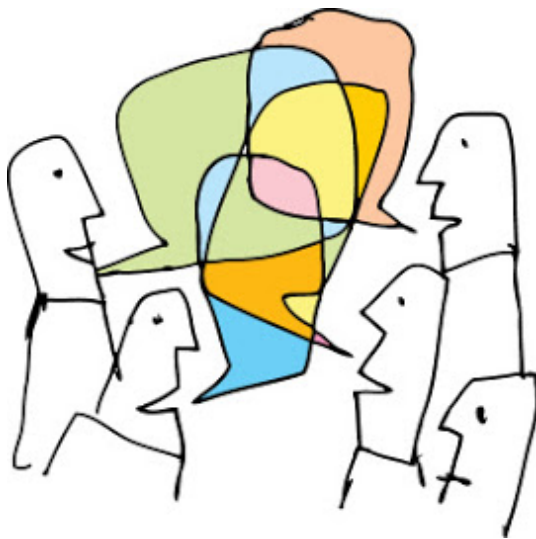


Familial/Cultural Barriers Among the Latinx Community

By Valerie Lenis



Family values are extremely important and highly appreciated in Latinx culture. Although these values are often thought of as positive, they can unintentionally create negative consequences, especially for victims of domestic violence.

For example, a Latinx parent may feel a certain responsibility to keep their family together in order to assure their children are raised by two parents, thereby preventing them from leaving an abusive situation. Especially among Latina women, there can be an intimidating fear of being seen as a “bad mother” by her family if she leaves. This urge to preserve and maintain family unity may strongly influence a victim to stay in their relationship. An abuser can also use these concepts to manipulate a victim in various ways.

Latino culture is often characterized by its strict gender roles and patriarchal family structure. Often Latina women might be pressured to be submissive or obedient to her male partner. This idea is related to *machismo*, a Spanish term to describe hypermasculinity or aggressive male behavior. This may pressure a Latina woman into staying in a violent relationship or be used as a justification for abusive actions.

Because these values and behavioral expectations are so deeply ingrained in Latinx culture, it is crucial to recognize specific absurdities in these traditions and remind victims that they are not a justification for their suffering. No victim belonging to the Latinx community should believe that their experiences of abuse are reasonable.

Women’s Support Services offers bilingual services and supports to victims of domestic abuse regardless of English proficiency, immigration status, and financial condition. WSS serves the Northwest corner of Connecticut and the border towns in New York, and can help connect clients to the appropriate resources and agencies, such as Grace Smith House in Poughkeepsie. WSS is free of charge, and does not report to ICE.