interviews with them. This related to the theoretical implication of this study, that the sharing of personal stories can help to create the women’s support network, and can have a potential benefit of promoting a deep healing for the research collaborator.

Horton (1988) wrote, “Storytelling is an important part of the healing process for all battered women” (p. 6). As Rzepka (2005) argued:

Participants benefited greatly from [this type of] study in sharing their life experiences, because it was very therapeutic and cathartic for them; some marveled over how far they had come in the process of recovery. Moreover, they delighted in passing on their legacy to others and were hopeful that doing so would help other [immigrant and non-immigrant] survivors. (p. 427)

Implications for Next Door Solutions to Domestic Violence

In this section I review two of the emergent themes from this study related to VSSB; specifically; what was necessary but not available, and missed opportunities to intervene (see Appendix F).

Economic and legal empowerment programs must be put in place to allow immigrant and non-immigrant survivors of domestic violence (DV) the extra time and financial ability to rebuild their lives at the shelter. I identified the following examples in relation to what was necessary but not available: free legal representation for victims in the Family Court, time extension to stay in safe housing, and waiver of eligibility requirements to remain in safe housing. In relation to missed opportunities to intervene, I identified the following examples in the women's stories: re-victimizing and re-wounding the victim, enabling the victim to stay with the abuser, and enabling the victim's engagement in other abusive relationships such as exchanging sexual services for a place to stay and bread to eat.

Non-immigrant survivors face extra challenges; they have no relatives and friends in the United States where they can go, they don't have money because they depend on the abuser for financial support, and they can't work because they depend on the abuser for immigration status. Moreover, legal advocacy at Next Door Solutions to Domestic Violence should be centralized as one unit at this agency, so the victim can avoid having to bounce around the county for legal services. Furthermore, restriction of the Free Housing Program must be omitted or waived, given that one of the survivors of this study felt that she had no choice but to return to her abuser. Society must provide immigrant and non-immigrant survivors of DV with useful support to maintain the separation if the victim chooses to do so (Perry & Zorza, 1999).

Implications for the Police Departments and the District Attorney's Office

In terms of what was necessary but not available, I identified in the analysis the following examples: familiarity of local and state officials with deportation orders, U visa requirements and paperwork and other immigration issues; proper information flow between Next Door Solutions to Domestic Violence, the District Attorney's Office, and police departments; the District Attorney's Office's sincere concern in regards to special legal victim's circumstances; and the Victim's Witness Compensation Program's compensation for the victim's trauma suffered as a result of abuse. In terms of missed opportunities to intervene, I identified the following examples: the District Attorney's Office's re-victimizing and re-wounding the victim by not charging the abuser; and the police department's re-victimizing and re-wounding of the victim by not signing U visa paperwork.

The Police Department and the District Attorney's Office of Santa Clara County must be trained on the subject of immigration issues, such as WAVA and the U visa. All police officers, regardless of rank, must be trained not only on the subject of DV, but also on immigration issues that can be involved in DV cases. The District Attorney's Office should be more knowledgeable about specific experiences of immigrant and non-immigrant survivors, and restrictions and regulations for acknowledging the victims' cooperation with law enforcement must be waived.

The Police Department and the District Attorney's Office of Santa Clara County should empower victims in immigrant or non-immigrant status and provide them with information about all the criminal procedures and services available, instead of re-

victimizing and bouncing a victim around. Every DV offense, regardless of the timeframe of reporting, should be considered as serious as any other felony reported immediately, and the special circumstances of immigrant or non-immigrant victims' late reporting must be taken into consideration.

Implications for Family Court, Immigration Court, and Criminal Court

The ability of the current court system to adequately address immigrant and non-immigrant survivors' needs was an emergent theme in relation to what was necessary but not available; specifically, (a) a common database and proper communication between Family Court, Immigration Court, and Criminal Court; (b) American Family Court System adequacies such as enforcement of spousal and child support orders, responding to the abusers' threats to deport the victim from the country, and attorneys' unethical conduct; (c) consequences to the abuser for nonpayment of child support and spousal support; and (d) assurance that the victim will not be deported while in family court proceedings.

In terms of missed opportunities to intervene, I identified the following examples: (a) an undocumented victim being kidnapped by bounty hunters and sent to Immigration Jail, which involved failure to protect children from the abuser without penalizing the victim financially and emotionally, the inability of a mother to protect her children without fear of being deported from the United States, and her being accused of international abduction (kidnapping); and (b) abusers' manipulations in legal proceedings while in the family court with regard to spousal and child support, and nonpayment of child support and spousal support by the abuser.

The injustice of the legal system in the research collaborators' stories was found in court orders regarding spousal and child support, custody visitation, and ignoring the abusers' threats to report a victim to immigration services. More major changes in both policy and practice must be made to make both courts, Family Court and Immigration Court, more accountable and supportive to victims in immigrant and non-immigrant status and their children.

Following Rzepka's study (2005), family support orders must be enforced in the earliest time frame possible, so as to avoid the victim's financial insecurity. According to Rzepka's findings, failure by the court to enforce spousal support and child support orders resulted in leaving victims with no means to live. This is also true for this study. There was a period of almost a year when Svetlana's and my ex-husbands did not pay either spousal or child support. In my case, there was court ordered spousal support, but no action was taken by the court against my ex-husband for nonpayment.

As for Svetlana's case, the judge never ordered either spousal or child support until the divorce case was transferred to the Juvenile Court, after she and her daughter had been kidnapped and sent to Immigration Jail. Moreover, Svetlana was on supervised custody visitation. She owed her attorney \$30,000. Svetlana traveled from one financial provider to another. One man was paying for her apartment, but could not afford to pay her attorney's fees; another man paid for her attorney's fees but could not buy her a car; another man paid for her car, and so on. At that time, she was in the process of filing her papers for an Employment Authorization Card to work as a legal resident, which would take at least 6 months. Before orders of custody or visitation are made, a full and

thorough assessment must take place in DV cases to determine what is in the best interests of the child. In Svetlana's case, the abuser got full custody of their son and she, the non-abusive parent, was allowed only supervised visitations. Spousal support and child support orders must be re-enforced, so that women do not find themselves on the street and desperate to find ways to support themselves.

There is an information underflow between Family, Immigration, and Criminal Courts. Coercive and unethical behaviors on the part of the abusers' attorneys of the Family Court must be documented and treated seriously. When determining visitation orders, disregard of the immigration abuse of a victim led to that victim's kidnapping. Even though there is a California Rule of Professional Conduct that says "A member shall not threaten to present criminal, administrative, or disciplinary charges to obtain an advantage in a civil dispute," Svetlana was threatened by her husband with deportation several times. No action had been taken either by the Family Court or by Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) to prevent the kidnapping, which is considered a federal crime. "Procedures must be put in place for the victims [in immigrant and non-immigrant] status to file complaints against attorneys and others whose behavior could be considered unethical" (Rzepka, 2005, p. 449); such as, threats to report the victim to Immigration Services, unconcern about privacy and confidentiality (as in Svetlana's case, when the courtroom clerk handed papers to the abuser's attorney that provided the victim's address). A centralized database should be developed that eases the communication and information flow between Family, Criminal, and Immigration Courts. Moreover, to assure the victim's safety in the United States and to de-mystify the

abuser's threats to deport a victim, an ICE representative should be present in the courtroom on family matters.

Directions for Future Research

The research literature on DV survivors of immigrant and non-immigrant status must look deeply at the issues the victims face while trying to escape from abusive relationships. Equipping the victim with life-skill tools is as important as giving legal advice. Further research might consider assessing the victim's life skills from the shelter, where dominant power relationships still exist between advocate and client, and the skills of victims who are using informal support groups, such as Al-Anon. Moreover, considering the *circumstantial dichotomy* (Vaughn and Stamp, 2003) between the shelter personnel and their clients, research for financial funds for victims in immigrant and non-immigrant status would be of great help. It has been noted that clients had been depressed more from being economically disadvantaged than from being abused. Compared to many of the other issues raised in this study, providing financial support seems relatively simple as a remedy.

Limitations

The primary limitation of this study is the small number of research collaborators in immigrant and non-immigrant status who were able to participate in this study, and the fact that they were all from a specific region in the United States. From this comparatively small pool of participants it is impossible to reflect upon the full range of their experiences and backgrounds. With a greater number of research collaborators, common themes within the VSSB may have been easier to establish between the different

narratives. Coherence among the different stories of battered women in immigrant and non-immigrant status may have been enhanced with a larger number of participants. My initial goal for this study was to collaborate with Next Door Solutions to Domestic Violence, and I had a written recruitment agreement with the Director of Housing Services regarding recruitment. My understanding was that the agency has its own research study on non-immigrant battered women in Santa Clara County that describes the obstacles they faced when using formal systems of support, such as applying for social security numbers and driver's licenses. All my attempts to recruit at least five additional research collaborators through the agency were unsuccessful. I attribute it partly to the victims' fear of immigration consequences, such as being deported.

The second potential limitation of this study is my own inherent biases in interpreting these qualitative interviews. Considering that I am myself a non-immigrant survivor of DV, and English is my second language, I certainly engaged these experiences while actively interpreting the data. As a researcher, I note that I am not entirely objective, and my interpretation was achieved through the fight against the patriarchal discourse of my country of origin. The influence of my personal experience led in many ways to greater insights and sensitivity to these stories; however, it may also represent a limitation to the extent that others may have seen patterns or relevance in the stories that were not apparent to me.

The third limitation of my study is not taking into consideration the various contexts in which events from the stories occurred. While participants were asked to describe their specific experiences of DV as immigrant or non-immigrant survivors, there

is a possibility of raw data distortion of VSSB and their experiences with formal systems of support. Since English is not their native language, they provided me with their own interpretation of events and experiences with those services. Some of the experiences might be exaggerated, or might be omitted or overlooked due to cultural differences. My educated guess was that since my participants were in a very vulnerable position—facing the double challenge of language struggles and acquiring cultural competence on the subject of DV, and seeking services they needed for survival—they might have seen everything through a blaming paradigm, and may have perceived themselves to be discriminated against due to race, language, and gender. Therefore, it is at least conceivable that there may be additional VSSBs to break the cycle of violence that remained uncovered by this qualitative study.

Concluding Remarks

This research project is significant for several reasons. First, it introduced a concept of DV from different perspectives, from practical and theoretical standpoints, in the light of Social Constructionism rhetorical theories (feminist critical theory), and victim's support-seeking behavior. As my Introduction and Literature Review of the topic showed, it is important to understand how DV is co-constructed through conversations and the potential consequences. Safety and security are denied from women in many homes nowadays, and an understanding of what is going on behind closed doors is necessary to save women's lives, and prevent them from living on the streets with no food, clothes, or money. Domestic violence exists even in contemporary

society. Education on this subject matter would help to reframe power-control patterns in relationships and help intimate partners to interpret things differently.

Second, my research study touched the key components of specific experiences of battered women in immigrant and non-immigrant status; specifically, how justification of DV occurred as a normal part of family life through cultural beliefs and values, how it was constructed through discourse, and how women's reality distortion in their own country of origin developed. Coordinated management of meaning theory, feminist critical theory, and my victim's support-seeking behavior Analysis are not the only ways to explain the phenomenon. To move this project further I would include the role of formal systems of support in the re-victimization of immigrant and non-immigrant women who are abused. Women in immigrant and non-immigrant status represent a more vulnerable population and they require specific attention in the communication literature.

Third, the implications of my method and my analysis of rhetorical strategies in the light of CMM theory, FCT, and VSSB, are beneficial for understanding how dominant patriarchal discourse of the country of origin deprived women of possibilities for social change. The topic that received the most attention in this study—a fight against DV among immigrant and non-immigrant communities—was the topic that is likely to gain favorable coverage in the mainstream media in the United States.

Fourth, in my research study, in these 5 women's narratives, the creation of a rhetor-audience relationship through a feminine style of conversation and self-disclosure conveyed a complex and diverse set of ideas about immigrant and non-immigrant

battered women's rights and choices. Rhetorical analysis of patriarchal language in the light of CMM theory, FCT, and VSSB, was central to understanding how women make sense of their experiences and how they access formal and informal systems of support that can move them toward a life free of violence. My analysis was an attempt to reclaim changes in perceptions and recast oppressive language as the women sought support and freedom. Storytelling blended personal narratives and life stories into the roles that women hold. Through re-thinking and language reconstruction, women could overcome barriers and provide inspirational examples.

Collecting and analyzing these life stories of 5 immigrant and non-immigrant women was an attempt to create a sense of feminist consciousness through developing a sense of sisterhood and a women's support network and in Santa Clara County. The narratives' feminine style served as a reflection of the conditions of female existence in patriarchal society, which these 5 women experienced. First, the women relied on their personal lives to reflect their on their private privileged roles as wives and mothers. Second, those stories fostered a sense of connectedness and affective relationships with others achieved through the use of self-disclosure and sharing emotions.

These conclusions foster the realization of feminine style as philosophy in this research study. Examination of rhetoric in the context of these narratives is aimed to empower female audiences and to criticize private styles of communication that devalue women. First, such analysis demonstrated the distinction between public and private discourses that doesn't take into account women's rhetorical contributions. "Complexity of women's social roles and their influence on communication, may be an asset in the

public sphere, rather than obstacle” (Dow & Tonn, 1993, p. 299). Second, as feminist rhetorical action, the recounting of these narratives was an attempt to offer alternatives to patriarchal modes of thought and reasoning. Since the women’s personal stories reflected their marginalization in society, revising male-oriented discursive frameworks will promote dissemination of feminist ideas throughout society. Feminine style was offered in this study as an empowering alternative to patriarchal modes of reasoning. Moreover, my analysis sought to discover rhetorical spaces for feminine language in the traditional patriarchal discourse. This is a lot to say to agencies of formal support systems and policymakers of Santa Clara County: We don’t have to be professionally educated on the subject of DV in non-immigrant and immigrant communities in the United States in order to respond with empathy and care; the dangers of DV are related not only to the fact that it is happening in immigrant and non-immigrant communities, but also to ignorant formal and informal community response. The time is ripe for reform.

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APPENDIX A

Examples of Interview Questions

Questions adopted and modified from Sundarajan (2000) and Rzepka (2005).

1. I would like you to tell me your life story, all the events, and experiences which involved domestic violence (DV) in your relationship. Tell me about how DV happened.
2. How did you meet?
3. What attracted you to your partner?
4. How long did you date?
5. How long were you together?
6. Please tell me about your experience of DV since it became important in your life, how things happened up to now.
7. How would you characterize the abuse?
8. Maybe you could start by telling me about the time when your abusive relationship became important for your personality (adolescence, youth, professional career, specific event, etc.). Please continue telling how things developed for you up to now.
9. Any other things you remember happening? Do you remember/recall anything else?
10. Do you remember how did the very first conflict in your relationship come about? (*introducing*)
11. What is your earliest experience with violence?
12. Could you describe in as much detail as possible the first fight that you had? (*introducing*)
13. How was the issue resolved or not resolved?
14. What are the issues that most often ended in arguments?

15. How did you one of you win/lose the argument? What did you think then?
(*specifying*)
16. Describe the first time the argument ended in a physically violent act.
17. What made you stay in the relationship? (Victim specific).
18. How did this change (if any) your relationship?
19. Describe how issues were left after this incident.
20. How did your feelings of fear of being hit (after this incident) change the way you argued issues? (Victim specific).
21. To whom did you speak about this incident (best friend/family/pastor)?
22. Describe the second incidence of violence.
23. Describe the last and the worst abusive episode
24. What kept you in a relationship?
25. How many times did you try to leave?
26. How were you finally able to end the relationship?
27. How would you characterize yourself then?
28. Please describe the effects the abuse had on you, both then and now
29. How this relationship affected your sexuality, parenting ability, relationships with children, family, and yourself?
30. How it affected your relationships with the same gender?
31. How it affected your relationships with opposite gender?
32. How it affected your ability to trust others?
33. How it affected your ability to trust yourself?

34. How have you coped with the transitions that came as a result of having gone through this experience?
35. Has it changed over time? If so, how?
36. Do you consider yourself healed? If not, why?
37. What is healing for you?
38. Were there “stages” of healing you passed through to get where you are now? If so, please describe them.
39. How would you characterize yourself now?
40. Which different strategies did you use to move beyond the abuse?
41. Do you think there is an end point at which one is “healed,” or is it an unending process? Why?
42. When/under what circumstances did you first hear the term “domestic violence?” What did it mean to you at the time?
43. Does this idea of domestic violence contradict any ideas that are part of your culture?
44. Was yours an experience of domestic violence (repeated abuse—not limited to physical abuse-within the context of an intimate relationship), or was it a situation of family violence (where a family member, older or younger, engaged in abusive or coercive acts toward you?)
45. What did you learn about gender roles, family, and loving relationships when growing up?
46. Do you feel comfortable talking about the abuse?

APPENDIX A (Cont.)

Interview Protocol Adapted from Wengraf (2001, p. 123)

I. Session # 1 (60- 90 min). Lightly-Structured Depth Interview.

Asking initial questions to elicit the full story/biographical narrative. (Stage of Active Listening and Projective Vagueness.)

During session #1: tape-recording, topic note-taking, (2-4 words: noun plus an adjective or adverb; name plus verb; phrase). It will make it easier to ask “narrative-pointed” questions in sub-session # 2.

Active Listening (non-intrusive, using interviewee’s own words):

1. I will listen first; I won’t interrupt. I will tell you if we are running out of time. I will just take some notes for after you have finished telling me about the experiences of DV which have been important for you.
2. That is still hard for you. It is still painful for you to remember that.
3. Paraphrasing: “Are you saying...”

Active Interviewing, Question Arising/Alternative Questions during

(Adapted from Sundarajan, 2000)

4. Please tell me your personal life story. Can you give me a more detailed description of your best date with your partner? (*probing*)
5. Do you remember how the very first conflict in your relationship came about? (*introducing*)
6. What is your earliest experience with violence?
7. Why were you attracted to your partner?
8. What are the issues that most often ended in arguments?

9. Describe the first time the argument ended in a physically violent act.
10. What made you stay in the relationship? (Victim specific).
11. How did this change (if at all) your relationship?

Let the interviewee speak. The initial narration continues until the interviewee indicates clearly that they have no more to say. Take a 15-minute break to review your SHEIOT (situation-happening-event-incident-occasion/occurrence-time) notepad notes and prepare TQUIN questions (topic questions aimed at inducing narrative).

II. SHEIOT Analysis.

III. Session # 2 (40-60 min). TQUIN questions (topic questions aimed at inducing narrative).

Examples of Questions

Extracting more story (closed questions to exclude non-narrative answers; same day, follow-up interview). Directional questions to elicit more story about topics raised by interviewee. Following the strict order, in which the topics have been raised, using the same discourse, language, key-words, and phrases. Highlight the most important topics. It will remind the interviewee of what they were talking about. Your task is merely to record the sequence. Formulate the precise wording of question-seeking-narratives for each of the topics. Return to narrative questions.

At the end of the session, you can ask: "Is there anything else you would like to add at this point?"

IV. Self-Debriefing. Making "field-notes" or "debriefing notes." (30 – 60 minutes of free-writing)

APPENDIX B
Recruitment Supplemental Materials

Letter to Next Door Solutions to Domestic Violence

May 2006

To Whom It May Concern:

This letter outlines basic information about a study that may interest women who have come into contact with Next Door Solutions to Domestic Violence. Please share this information with women whom you believe to be suitable for this study; I ask them to contact me for further information. Once they have had an opportunity to review the complete protocol and ask me questions, I will invite them to sign up for the interview.

Interview Study

Study Title: Exploring the role of communication in domestic violence: Toward providing better services for women in non-immigrant status

Investigator: Ania Goritskaia-Ivanova, Department of Communication Studies

My proposed research project will focus on some of the cultural influences that contribute to domestic violence among women in non-immigrant status; specifically, how beliefs and language help to frame, perpetuate, or resist violence in relationships.

Research Question

What are the specific experiences of women in non-immigrant status who are victims of domestic violence in the United States? How might battered women's personal stories help to develop prevention programs to alleviate the problems of domestic violence for women in non-immigrant status in Santa Clara County?

Procedure

I am hoping to recruit approximately 10 non-immigrant women who have been living in the United States for less than three years, who have had an intimate heterosexual relationship, have experienced domestic violence, have been in the shelter, or sought help through local law enforcement and other domestic violence prevention agencies.

This study will use a qualitative method of in-depth, face-to face interviewing. The interviews will be conducted to elicit in-depth responses from women who have been looking for support and have used domestic violence support services. I anticipate that each interview will take approximately 90 minutes and will be held at a location that is convenient for the participants.

If you are interested in learning more, please contact me, Ania Goritskaia-Ivanova at valery.anna@gmail.com or (408) 298-4698

The study has been approved by the San José State University Institutional Review Board. (Protocol Number S0602120)

APPENDIX C

Description of the Research Collaborators
(Adapted and modified from Rzepka, 2005)

Case Name	Age	Education	Economic Indicators	Ethnicity	Court or Penal System Involvement	Continued Contact With the Abuser	Immigration System Involvement	Shelter	Al-Anon
Ania	27	DDS, in graduate school	unemployed, in the process of divorce	Russian	divorce, spousal support	No	H4 visa holder, in the process of filing U visa	No	3 months
Svetlana	31	MBA	unemployed, in the process of divorce	Ukrainian	divorce, spousal support, child custody, child support	No	Undocumented, in the process of filing WAVA	3 months	No
Claudia	62	High school	unemployed	Portuguese	No	in a relationship with the alcoholic abuser	American citizen through family relation (her brother), sponsored legal status for her husband	No	2 years
Maria	46	High school	employed	Mexican	No	in a relationship with the alcoholic abuser	American citizen through marriage	failed application due to non-eligibility	12 years
Anastazja	57	High school	unemployed	Polish	No	in a relationship with the alcoholic abuser	American citizen through political refugee	No	1 year

APPENDIX D

Portraits of the Research Collaborators (Adapted and modified from Rzepka, 2005)

Case Number	Dating Before Marriage	Abuse History	Length of Abusive Relationship	Children	Economic Class THEN	Economic Class NOW	Religion THEN	Religion NOW	Disability THEN	Disability NOW
Ania H4 visa holder, in the process of filing U visa	1.5 years. Reason for marriage: fear of being sexually involved before marriage	-family history of abuse, witnessed father's abuse of mother; mother's controlling behavior -1 st marriage: emotional, physical, verbal, sexual, financial abuse	1 st marriage: 5.5 years	None	Middle	Lower	None	Christian	None	PTSD
Svetlana Undocumented, in the process of filing WAVA	No dating. Reason for marriage: pregnancy, legal status	-no family history of abuse -1 st marriage: no abuse -2 nd marriage: emotional, physical, financial abuse	1 st marriage: 7 years 2 nd marriage: 4 years	Alena (F), 10 Dmitri (M), 3	Upper	Lower	None	None	None	None

APPENDIX D (Cont.)

Portraits of the Research Collaborators (Adapted and modified from Rzepka, 2005)

Case Number	Dating before Marriage	Abuse History	Length of Abusive Relationship	Children	Economic Class THEN	Economic Class NOW	Religion THEN	Religion NOW	Disability THEN	Disability NOW
Claudia American Citizen with legal right to work	3 months. Reason for marriage: to sponsor a legal status for her husband	-no family history of abuse; mother's controlling behavior -1 st marriage: physical, emotional, verbal, financial abuse	1 st marriage: 39 years	Ramiro (M), 30 Xanti (M), 33	Lower	Upper	None	None	None	PTSD
Maria American Citizen with legal right to work	6 months. Reason for marriage: legal status	-mother's controlling behavior: sold into wedlock with 60-year-old man -1 st marriage: physical abuse -2 nd marriage: physical, emotional, verbal, sexual, financial, spiritual abuse	2 nd marriage: 18 years	Anacaona (F), 30 Chimalpopoc (M), 27 Chimalman (F), 26 Eloxochiti, (F), 19 Malinal, (F), 19 Papantzin, (F), 16 Apanacati, (M), 13	Upper	Lower	None	None	None	None
Anastazja American Citizen with legal right to work	8 months. Reason for marriage: pregnancy	-no family history of abuse; loving and nurturing environment -1 st marriage: physical	1 st marriage: 44 years	Andrzej (M), 28 Boleslaw (M), 33	Lower	Middle	None	Christian	None	PTSD

APPENDIX E

Data Analysis: Interpreting Data with Coordinated Management of Meaning Theory (CMM), Feminist Critical Theory (FCT), and Victim's Support Seeking Behavior (VSSB)

DATA CATEGORY	THEMES	RELATED SUBTHEMES
Repetitive Patterns in Women's Reality Construction (CMM)	Natural Womanhood Assumption (FCT)	<p>Financial Abuse (FCT)</p> <p>Overt Strategies:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -making a victim beg for money -making a victim work for free for a family business -taking away any means of financial support from a victim <p>Covert Strategies:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -hiding information about family income -removing a victim from the joint property's legal documents -leaving a victim with debts on her credit cards -victim's not having access to the family financial resources -victim's not participating in major financial decisions -victim's not having access to family transportation <p>Third Party Abuse:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -giving enormous amounts of pocket money to the children

APPENDIX E (Cont.)

Data Analysis: Interpreting Data with Coordinated Management of Meaning Theory (CMM),
Feminist Critical Theory (FCT) and Victim's Support-Seeking Behavior (VSSB)

DATA CATEGORY	THEMES	RELATED SUBTHEMES
Repetitive Patterns in Women's Reality Construction (CMM)	Natural Womanhood Assumption (FCT)	<p>Sexual Abuse (FCT)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -marriage structure sets up the stage for sexual abuse -sexual slavery -women's perception of self as sexual workers -abuser's cheating -abuser's threats for not having sexual intercourse -abuser's control over victim's sexual desires and sexuality <p>Benevolent Sexism (FCT)</p>
Repetitive Patterns in Women's Reality Construction (CMM)	Concept of Natural Womanhood and the General Context of Paternalistic Dominance (FCT)	Financial Abuse (FCT) Immigration Abuse

APPENDIX E (Cont.)

Data Analysis: Interpreting Data with Coordinated Management of Meaning Theory (CMM),
Feminist Critical Theory (FCT) and Victim's Support-Seeking Behavior (VSSB)

DATA CATEGORY	THEMES	RELATED SUBTHEMES
Denial of Abuser's Reality (CMM)	Evidence of Natural Woman within the Concept of True Practical Woman (FCT)	<p>Employment Authorization Card (VSSB)</p> <p>Job Seeking Strategies (VSSB)</p> <p>Safety Plan (VSSB)</p>
Denial of Abuser's Reality (CMM)	Victim's Support-Seeking Behavior (VSSB)	<p>Formal System of Support that Hindered (VSSB)</p> <p>-Next Door Solutions to Domestic Violence</p> <p>-District Attorney's Office</p> <p>-Police Departments</p> <p>-Family Court: disregarding the immigration abuse of the victim; no action taken by court to enforce spousal support and child support order</p> <p>Formal System of Support that Helped (VSSB)</p> <p>-School</p> <p>-ICE and Immigration Jail</p>

APPENDIX E (Cont.)

Data Analysis: Interpreting Data with Coordinated Management of Meaning Theory (CMM),
Feminist Critical Theory (FCT) and Victim's Support-Seeking Behavior (VSSB)

DATA CATEGORY	THEMES	RELATED SUBTHEMES
Denial of Abuser's Reality (CMM)	Victim's Support-Seeking Behavior (VSSB)	<p>Informal System of Support that Helped: Al-Anon (VSSB)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Al-Anon Helps to Break the Cycle of Violence. -Al-Anon Helps to Break the Cycle of Immigration and Financial Abuse. -Al-Anon Disembodies Unhealthy Communicational Patterns and Helps to Reject Abuser's Reality.

APPENDIX F

Toward Providing Better Services (Adapted and modified from Rzepka, 2005)

WHAT HELPED	WHAT HINDERED	WHAT WAS NECESSARY BUT NOT AVAILABLE	MISSED OPPORTUNITIES TO INTERVENE
<p>Informal Systems of Help:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Al-Anon Support Groups 	<p>Informal Systems of Help:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -friends, neighbors and community support: in terms of not providing a safe place to live and financial support; by staying away from the victim- abuser relationship and failing to intervene 	<p>Next Door Solutions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -free legal representation for victims in the Family Court -time extension to stay in safe housing -waiving eligibility requirements for staying at safe housing for victim 	<p>Next Door Solutions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -re-victimizing and re-wounding the victim -enabling victim's staying with the abuser -enabling victim's engagement in other abusive relationships such as exchanging sexual services for a place to stay and bread to eat
<p>Formal Systems of Help:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -ICE -Immigration Jail -Principal's Office at School -Faculty and Staff at the University 	<p>Formal Systems of Help:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Police Departments -Next Door Solutions to Domestic Violence -District Attorney's Office -Family Court 	<p>District Attorney's Office:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -sincere concern in regards to victim's special legal circumstances <p>Victim's Witness Compensation Program:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -compensating victim's injuries as a result of abuse 	<p>District Attorney's Office:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -re-victimizing and re-wounding the victim -not charging the abuser

APPENDIX F (Cont.)

Toward Providing Better Services
(Adapted and modified from Rzepka, 2005)

WHAT HELPED	WHAT HINDERED	WHAT WAS NECESSARY BUT NOT AVAILABLE	MISSED OPPORTUNITIES TO INTERVENE
		<p>Police Department:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -familiarity of local and state officials with deportation orders, U visa status, and immigration issues -proper information flow between Next Door Solutions, District Attorney's Office, and Police Department <p>Family Court:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -ability of current system to adequately address immigrant and non-immigrant survivor's needs -common database and proper communication between Family Court, Immigration court, and Criminal Court -American Family Court system adequacies: enforcement of spousal and child support orders; not ignoring the abuser's threats of victim's deportation from the country; disallowing attorney's unethical conduct 	<p>Police Department:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -re-victimizing and re-wounding the victim -not signing U visa Certification Form <p>Family Court:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -undocumented victim kidnapped by abuser and sent to Immigration Jail -protection of children from the abuser without penalizing the victim financially and emotionally -inability of mother to protect her children without fear of being deported; being accused of international abduction (kidnapping)

APPENDIX F (Cont.)

Toward Providing Better Services
(Adapted and modified from Rzepka, 2005)

WHAT HELPED	WHAT HINDERED	WHAT WAS NECESSARY BUT NOT AVAILABLE	MISSED OPPORTUNITIES TO INTERVENE
		<p>Family Court:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -consequences to abuser for nonpayment of child support and spousal support; victim assurance of not being deported during the family court proceedings 	<p>Family Court:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -abuser's manipulation in legal proceedings while in the family court in regards to spousal and child support -payment of child support and spousal support by the abuser not enforced