

# *Embarazadas y Maltratadas:* Domestic Violence Among Latinas

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## ABSTRACT

Abuse directed at women by male partners has become recognized as a major health problem. Certain characteristics in the Latino culture have been thought to influence the occurrence of violence in the family. This paper is a summary of the main findings from the author's research with Dr. Susan Mattson on domestic violence perpetuated against pregnant Latinas. That research triangulated quantitative (survey of 450 Latinas) and qualitative (focus groups) methods and used data on prevalence of domestic violence collected in three sites (rural U.S., urban U.S., and Mexico). The study found that although the abuse prevalence for the total sample was only 8.8%, significant differences existed between the three sites, with the highest abuse rate found in the U.S. rural site (17.5%), followed by the Mexican site (10.7%), and the lowest found in the U.S. urban site (3.8%). Studying the association between domestic abuse, acculturation level, and self-esteem revealed only acculturation to be a significant predictor of abuse. Cultural factors enabling abuse were identified through focus groups included use of alcohol, staying in abusive relationships for the good of children or economic dependence, family history of violence or abuse, husbands' infidelity, and jealousy. The paper concludes with some considerations for service providers and researchers as they struggle with the issue of domestic violence in the 21st Century.