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ORIGINAL ARTICLE

Latinas as carceral collateral: Violence in the lives of Latinas across the carceral community

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Abstract

Prisons have long been scrutinized for their destructive properties inside and outside of their walls, yet most of this work has focused on incarcerated men and those in the resource-deficient communities that house them. In these studies, mostly focused on the economic losses that families face by losing their primary breadwinners and the spillover of prison politics into these communities, women are largely ignored. As prisons are placed in divested communities, the existing social ills that draw them become exacerbated. This study examines how Latinas are rendered as carceral collateral by the passive and active violence rampant across California carceral communities. Using interviews/critical narratives of seventeen formerly incarcerated Latinas, I examined their multifaceted experiences of neglect and abuse, and their subsequent paths to criminalization. The findings demonstrate that the social ecology of the carceral community renders Latinas hypervulnerable to interpersonal, familial, and institutional neglect and abuse, which coerce these women to cope with their victimization in ways that are criminalized by the state and rejected by traditional sources of support. Furthermore, Latinas in carceral communities exist in what can be construed as a "perfect storm" of social problems wherein neoliberal constructions of worth collude with Latinx cultural practices to reinforce and perpetuate the devaluation of Latinas. This gives insight as to how decriminalization efforts may be better posed toward challenging the existing material and ideological roots of inequality embedded in both institutional and cultural constructs.

Keywords Girls · Latinas · Abuse-to-prison pipeline · Carceral community · Qualitative research · Intersectional criminology

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Las latinas y el efecto colateral carcelario: La violencia en la vida de las latinas en las comunidades carcelarias

Resumen
Las prisiones han estado bajo escrutinio hace mucho tiempo por las características destructivas que exhiben dentro y fuera de sus muros. Sin embargo, la mayor parte de ese trabajo analítico se ha enfocado en los hombres encarcelados y en las comunidades de escasos recursos donde residen. Estos estudios se centran en las pérdidas económicas que enfrentan las familias al tener que prescindir de sus proveedores principales y en las repercusiones que tienen las políticas carcelarias en dichas comunidades. Sin embargo, por lo general ignoran a las mujeres. En la medida que las prisiones se ubican en las comunidades desventajadas, se exacerban los males sociales que las atraen. Este estudio analiza cómo las latinas representan un efecto colateral carcelarioi debido a la violencia pasiva y activaii que permea en todas las comunidades carcelarias de California.iii Por medio de entrevistas y narrativas críticas de diecisiete latinas anteriormente encarceladas, examinamos sus experiencias multifacéticas de abandonoiv y abuso, así como sus subsiguientes trayectorias de criminalización. Los hallazgos demuestran que la ecología social de la comunidad carcelaria hace que las latinas sean hípervulnerables al abandono y el abuso interpersonal, familiar e institucional, lo que las fuerza a lidiar con su victimización en formas que son criminalizadas por el estado y rechazadas por las fuentes tradicionales de apoyo. Además, las latinas en las comunidades carcelarias existen en lo que podemos describir como una "tormenta perfecta" de problemas sociales, dentro de la cual las construcciones de valor neoliberales coludan con las prácticas culturales latinas para reforzar y perpetuar la devaluación de la mujer latina. Conocer esto nos permite dirigir mejor los esfuerzos de descriminalización para desafiar las raíces materiales e ideológicas de la desigualdad presentes tanto en los constructos institucionales como los culturales.

Palabras clave Niñas · Latinas · Camino del abuso a la cárcel · Comunidad carcelaria · Investigaciones cualitativas · Criminología interseccional

Prisons cause harm to those across carceral continuums,[1] both inside and outside prisons (Wacquant 2001; Lopez-Aguado 2016; Comfort 2009; Braman 2004). Most studies have focused on men despite the existence of incarcerated women as well as women playing critical roles supporting the incarcerated and formerly incarcerated as they reenter society (deVuono-Powell et al. 2015; Comfort 2009). Feminist and intersectional criminology scholars who have studied criminalized women contend that a "feminist pathways" abuse-to-prison[2] pipeline exists for women (Belknap and Holsinger 2006), rendering their placement in the criminal justice system as a by-product of abuse and neglect [3] early in their lives. Nonetheless, not all victimized girls and women are relegated to the social constructs of ideal victimhood. Working-class and poor women (Potter 2013; Arnold 1990), gender nonconforming people and lesbians (Caraves 2018; Irvine 2015), immigrants (Escobar 2016), mothers (Roberts 1993), and girls and women of color (Richie 2012; Diáz-Cotto 2006; Epstein et al. 2017) are often vilified for their "situated survival strategies" despite experiences of violence (Jones 2010). Furthermore, many victimized Latinas find themselves in the crossfire of many of these social identities, heightening their vulnerability to both hypersurveillance and criminalization (Maldonaldo-Fabela 2021, 2022; Lerma 2022; Salinas and Santos 2023; Lopez 2017; Lopez and Pasko 2021; Lopez et al. 2012). Despite this propensity, there is limited data on Latinas in this pipeline because of a lack of self-reporting by Latinas (Harper 2017), and on Latinas, which is attributable to public institutions limiting much of their ethnoracial demographic information to the Black and white binary.

In addition to the lack of studies on the abuse-to-prison pipeline as it relates to Latinas, there is also a lack of systematic studies of Latinas across the backdrop of carceral communities as these communities are concentrated sites of social ills. This article addresses this lack of understanding and provides insight into how carceral

[1] Wacquant (2001) locates the "Hyperghetto" and "Prison" with welfare recipients and criminals as one of the "peculiar institutions," those that define, confine, and control Black Americans. He argues that the prison and the ghetto have a symbiotic relationship by which those that are encaged are directly connected to those in the ghetto by way of racialization as the primary categorizing principle; social life in and outside of: the prison trickling into each site; inhabitants of each group rendered disposable; and racially tinged criminalization being the impetus of hypersurveillance of Black communities by white men. Thus, this relationship between the ghetto and the prison represents a continuum of sorts by which poor, racialized communities of color residing in prisons and ghettoes are connected by ways of criminalization that Rios (2011) and Lerma (2022) contend do not require a criminal record.

[2] Described as the feminist pathways perspective (Belknap and Holsinger 2006), the abuse-to-prison pipeline describes the strong connection between criminal activity and prior victimization for girls and women. Justice Department data collection has found that nearly 60% of incarcerated women, versus 16% of incarcerated men, report being physically or sexually abused prior to their current sentencing (Chesney-Lind 2002, p. 83).

[3] Based on the Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act (CAPTA) (Child Welfare Information Gateway 2019) parents have a responsibility to provide "food, clothing, shelter, medical care, and supervision" for children. Failure to provide these elements constitutes child neglect (p. 3). However, neglect and abuse are constituted by the state as, "any recent act or failure to act on the part of a parent or caregiver that results in death, serious physical or emotional harm, sexual abuse, or exploitation, or an act of failure to act that presents an imminent risk of serious harm" (p. 1). While many interviewees enumerated childhood experiences, many also experienced abuse as adults, including physical, sexual, mental, and verbal.

communities[4] render Latinas hypervulnerable to neglect and abuse. I found that Latinas in carceral communities experience both passive and active violence[5] predicated by rampant inequality across many of the facets of their lives. Their survival mechanisms in relation to this violence are shunned by traditional systems of support (family, school, religion, etc.) and criminalized by law enforcement, leading to the start of their criminal records. This provides more insight into the overlapping and often contradictory mitigating factors that Latinas must contend with that both make them susceptible to abuse *and yet* also inform how they resist that violence.

This study explores forms of neglect and abuse that Latinas in carceral communities across California experience and how these lead to their criminalization. I describe forms of passive violence as erected by the state that led Latinas and their families to become susceptible to neglect, as well as active interpersonal violence propagated by the rampant inequality in their impoverished communities. This article demonstrates how such violence is guided by neoliberal ideology but can be reinforced by facets of Latinx cultural ideologies that constrain Latina personhood. Thus, Latinas in carceral communities are entrapped (Richie 2018; Harper 2017; Stark 2007) within a neoliberal social ecology that situates poor Latinx communities as disposable on a structural level; they are forced to navigate institutions pervaded with this logic; and they confront particular Latinx cultural values that—when aligned with this ideology—can result in deleterious outcomes for Latinas.

Drawing from interviews/critical narratives with seventeen formerly incarcerated Latinas from carceral communities across California, this article explores the following questions: (1) What types of neglect and abuse do Latinas across carceral communities confront? (2) How might their victimization be related to their future incarceration? And finally, (3) What are the prevailing systems of oppression that contribute to the abuse and incarceration of Latinas in carceral communities? The study found that neglect experienced as a child was largely the outcome of familial poverty informed by factors contributing to low socioeconomic status (SES). Forms of neglect they experienced included food and housing scarcity, little supervision,

[4] Carceral communities are defined as communities within 30 miles of a carceral facility—not limited to prisons, immigration detention centers, and juvenile detention centers. While the use of geographic distance—in this case 30 miles—presents a limitation in that the density of the urban landscape offers more socioeconomic diversity than the rural landscape, the small rural towns that house carceral facilities are dispersed among large swaths of agricultural land; thus, I accounted for this spacial diversity. Beyond recognition of these sites as predicated on distance, these communities host mirrored material and ideological conditions as sites of extreme state-sanctioned divestment. While the residents of these locales may not ascribe to a shared and unified identity with others from similar sites, as explicated in the text, there are resounding socioeconomic parallels among these sites. Conceptually, this places emphasis on examining the impact of carceral facilities on social life as opposed to analyzing the often urban communities that have high recidivism rates.

[5] Whereas active violence is generally conceived as immediate and explosive, with a physical component to it, passive or slow violence is violence that happens gradually and over space, to obfuscate that it is conceived as violence at all (Nixon 2011). It is indirect and results in neglectful human suffering and can have connections to cultural hegemony (O'Lear 2016). Interpersonal violence most succinctly describes the active violence in this study, and forms of passive violence in this study include poverty, food and housing precarity, criminalization and policing, and institutional neglect informed by systems of oppression.

and limited clothing access. Forms of active violence experienced most often at the hands of family members included parental addiction, domestic violence, and physical and sexual violence. These experiences led to coping mechanisms such as fighting and refusing to go to school, drug consumption and sales, running away, engaging in toxic relationships, and becoming gang affiliated (Chesney-Lind and Pasko 2012; Vigil 2008; Zahn et al. 2010; Belknap and Holsinger 2006; Arnold 1990; Simkins et al. 2004). Each of these coping mechanisms was criminalized and led to incarceration. Finally, the confluence of neoliberal notions of worth (predicated on proximity to white supremacy, classism, racism, xenophobia, and Judeo-Christian values) with Latinx cultural values (predicated on female virtue by way of adherence to cis-heteronormativity, chastity, self-sacrifice, and cultural silence about abuse) create a particularly constraining set of conditions whereby Latinas from carceral communities find themselves structurally dislocated (Arnold 1990; Lopez 2017; Lopez and Pasko 2021). Altogether, the structural, institutional, and cultural configurations of these communities *socially entrap* (Harper 2017, p. 227) these women to diminish their personal autonomy.

This study has important implications. First, it offers breadth and depth to understandings of how the social locations of Latinas in the carceral community culminate to shape the forms of violence they confront. Second, it helps explain how inequality socially reproduces the criminalization patterns of racialized women in carceral communities, showing how inequality is linked to criminalization and begets a future of more dispossession. Finally, it demonstrates the insidious relationship of social control that gendered racial capitalism has when aligning with the cultural values embedded within many Latinx communities; this should compel social scientists to turn the lens of inquiry as it relates to criminalization not toward the criminalized but toward the ideological and material conditions that manifest in symptomology of poverty and dispossession.

Inserting Latinas in criminological research

Criminologists have long examined the various reasons that some end up leading lives of crime. Self-control theorists Gottfredson and Hirschi posit that the propensity for criminality is influenced by how parents rear their children. From this perspective, criminality is produced by people who develop low self-control as children—based not on socialization per se but on their parents' 'ineffective child rearing" (1990, p. 97). Sampson and Laub's age-graded theory of self-control posits that "the major objective of the life-course perspective is to link social history and social structure to the unfolding of human lives" allowing researchers to make sense of processes in the human life course that impact criminality (1992, p. 66). Pulling from Gleuck and Glueck's 1950's longitudinal research on one thousand white, low-socioeconomic-status boys collected across three waves from the 1930s to the 1960s, Sampson and Laub concluded that people commit crimes when their social bonds are weakened. Highlighting *trajectories* (pathways), *transitions* (role changes), and *turning points* (life events with the potential to change one's path with long-term effects), they conclude that people commit crimes when their social bonds

to structures and institutions like family, peer groups, and workplaces are weakened. Acknowledging the limitations of their work for diverse populations, Sampson and Laub said, "Among the disadvantaged, things seem to work differently. Deficits and disadvantages pile up faster, and this has continuing negative consequences for later" (Sampson and Laub 1997, p. 153).

The only area of consensus between these orthodox theories and feminist criminological theory is the "victim-offender overlap" that claims that "victims and offenders tend to share all or nearly all social and personal characteristics" (Gottfredson and Hirschi 1990, p. 17). Since at least the 1980s, feminist criminologists have studied intersections between gender and crime to complicate existing paradigms (Chesney-Lind and Rodriguez 1983; Maher 1997). Coined the "feminist pathways perspective" by Belknap and Holsinger (2006), studies document an abuse-to-prison pipeline in which abused women are more likely than non-victims to commit crime (Potter 2015). The perspective offers insights as to how victims of crimes are similar to their offenders, with most of this work highlighting how abused girls and women engage in criminal activity in an effort to evade abuse and reach safety (Chesney-Lind and Shelden 20134; Jones 2010; Flores 2015).

This body of work has a few areas that can be further explored. First, there simply are not enough studies on formerly incarcerated Latinas to fully understand how Latinas relate to the abuse-to-prison pipeline. This is particularly important considering that processes of acculturation are acutely connected to other aspects of marginalized identities that inform pathways to incarceration (i.e., Latinx ethnoracial identity, command of English, generational status, poverty, and so on) (Vigil 2008; Barret et al. 2013). This discussion is further complicated by the notion of Mexican immigrant replenishment, which serves to sharpen group boundaries, makes race more salient for later-generation Mexican Americans, and serves to solidify intragroup boundaries among Mexican Americans of various generations (Jiménez 2008). Latinas, and in particular Mexicans and Mexican Americans, are different in that regard in comparison to other racialized communities of criminalized women.

Second, despite a burgeoning body of work on Latinas and the abuse-to-prison pipeline, little focus has been directed to how carceral communities adversely impact the lives of the Latinas that live in them. Given the criteria that dictate carceral placement, US-born Latinas and Latina immigrants (Mexican immigrants in particular) are more inclined to live in the type of extreme-poverty neighborhoods that house carceral facilities (Jargowsky 1997; Portes and Zhou 1993). As distinct sites, the social milieu that arise in carceral communities is not unique to poor, racialized communities—but the heightened level of social problems, in conjunction with other forms of state divestment and economic exploitation, is. Thus, more systematic analysis of the impact of the social ecology of these neighborhoods needs to be done to better understand their reach.

Finally, many existing feminist pathways studies utilize race and ethnicity as simply variables of identity that differentiate their participants from orthodox studies. These studies tend to focus on interpersonal violence and how institutions make accessing help more difficult for them. Rather than divorcing race and ethnicity from

systems of power, studies need to examine how systems of power inform the ideological and material conditions that make crime happen for gendered and racialized populations (Lopez 2017).

This study examines these possibilities, considering how Latinas are rendered the victims of carceral facilities. I address these concerns and the research questions with data from interviews and critical narratives from formerly incarcerated Latinas across California's various carceral communities. First, I provide a sense of the material and social realities of California carceral communities to demonstrate characteristics consistent among these sites. I then discuss my methodology including participant outreach, participant demographics, and data compilation. I move into the study's findings by discussing the neglect and violence that these women faced across various facets of their communities and the coping mechanisms that they used to resist that treatment that ultimately led to their criminalization. I conclude by discussing how the social ecology of the carceral community in conjunction with prevailing neoliberal ideology renders Latinas hypervulnerable to neglect, violence, and subsequent criminalization.

Carceral communities

Communities rendered disposable by asset stripping and divestment are considered prime locations for prisons (Clear 2007; Pardo 1990). Prisons, like nuclear power plants and landfills, are considered locally undesirable land-use (LULU) projects. LULUs are land-use projects that are perceived as detrimental or of consequence to the marginalized communities surrounding them, as they are more likely to be found in or near communities of color which experience declines in property values (Been 1994). Previous research has found that rural, conservative, working-class, Catholic communities reliant on ranching and farming industries but disengaged from social justice traditions are the least likely to oppose the construction of LULU projects. While race is not named explicitly, the resemblance of this list of characteristics is strikingly similar to that of the Latinx communities that house prisons along California's "golden gulag"[6] (Gilmore 2007, p. 4).

The roughly 17% of Latinxs that live in poverty in the United States (Ross and Dorazio 2022) are more likely to live in high-poverty neighborhoods (Jargowsky 2013, p. 4; Jargowsky 2009, p. 1129). These neighborhoods, vexed with extreme poverty,[7] are home to large numbers of poor Black people, US-born Latinxs, and Latinx immigrants (particularly Mexicans) (Jargowsky 1997; Portes and Zhou 1993). An analysis of Jargowsky's (2013) study of metropolitan areas in the United States with the highest concentrations of poverty among Latinxs shows that every

[6] Known as California's prison alley, this 900-plus-mile trek refers to the vertical stretch of land running up the state of California along Highway 99/Interstate 5 where the majority of California's prisons are clustered.

[7] Extreme poverty neighborhoods are defined as having 40% or more of residents classified as poor based on national poverty standards.

area on the list is home to a carceral facility of some type, whether criminal or immigration detention center (p. 14). The poverty-enhancing concentration of these communities makes Black ghettos, Latinx barrios, and rural ghettos similar as sites of extreme disadvantage (Eschbach et al. 2004, p. 1807; Eason 2017).

Prisons and extreme-poverty communities have symbiotic relationships in regard to societal degradation. Prisons are placed in "disposable communities" with fleeting life chances and opportunities for their residents, while prisons also deteriorate the quality of life and outcomes of their residents. Jargowsky (2009) found that despite extreme-poverty communities dropping in number by more than a quarter nationally, the exceptions have been found in California carceral communities with Latinx pluralities. The concentration effects of living in these extreme-poor neighborhoods "exacerbate the problems of poverty and limit economic opportunity," hosting a slew of social problems not limited to high crime, gangs, increased policing, defunded schools, dilapidated housing, a defunct medical infrastructure, and environmental issues (Jargowsky 2009, p. 1129).

Gilmore contends that "prisons wear out places by wearing out people, irrespective of if they have done time," as heavy state-sanctioned surveillance in communities disintegrates the casual relationships that neighborhood and community well-being require, and "people stop looking out for each other and stop talking about anything that matters in terms of neighborly wellbeing" (2007, pp. 16–17). The high imprisonment rates of residents destabilize neighborhoods and damage informal social control mechanisms, replicating the conditions that sustain crime (Clear 2002, p. 193). Family and community members bear the multifaceted burdens of the criminalized during incarceration and after, as the formerly incarcerated face many structural impediments to securing stable lives. Studies show that women take on these responsibilities most and share in the chronic socioeconomic adversities that their formerly incarcerated counterparts experience (Mercado 2022; Comfort 2009).[8] These resource-deficient communities are at the intersection of many oppressive systems, which creates friction and disrupts the familial ties and social networks that people rely on for support (Huling 2002; Clear 2002). The communal bonds that value collective ways of being and a sense of shared entitlement over public space are destroyed, and people become isolated, distrust one another, and feel the pressure of constant surveillance. "We" becomes "me," and ruptured social cohesion serves as a form of carceral collateral[9] consequence: While ghettos become prisonized, prisons become ghettoized and the surveillance and social

[8] In *Rethinking Corrections: Rehabilitation, Reentry, and Reintegration* (2011), Gideon and Sung found that 60% of formerly incarcerated people are still unemployed a year after their release with 67% in the report still unemployed five years following their release (p. 332).

[9] Carceral collateral has most often been used in reference to the disenfranchisement and barring of formerly incarcerated people from the rights and material entitlements of US citizens without a criminal record by way of "carceral citizenship" (Miller and Alexander 2015; Miller and Stuart 2017). Additionally, it has referenced the destruction of collective bonds (Clear 2002; Huling 2002), the emotional and economic fallout that happens to families when a member is incarcerated (Comfort 2009), and the increased criminalization of communities that are home to formerly incarcerated people (Lopez-Aguado 2016; Wacquant 2001). This study locates Latinas as subjects that bear the cumulative consequences of carceral facilities in their communities.

control around them constitutes a "carceral continuum" (Wacquant 2001) whereby they are connected to those behind bars (Lopez-Aguado 2016). This "we-versus-they" mentality among its residents pits friends, family members, and formal agents of control against one another (Clear 2002, p. 192). This pressure manifests as unhealthy relationships, neglect, and outright violence across the community. Clear (2002) explains: "There's no shortage of anecdotal evidence of increased rates of divorce, alcoholism and substance abuse, suicide, health problems, family violence, and other crimes associated with multi-generational prison communities, suggesting that below the surfaces of local power structures, people in these communities are suffering" (Huling 2002, p. 207).

The women in this study are no exception, as their experiences provide insight on the intersectional violence in these communities. I draw on intersectional criminology and feminist research on abuse in criminology and sociology to demonstrate how the social ecology of the carceral community renders Latinas hypervulnerable to the passive and active violence that leads to their criminalization. Through analyzing their experiences before and after abuse, I contend that neoliberal and traditional Latinx ideologies of worth at times align with one another to deleterious effects contributing to Latina criminalization.

Methodology

I conducted seventeen semi-structured interviews/critical narratives (Darder 2015; Ntinda 2019). Outreach was conducted via social media using a flyer identifying myself with information on the study. I shared it to social media accounts and other pages that are highly trafficked by Latinx and BNBPOC.[10] Those interested contacted me, and once I ensured eligibility, we set appointments.

Six sessions were conducted in person, seven by video chat, and four by telephone. Participants were given the terms of participation and an overview of the consent form, with a chance to ask questions. After signing, participants were given surveys inquiring about demographic and criminal history backgrounds. I iterated the voluntary and confidential nature of the study and reminded participants that consent could be rescinded at any point and that any data collected would be terminated. Once participants had agreed to these terms, I started to record and began the sessions. These semi-structured open-ended interviews turned into critical narrative hybrid models as their experiences cannot be explained fully without understanding their lives prior to containment. Given that this method gives participants free range to make sense of their lives using their sociocultural contexts through storytelling, participants immediately directed these sessions toward experiences in their lives that were most salient to their criminalized present—their experiences with neglect and violence. I gave participants the space to recount their stories and offered semi-structured questions to discuss areas of inquiry and patterns among participants.

[10] Black and non-Black people of color.

Table 1 Participant demographics

Pseudonym	Location (Metropolitan/regional areas)	Generation	Children	Education	Age of initial incarceration	Cumulative time served
Leti	Bay Area	1–2 Gen	Yes	< College	15y	3y
Paola	Bay Area	1–2 Gen	Yes	< College	13y	2y
Mariah	Bay Area	N/A	Yes	< College	21y	10y
Caro	Bay Area	1–2 Gen	No	BA degree	13y	7y
Deion	Central Valley	3+Gen	Yes	High school diploma	24y	< 1y
Alejandra	Central Valley	3+Gen	Yes	High school diploma	24y	6y
Martina	Central Valley	3+Gen	Yes	High school diploma	18y	3y
Tiffany	Central Valley	3+Gen	Yes	< College	17y	> 1y
Xiomara	Central Valley	3+Gen	No	< College	13y	2y
Alicia	Los Angeles	3+Gen	No	Graduate School	13y	< 2y
Celine	Los Angeles	1–2 Gen	Yes	AS degree	19y	< 1y
Bella	Los Angeles	1–2 Gen	Yes	Graduate school	21y	< 3y
Azalea	Los Angeles	3+Gen	Yes	BA degree	12y	< 4y
Camila	Los Angeles	3+Gen	Yes	Vocational training	13y	1y
Alexis	Los Angeles	3+Gen	Yes	< College	13y	< 5y
Gianna	San Diego	3+Gen	Yes	< College	13y	2y
Maritza	San Diego	N/A	Yes	AA degree	24y	5y

Participants were from the San Francisco Bay area, the Central Valley, and the Los Angeles and San Diego metropolitan areas. Most participants were of Mexican descent, several identified as Indigenous, one as Afro-Latina, and a few as non-Mexican ethno-national identities.[11] Less than half were first- or second-generation American (Table 1).[12] All except for one grew up working class/poor. Three-fourths are mothers; most were teen mothers. Half were removed from their parents as youth in some capacity either by the state or emancipation. Almost all discussed health conditions despite not initially reporting such. Most were/are gang affiliated and had/have substance-addicted parents. All experienced neglect and/or abuse.

[11] While participants self-identified ethnoracially using these descriptors, phenotypically most were on a spectrum of light to dark brown skin. Despite racialization significantly playing into the disparate treatment of women of color in the justice system (Nanda 2011, p. 1522), within this sample of Latinas, later generations seemed to have worse outcomes with abuse and criminal trajectories.

[12] Generational status was defined as the following: first-generation meant being born in another country and (im)migrating to the United States, second-generation meant being the daughter of immigrants, third-generation-plus meant having parent(s) born in the United States.

Participants either chose or were given a pseudonym. Field notes and sessions were transcribed verbatim. I utilized Dedoose, a qualitative software, to categorize descriptors and manually coded themes. After coding, I utilized *muxerista* portraiture (Flores 2017) as my methodological theoretical device when interacting with and writing about my participants. Lawrence-Lightfoot and Davis define portraiture as a "method of qualitative research that blurs the boundaries of aesthetics and empiricism in an effort to capture the complexity, dynamics, and subtlety of human and organizational life" (1997, p. xv). Like the painter and the painted, the roles of researchers and those being researched are co-constitutive, as each impacts the other. Thus, knowledge is erected collectively through their careful collaboration. A. Flores's (2017) *muxerista* portraiture approach utilizes Chicana and Latina feminist theory (CLFT) to emphasize the role of the researcher's positionality in utilizing cultural intuition to actively refute deficit framing and make visible the goodness of their collaborators with the assumption that affirming qualities can and do manifest alongside that which is flawed. Additionally, *muxerista* portraiture is a methodological theoretical device that honors the lived experiences of collaborators, sees the good in them, and is committed to challenging oppression. *Muxerista* portraiture comprises the various elements of portraiture yet incorporates the following Chicana/Latina feminist sensibilities: the borderlands as context, translating voice, relationships and spirituality, cultural intuition and emergent themes, and the aesthetic whole-piecing together Coyolxauhqui (Flores 2017, p. 2).

Methodological limitations include sample size and that participants reflect shared organizational networks. Despite my robust participant pool, larger sample sizes lend to greater reliability. Based on networks that shared the study, there was an overrepresentation of participants with ties to educational organizations committed to educational equity and access for formerly incarcerated and system-affected students.

Additionally, positionality *always* impacts data, and our interactions reflected such. Participants often expressed surprise upon first meeting me. Exclamations like, "It's cool that you're one of us." or "You're not like the others," were common, as my Chicana working-class aesthetic (Hernandez 2020) and vernacular put them at ease. Yet our shared understandings and experiences as working-class Chicanas from carceral communities facilitated connection. Poverty, gangs, drugs, criminalization, and trauma unfortunately are salient in my family and broader community leading me to being an outsider within (Collins 1986), of sorts. Therefore, much of the explanatory unpacking necessitated when participants are of a different sociocultural experience than their researchers was avoided, as well as feelings of judgement, which allowed a more organic exchange to unfold. Additionally, I believe my visible pregnancy allowed participants to let their guard down, and because most are mothers, it opened the door to establishing rapport.[13] In the ethos of reciprocity,

[13] I do, however, wonder how my cisgender heteronormative display may have influenced discussions of queer sexuality in the study, as few discussed it and several made disparaging remarks about queer play in prison.

participants had full rein to ask questions, and I sensed their ease when I shared aspects of my upbringing.

Despite having much in common, I have tremendous privilege in relation to these women, as a working-class Chicana scholar with access to middle-class resources and having never been incarcerated. Getting insight into their lives, I sat with survivor's guilt as someone who shared community and upbringing with them but "made it out." It is not lost on me that it could have very easily been me in their position. Sensitive to the history of researchers extracting knowledge from marginalized communities, I discussed my intentions with this work with several of the participants and what I hoped it would achieve. Participants affirmed my work and encouraged me to keep pushing, making me promise to reach out when the larger study was finally published. I offered my support with their endeavors and remain in contact with many.

Latinas as carceral collateral

Three major observations emerged from the study. First, participants experienced neglect and an array of abuse that occurred mostly within their households. Second, they coped with the aftermath of abuse by utilizing survival mechanisms that were rejected, prompting their criminal records. Based on these findings I conclude that their experiences demonstrated that the perfect storm of conditions that ultimately led to their criminalization was informed by neoliberal ideologies "from above" and cultural ideologies "from below" that constrained these women from breaking free from lives of abuse and incarceration.

Neglect and violence

Neglect and violence were some of the most prevalent experiences in the lives of Latinas across California carceral communities. All participants discussed their victimization. Despite participants coming from vastly distant regions with different social histories, the similarities in their experiences were astounding. They reported confronting neglect in the form of sustenance precarity and various forms of vicarious and direct abuse ranging from parental addiction to domestic, physical, and sexual violence. Participants roamed the streets as children to find food, experienced torture by extended family members, had to bear witness to domestic violence, were battered by family, and were molested by their mothers' partners. While these cases may sound hyperbolic, they were uncannily familiar across this study.

Poverty, a form of passive violence with far-reaching limbs, was at the root of the neglect that participants experienced. Living in poverty-concentrated neighborhoods, their families shared in the deprivation of those around them. Being single parents, coming from immigrant families, and having parents with disabilities and addictions meant that many of their backgrounds contributed to the financial insecurity they faced that affected the care they received. Many of their parents failed

to provide for their physical and emotional needs in ways that are coded as neglect, from an institutional standpoint. Martina, a light-skinned, masculine Chicana with gang tattoos across her ear lobes and neck described the struggle she faced with accessing food and clothing as a sibling of seven in the Central Valley:

> *Martina* I use to wear my brother's clothes. … I didn't have a blanket. About food we just were always eating at the neighbor's house all the time. If we run out of food so, like, my mom send me to my cousins across the street the Gonzalez's to go eat over there ….
>
> *Researcher* How did your mom afford it? Like you said there was seven of you.
>
> *M* Yes.
>
> *R* So how did your mom get by, like how did she manage?
>
> *M* Beans … rice … then borrow from family and friends. You know? There were days where we didn't eat, you know?

While Martina's mother received some social welfare support, it was simply not enough. As there was no adequate social welfare safety net to help meet the needs of Martina's family, families like theirs that were struggling to get by turned to their communities to help catch them. While neighbors often tried to make up for what the state would not, they also were poor, as they lived in sites of concentrated poverty. Despite Martina's mother and her immediate community mobilizing the resources they had, because Martina and her siblings went without, Martina's family was vulnerable to the state classifying their need as neglect.

Paola, a mother of two, discussed never seeing her parents. Like other Mexican immigrants, they were forced to work long hours at lower pay rates than their US-born counterparts to make ends meet (Bureau of Labor Statistics 2019; Jargowsky 2009; Chapman and Bernstein 2003), even as they lived in what Paola described as "the ghetto." Consistent with the supporting research (Jargowsky 2009), Paola's immigrant parents were able to move from a concentrated-poverty neighborhood to a working-class neighborhood when they purchased a home. Yet this move in upward mobility did not occur without some consequences. Because of their low-paying jobs and need to make their mortgage payment, she recalled them always working. From the moment she woke up until going to bed, they were working. After she would fall asleep, they would return home, only to be gone by the time she arose. At the same time, Paola and her brother were placed in different schools, and she was one of the only Latinxs in her new school. As a dark-skinned Latina, she was ostracized yet described her ignorance of drugs, gangs, and sex as being a major reason she was picked on. Through her dominance in fighting, she gained a popular reputation that followed her as she was kicked out from a higher-performing school to a school with more drugs, gangs, and violence. As she "went from bad to worse," her newfound sense of confidence from fighting gave her a following of equally troubled youth who would congregate in her empty home. Used to the lack

of supervision, she and her brother would engage in illicit behaviors during the day but be in bed by their parents' return.

Neglect was often a result of secondary trauma that greatly affected the emotional and physical well-being of these women. Given that more than three-fourths of participants came from substance-addicted families, they often detailed how parental addiction was a black hole of sorts that adversely affected other areas of their lives. Alicia, a thirty-six year-old Chicana of native ancestry who eventually would go on to receive her PhD, overcame dire circumstances marred by intergenerational drug abuse in her family. She explains,

> They [her parents] had left LA because of my dad, [who] was in and out of prison a lot, … involved in the gang lifestyle. Heroin addict, and alcoholic. *Clears throat* And that's kind of what we grew up around as kids, we grew up in a motel. When we came back from San Jose I grew up in a one room motel in South Gate, city of South Gate. And then in 1995 my dad died from cirrhosis of the liver, alcoholism at the age of 36. And then for a few years my mom still took care of us, there we were still living in this motel and then my mom had a massive stroke in 1991. So, I was 10 years old—9 or 10 years old and [it] completely changed her for life. She had to learn how to walk, talk, and eat again. My grandma would come to take care of us.

Addiction in the home is connected to subsequent incarceration for girls, and having at least one parent who is addicted to alcohol and/or drugs is strongly connected to other types of violence (Simkins at al. 2004). This was precisely the case for the women in this study, as it opened the door to other forms of violence.

Participants often witnessed and experienced domestic and physical violence when their fathers were under the influence. Their mothers were usually the recipients of domestic violence, but our participants also were subject to beatings by parents, male siblings, and male extended family members, as studies show that perpetrators of interpersonal violence are more likely to abuse their children (Children's Hospital of Philadelphia Research Institute 2020). While some participants had systems in place in which their mothers would gesture when to call the cops, others would physically intervene to try to stop their fathers from assaulting their mothers, stepmothers, and siblings. Alejandra, a Norteña gang member[14] from the Central Valley, was taken from her mother's custody at seven years old due to her stepfather murdering someone. She was placed into the custody of her father, an abusive alcoholic. Alejandra describes the day she fled home, "I'm always protecting my little brothers from him and when I was seventeen, it was I think, February 4. He came home hella drunk and yea it was bad. He ended up shattering my jaw and I just remember leaving and it was raining and I just ran." Horrific physical abuse was common among these women as girls, and there were countless times that one might

[14] Translating to "northerners," this gang dominates from Bakersfield to northern California and pays homage to the Nuestra Familia prison-based organizational gang. Norteños tend to be Mexican American.

expect protective services to intervene but the shattered jaws, bones, bruises, and hospitalizations were to no avail.

Yet inadequate familial and institutional intervention was something the women in this study knew well. Despite not being asked directly, a third of participants discussed their sexual abuse histories. While many discussed being shunned by their families into silence about being molested by extended family members—with some chastised for calling out their perpetrators and being forced to apologize—others demanded action by authorities. Tiffany, an Afro-Latina mother from Fresno, was molested by her mother's boyfriend at twelve years old. Baring her feelings, she described how she felt when her mother took back the perpetrator,

> *Tiffany* So after that was, basically, I said all that [just for them] to be just like "your voice, what you just told me doesn't sound true." And she took him back which was like, … after all that, you turn around and to come back so like I don't feel protected. Like you're my mom and I told you all this and you still took him back??? … Like I still think I suffer from it like a lot. Like I'm so paranoid for my kids. So, who's going to protect me?
>
> *Researcher* And how did that impact your relationship with your mom after that point?
>
> *T* Oh I'm still resentful to this day because she didn't protect me and like, how do you go back to someone that your daughter said molested her? And she's telling you at 12 like, and a lot of women were like, "Oh, she's lying. It doesn't sound like …" like why are 12-year-old kids going to lie?

Believing her perpetrator, the police dropped the case. In this case, the police had the authority to decipher the innocence or guilt of Tiffany's perpetrator, but Tiffany as a young Black girl was ultimately determined to not be innocent enough to make a claim of her own volition. In this case, and in so many others, these women (then girls) were held to standards of innocence based on the moral discretion of juvenile decision-makers whose judgements have been found to be steeped in racist and gendered stereotypes that disproportionately and more harshly punish Black and Latina girls and women (Nanda 2011; Pasko and Lopez 2018). The responses of these women (as girls) disclosing their sexual assaults is consistent with studies on Latina sexual abuse that suggest that most do not disclose their sexual victimization to anyone (Romero et al. 1999).

The institutions in place that should have saved these women did not because of the devaluation of these women as young Latinas. Whether the failure was in lack of adequate resources to combat the crippling poverty Martina's family confronted, school personnel not noticing that Paola was being targeted, or cops not taking seriously the allegations of molestation made by Tiffany, they each fell through the cracks. Additionally, because of enduring Latinx stigmatization and criminalization within social services like Child Protection Services (Maldonado-Fabela 2022) or even social workers at their school sites, most of these women knew early on that potential interventions were rarely in their favor and would serve to fracture their already vulnerable families. With no one to turn to, the women (then girls) in my

study began to cope in the ways that were available to them. Unfortunately, these mechanisms of self-preservation catalyzed their paths to confinement.

Coping mechanisms

Maladjustment across girls' lives is connected to abuse in the home (Simkins et al. 2004; Johansson and Kempf-Leonard 2009; Chesney-Lind 2002; Belknap and Holsinger 1998). Girls and women display coping mechanisms in their evasion of abuse then become criminalized by their families and society (Chesney-Lind and Shelden 2013; Winn 2010, 2019; Diaz-Cotto 2006; Schaffner 1998). Because the hierarchies that exist in society exist in the criminal justice/legal system, women of color—like the Latinas in this study—are subjected to intensified vulnerabilities in their paths to criminalization (Salinas and Santos 2023; Lerma 2022; Maldonado 2021; Richie 2002; Flores 2015).

Previous research has found that abuse in the home finds its way to school (Simkins et al. 2004). This can range from disengagement with academic work to being ejected from class for being disruptive to getting into fights and, ultimately, to experiencing removal from school sites (Morris 2016; Flores 2015; Jones 2010). Many in this study discussed exhibiting aggression at school to cope. Alicia discusses how she went from trying to make sense of her experiences to expulsion from her school district,

> I was like 12, 13 … when I started to like realize and sort of to like internalize my frustrations, my anger in regards to like, "Why the fuck do I live this life" like—"why am I—why was I born into a family like this?" And what I mean by "family like this" I mean, dysfunctional. My dad was a drug addict and alcoholic—he died super early from cirrhosis because of his alcoholism. He was in and out of prison. He was a gang member. My uncle, my cousins, were all members of gangs, you know what I mean? So it's like, what the fuck. I was mad with that reality. Why did my mom have a stroke and get sick, you know what I mean? And then like, I felt abandoned by her during that time. And so that manifested in my behavior in school specifically towards other girls. So I felt like, I felt like that because that's how I felt about myself. Right? I was angry towards myself, and so, and so I would incite fights with girls or I would like ditch and go to the, go to like ditching parties, stuff like that. And so when I got kicked out of junior high's when I started, when I, when I first got, I guess you could say kicked out or whatever the hell they call it, like pushed out.

By eighth grade, Alicia had been expelled from the Los Angeles Unified School District and was forced to regularly report to her probation officer. Consistent with previous research, the women in this study identified their school sites as where their criminal records started (Chesney-Lind and Rodriguez 1983). Probation violations for absences catalyzed their paths to the school-to-prison pipeline—as petty offenses were grounds to take them to juvenile detention facilities, entangling them in a relentless web of criminalization.

Others, like Alexis, a multiracial Chicana mother from Los Angeles, used drugs as her coping mechanism. Alexis's parents and sibling abused PCP, crack cocaine, and alcohol. Poor, living in dilapidated housing, and witnessing daily violence, she turned to drugs to self-medicate. Insightfully, she posed the question, "What came first, the chicken or the egg?" questioning whether familial dysfunction drove her to addiction or whether addiction drove her family into dysfunction. As with many, drugs were her way out. Consistent with previous research, many abused women used drugs and alcohol to receive momentary reprieve (Winn 2019; Chesney-Lind and Shelden 2013; Zilberman and Blume 2005; Schaffner 1998; Bronson and Carson 2019). For others, income from drug sales provided an opportunity to secure stable housing to flee familial or romantic partner violence. In both scenarios, they were usually apprehended and jailed—not for being under the influence or for having proof of sales—but for having traces of drugs when searched. Searches were generally conducted as police made gendered claims of sex work solicitation, making them vulnerable to search and seizure while in public.

Nearly all participants found temporary refuge from the chronic abuse in their lives in romantic relationships that replicated the cycles of violence they were trying to flee. Consistent with feminist criminological research that contends that pathways of abuse are catalyzed by girls' assertion of themselves as sexual subjects (Winn 2010; Chesney-Lind and Shelden 2013), many discussed how their desire for romantic relationships as teenagers clashed with the Roman Catholic, immigrant values that reigned supreme in their homes but policed their bodies. These contradictions resulted in abuse by family members, which pushed them toward abusive and exploitative relationships, often with much older men (Schaffner 1998). Forms of exploitation they faced included being pressured to take drugs, which often led to addiction, their dependence through engaging in survival sex (Shannon et al. 2007), and being pressured to take on gendered drug sale and/or gang roles. They also opted to take on charges for crimes their partners committed. Given that most of them dated men with lengthy criminal records, they sacrificed themselves so their partners could evade lengthy felony terms. While exploitative, most of these relationships were also outright abusive, as they were subjected to intense interpersonal partner violence. Consistent with intersectional criminological literature, many women legitimated the physical violence in their romantic relationships given the abuse they received at the hands of their fathers (Potter 2008). Celine, a mother of three from Los Angeles, discussed why she stayed in her relationship:

> Now I know that him putting hands on me was something really wrong in our relationship. But since my dad used to do that to me, I thought it was so normal you know, that I was like, "whatever I could take it" you know. "I could take a beat down, it's normal, my dad used to put hands on me," I thought I was okay.

This sentiment was echoed by participants. Saying things like, "he broke my phone, … he didn't break my nose, so that's okay," they normalized abusive behavior that would eventually escalate. Yet this often led to their own incarcerations, as many did time for resisting their attackers by calling the police and/or physically

engaging with them. After Tiffany threatened her children's father with a knife after he assaulted her while holding their infant, she found herself pumping milk from the jailhouse.

Many would not get the outcomes they anticipated by calling for help, as they defied popular conventions of ideal victimhood. Several of these women spoke about calling the police after being battered only for the officers to get false testimonies from their perpetrators that the women were in fact the aggressors. In turn, this would incense the victims and incite their resistance through aggressive protest, and the women would often be taken in alongside their batterers. Despite this, many of these women were caught in cycles of domestic violence whereby they would call the police for help only to not follow up with the cases and ultimately take their partners back. Deion, a Chicana mother from the Central Valley who often called the police for respite from domestic battery, told me of a particularly egregious assault by her husband. When I asked her about calling for help, she told me that officers stopped coming to her house because they knew she would take him back and it was a waste of their time. Frustrated by her lack of follow-through, they told her that, if she was not going to press charges, in the future she should either stop calling or they would also take her into jail. Ultimately, this served to reinforce distrust of law enforcement and dissuade these women from seeking a type of help that had the capacity to contribute to their own criminalization.

Running away was one of the main ways participants evaded familial abuse. This manifested differently by generation and acculturation status. For third-generation-plus participants, their volatile family dynamics offered the latitude to leave home with little consequence or serious follow up. Camila, a professional boxer and mother of four, was sexually abused by uncles and her mother's romantic partners, beaten by her addicted parents, and taken away from her grandmother—the only stable figure in her life. With her grandmother's blessing to flee the violence in her mother's home and $10, she ran away to Venice Beach. She lived there for two years before finding wanted posters in her area asking for her whereabouts. Threatened by her former school district, her mother was forced to locate her and send her to school. Camila endured multiple forms of incarceration by the state as a ward of the court reliant on state provided sustenance. Group homes designed to provide safe housing for justice-system-involved girls and emancipated minors were sites that reproduced the sexual terror that many of these abused girls faced. When Camila was placed in a group home headed by a husband and wife with five other girls, she thought she finally had some domestic normalcy as she bounced around from juvenile detention to psychiatric treatment facilities despite not having a criminal record or psychiatric issues. That dream was cut short as she awoke to the home's father figure secretively taking one of the girls in the middle of the night to sexually assault her. Shocked, Camila pretended to be asleep only for him to notice she was awake and threaten that she was next. Faced with either staying and being raped or fleeing and being criminalized, Camila chose the latter.

Latina immigrants and the daughters of immigrants had a very different experience with running away. Most of these women experienced acculturation stress. Bound by rigid definitions of "proper" behavior by their parents, they saw Americanized peers enjoying the independence they craved. Leti, the eldest daughter of

formerly undocumented Mexican immigrants, was no different. Describing growing up in "a very strict Catholic household, both of my parents are Mexican and they're very by the books, very old-school," going to mass every Sunday, and dressing extremely conservatively; she described being envious of the freedom that more acculturated gang members had. She fell for a much older *cholo* whose family was what she called "gang centered." I asked her why she was so interested in him. She responded,

> I think the fact that my parents were super strict—that I had gone through all these situations and didn't really have an outlet for it, that my life was so different in the sense that they had all the liberty of the world, … they were doing their own thing, they were able to go out when they wanted, and I didn't quite understand, the 15 year old me didn't understand "hey why can't I just go out sometimes?" or "why can't I do these different things?" so I don't know if it was liberty that attracted me.

Leti was consumed with how those in her new social circle lived, and attributed their autonomy as the impetus for her pushing back on her parents' demands, from chastity to how she adorned herself and who she socialized with. After a physical altercation in which her parents called the police after she defended herself from their physical assault, a fifteen-year-old Leti would begin her first sentence of many in juvenile detention for battery. Whereas her parents believed they were containing her unruly behavior, her estrangement from her adult boyfriend only made her resent them and seek his company more when she was released. After her parents filed a case against him because of the inappropriate nature of their relationship, he was deported. Despite being on probation, a then seventeen-year-old Leti ran away to Mexico to be with her boyfriend. Her actions were futile as he was unfaithful, and she returned back to her worried mother—only to be taken directly into custody for probation violation.

While most participants acknowledged that their immigrant parents' rigid expectations were well-intentioned, they remarked on how confining the gendered constructs were for them. On one hand they were expected to take on household and familial responsibilities but, on the other hand, were not granted the power to socialize outside of the family like their peers or even their brothers. They felt like the strict rules their immigrant parents set on them forced them into a naivete of not being able to navigate some of the more vexing social milieu in their carceral communities like drugs or gang life. This created an ongoing tug-of-war between daughters and Latinx parents that often resulted in their daughters running away with friends or older boys/men. Running away to escape the control of her parents, Paola, the daughter of Mexican immigrants, explains,

> I think that is a lot of the reason why I would run away. … It's because they always kept us so like chained up. They always kept us like in their order. We always had to follow their rules. They never gave us any freedom or you know, any opportunity to prove to them that we could do good … without being watched all the time. And I think that's why I rebelled so bad. I had never seen any of this, I had never done any of this, like I had always heard you know,

> "gangs are bad, drugs are bad" … and all this but like, you can tell me something is bad but like, tell me what would happened from it. Don't just tell me like, "*algo esta caliente*" (something is hot) because I'm still going to want to touch it like unless I actually like, you know, know what's going to happen if I touch it. So I never had that opportunity.

Like all the other first and second-generation girls that ran away, Paola quickly became immersed in a life of drugs, gangs, and a rapidly growing prison record. Ironically, this was the same outcome that her immigrant parents were trying so hard to shelter her from.

Evade the disposability trap: Neoliberal and cultural collusion

The social ecology of poverty drastically limits the life chances and opportunities of the impoverished (Vigil 1988). Carceral communities are sites deemed disposable because their residents are devalued using a neoliberal litmus test of worth that ascribes merit to privileged, white, upper-class, US citizens. As home to largely poor racialized people—many of whom are Latinx immigrants—these communities are divested from and heavily policed (Gilmore 2007). While Vigil (2008) utilizes a multiple marginality framework to address the ecological, economic, sociocultural, and psychological factors that motivate youth to join gangs, I extend intersectional criminology (Potter 2015; Lerma 2022) as a useful framework for understanding the coalescence of neoliberal ideology with dominant Latinx cultural frameworks to better understand the unique constraints Latinas in carceral communities face trying to escape violence. The social problems Vigil refers to as contributing to urban gangs also apply to rural criminalization (1988). Additionally, the acculturative stress linked to criminalization is also present in rural communities (Barrett et al. 2013; Esbensen et al. 2004), making both urban and rural carceral communities parallel sites of social behavior. Thus, Latinas in these communities not only contend with racialized, economic, and xenophobic devaluation, but also confront intra-community gendered marginalization that renders them vulnerable to violence and constrains their opportunities for successfully evading abuse without establishing criminal records.

Neoliberalism explains the passive violence they contended with in their communities and has created the conditions by which they confronted active interpersonal violence, yet cultural ideologies rooted in Latina devaluation often exacerbated their situations. While studies have found that cultures rooted in a gender binary that places a high premium on masculinity, such as Latinx culture, create familial dynamics that are hypervulnerable to violence (Flores-Ortiz 1993), offering only machismo and marianismo paradigms as explanations for this violence not only conceals the roles that structural oppression plays in the lives of Latinx communities but also essentializes Latinx culture as culturally distinct from a mainstream American culture that shares in sexism (González-López and Vidal-Ortiz 2008). What is constructed as *cultura* includes ideologically motivated behaviors that reflect Latinxs' liminal social locations, depressed by structures of power that have historically used

institutions to fragment and punish Latinx families (Maldonado-Fabela 2022). Additionally, constructs like familialism, found in "honor cultures," work to the detriment of women harmed in the family, as they are less likely to reach out for support for fear of tarnishing familial reputations (Dietrich and Schuett 2013). Between not being able to trust institutional resources for support, like law enforcement or schools, and wanting to maintain familial bonds above all else, Latinas have little recourse. The coalescence of culture with structural impediments ensnare Latina violence survivors into a constrained position with few practical opportunities for escape (Villalón 2010). By structurally dislocating reliable support systems to turn to in order to evade abuse (Arnold 1990), cycles of violence that utilize cultural rhetoric like female sacrifice, rigid gender roles that entail female subordination, a sense of worth tied to female chastity, and general male dependency contribute to Latinas feeling trapped (Villalón 2010; Flores-Ortiz 1993; Harper 2017).

The social ecology of the carceral community, where capitalist divestment of poor Latinx communities informs the material conditions that Latinas are forced to contend with, works alongside cultural ideologies and institutional processes to shape the abuse, survival mechanisms, and outcomes for Latinas. This study provides context as to the dearth of information on Latinas' feminist pathways to incarceration and, in particular, how this operates within carceral communities. The slow violence by way of concentrated poverty colludes with the symptomology of the violence and social disorganization found in carceral communities to produce abuse in the lives of Latinas that inhabit them. Their mitigation of abuse in the form of survival mechanisms are judged using not only cultural values that minimize the worth of women, but also neoliberal value systems that criminalize their actions, perpetuating the devaluation of Latinas.

While other studies provide information on feminist pathways (Chesney-Lind and Shelden 2013; Johansson and Kempf-Leonard 2009; Belknap and Holsinger 1998), this study adds complexity to the body of literature which mostly looks at either interpersonal or institutional violence, and demonstrates how both processes work together from "above" and "below." This analysis is framed not solely outward but also inward at the cultural contradictions that support the structural mechanisms of subordination for Latinas. To reiterate, this is not to subscribe to cultural deficiency models but to instead posit how carceral facilities contribute to rendering Latinas as collateral and also to move beyond silos of inquiry to gain a more thorough sense of the conditions that Latinas negotiate. These results are significant because all social behavior and outcomes are dictated by an interplay among micro, meso, and macro processes. Yet all these levels are informed by ideological constructs that determine value based on "raced, sexed, spatial, and state-sanctioned violence," in all of which Latinas in carceral communities come out on the bottom (Cacho 2012, p. 13). While the structural violence that Latinx communities are subjected to is multiplicative and far-reaching, we too have an obligation to not be complicit by reifying existing hierarchies of power in our own communities.

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