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Title of presentation: Transitioning From Public Assistance to the Workplace: An Exploratory Investigation

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### ***Exploring the Immigrant Experience: The Latina Story***

The United States has always been and will continue to be a country of immigrants. This demographic trend greatly contributes to the constantly changing nature of society in general and work in particular. According to the Pew Hispanic Center's estimates, immigrants and their U.S.-born children represent 55% of the total increase in the U.S. population since 1967. At about 44.7 million, Latino immigrants and their families are by far the largest group accounting for 36% of the 100 million added to the population in the last 40 years. The majority of new immigrants, both authorized and unauthorized, are employed and a large number of them are women. Latino and Latina employees contribute increasingly to the U.S. economy. It is not surprising that health, safety, and well-being of immigrant workers, though relatively new, is a rapidly growing area of research.

Immigrants in general and Latinas in particular face many unique challenges in the workplace. This symposium will bring together five research contributions that will jointly explore a broad variety of topics related to Latinas' work experiences and the implication of these work experiences for their health and well-being. The studies that have been conducted in settings as diverse as the military, the construction industry, and work assistance programs address a range of issues important to Latina population.

Eggerth and colleagues present findings from their extensive interviews that were conducted in several geographic areas. This unique study allows researchers to create a broad picture of Latina work experiences, their occupational safety concerns, and ways of coping with work-related issues.

Diversity is a major concern in the U.S. military. Parks will present her research based on the sample of enlisted women from all branches of the military. This study focuses on Latinas' perceptions of discrimination and provides comparisons between ethnic groups. Parks also suggests several ways to reduce discrimination that are applicable to non-military workplace settings.

In addition to being at high risk for workplace discrimination, many Latinas experience intimate partner violence (IPV) at home that may spillover into the workplace. Yragui and colleagues develop and validate a behavioral measure of wanted and received supervisor support-- The IPV Work Support Assessment. Knowledge of Latina women's wanted and received support will be used to inform culturally-appropriate workplace-based interventions addressing this group's unique needs.

Health problems such as high blood pressure and depression have a high prevalence in the U.S. population. James analyzes data from the U.S. national household sample study and explores important differences in the incidence of hypertension and mental health problems across middle- and upper-income Latinas (i.e., females), Latinos (males), white females, and white males. James offers explanations for the observed differences between gender and ethnic groups.

Clark and Muzyro's research addresses an issue relevant for many Latinas— transitioning from public assistance to the workplace. The authors present results of a longitudinal study that follows women through the work assistance program and investigate the role of several factors, among them English language proficiency, in workplace success and adjustment.

Our country is currently in the midst of a major immigration reform. In the media as well as among the general public, immigration is a hotly debated topic. Today, more than ever, it is crucially important for researchers who study immigrant experience to share their findings with the general public and policy-makers. This symposium will provide a much-needed opportunity for researchers representing different disciplines (i.e., public health, occupational safety, and psychology) to have a discussion and to share ideas. The topic of this symposium is likely to draw a large and enthusiastic audience.

***(1) Occupational Safety and Health Experiences of Latina Immigrants***

Much of the occupational safety and health (OSH) literature addressing the concerns of Hispanic immigrant workers has focused on agriculture. However, recent estimates by the Pew Hispanic Center suggest that currently less than 4% of Hispanic immigrants do agricultural work. Other research suggests that, contrary to popular perceptions, less than 1% of Hispanic immigrants work as day laborers. Far greater numbers of Hispanic immigrants are employed in industry sectors such as wholesale and retail trade (12%), service (24%), manufacturing (16%) and construction (17%). Other than epidemiological studies suggesting the existence of significant health disparities within this worker population, there is little in the literature to guide OSH interventions for Hispanic immigrant workers. It should also be noted, that the existing OSH literature addressing Hispanic immigrant workers is heavily skewed toward investigating those industries and occupations that are traditionally male. Little is known about the work experiences of female immigrants (Latinas) in the United States.

In the past, most Latin Americans immigrating to the United States for employment settled in areas that had existing Hispanic communities. However, in the last decade, areas of the United States that have not historically been destinations for these immigrants have experienced explosive growth in their Hispanic populations. Compared to immigrants in “old settlement” areas, immigrants in the new settlement areas face additional challenges related to the lack of an established Hispanic community. These challenges include the lack of a Spanish-speaking infrastructure and community service agencies virtually unprepared to cope with the sudden influx of Hispanic immigrants. Consequently, it is of interest to compare the experiences of immigrants in new settlement areas with those in old settlement areas.

This presentation will discuss a portion of the findings from a series of 8 focus groups conducted with Latina immigrants working in the United States. Four of the focus groups were conducted in Cincinnati, OH (a new settlement area) and four in Santa Fe, NM (an old settlement area). These focus groups were stratified by educational level (6th grade or less & 7 – 12th grade) and length of time in the United States (2 years or less & 5 years or more). The focus group participants were asked to discuss their perceptions of OSH risks related to their jobs, how they cope with problems at work, and to compare their employment experiences in their home countries with those in the United States.

Analysis of the results of these focus groups suggests that many of these Latinas worked in stereotypically female occupations in their home countries (seamstress, maid) but have moved into occupations in the United States that would have been considered stereotypically male in their home countries (manufacturing, warehousing). Other findings suggest that recent immigrants (2 years or less in the

United States) describe similar workplace OSH challenges whether they are in an old or a new settlement area. Less recent (5 years or more in the United States) and/or better educated (7 – 12 grade) immigrants report more instances of challenging unsafe or unfair work situations than recent and/or more poorly educated immigrants. However, all groups report that being undocumented makes them more vulnerable to exploitation and more willing to accept unsafe or unfair work situations than American-born workers.

***(2) Hispanic Women in the Military:  
Rank, discrimination, and equal opportunity***

As the result of several initiatives, the number of minorities in the U.S. military has increased over the last fifty years. As result, the U.S. military is a diverse organization, of the more than 1.4 million active duty men and women in the U.S. armed forces, 11% are Hispanic women in the Army and 44% of women in the armed forces are minorities (Knouse & Webb, 2000). Moreover, there are roughly 212,000 enlisted women and another 150,000 who serve in the National Guard and reserves. To ensure the presence of an equal opportunity climate (EO), which stresses inclusion, positive human relationships, and the opportunity for all to have a voice, several organizations such as the Defense Equal Opportunity Management Institute (DEOMI ) and the Navy Personnel Research and Development Center (NPRDC) offer EO/EEO, diversity, and human relations training, education, and research. Despite the efforts, women especially Hispanic women typically report a less positive EO climate than White women, although greater than Blacks. In an investigation of this trend, researchers from NPRDC analyzed a 1993 Navy Equal Opportunity/Sexual Harassment Survey (NEOSH) and concluded that Hispanic women were less satisfied with the equal opportunity climate (EO) in the Navy than White women, especially if they experienced gender discrimination. Additionally, in an examination of over 166,000 active duty men and women assigned to Army installations, it was concluded that women held lower perceptions of EO than men, but more specially, women officers held more positive views of EO than enlisted women (Moore, 2001). The goal of this research is two fold, first, this research examined the link between EO climate and rank (enlisted and officers). Based on previous research, it is expected that female officers, regardless of race will report a more positive EO climate than enlisted women (Dansby & Landis, 1998). The second goal is to examine the interaction of rank and discrimination (racial, sexual, sexual harassment, age, disability, religion, national origin, or color) on EO climate. Thus, it is hypothesized that Hispanic officers who experienced discrimination (racial, sexual, sexual harassment, age, disability, religion, national origin, or color) in the past twelve months will experience higher levels of EO than Hispanic enlisted women who experienced discrimination.

The data used to examine these hypotheses is based on the responses of 55,040 military women between 2005 and 2007 who completed the Defense Equal Opportunity Organizational Climate Survey (DEOCS), which consisted of sixty-three likert scale items measured on a five-point scale administered electronically and in paper/pencil format. DEOMI offers commanders the opportunity to administer the (DEOCS) to their unit. The women represented military officers and enlisted personnel from all branches of the military, including, Air Force, Army, Navy, Marine Corps, and Coast Guard.

The analyses concluded, that across ethnic groups (African American, White, Hispanic, Native Hawaiian, Asian, and American Indian) women officers reported a

more positive perception of EO climate than enlisted women even though there were only 7,673 women officers in comparison to 47,367 enlisted women. Additionally, Hispanic officers had a higher view of EO than Hispanic enlisted women ( $F=96.887$ ,  $p=.00$ ). Contrary to expectations, there was no rank by discrimination interaction, although, officers had an average EO climate score of 3.1 compared to enlisted 2.8. Nonetheless, some troubling findings emerged, 32% of enlisted and 27% of Hispanic officers reported that they had experienced an incident of discrimination (racial, sexual, sexual harassment, age, disability, religion, national origin, or color) in the past 12 months.

As of the last US Census count, people of Hispanic origin accounted for the nation's largest ethnic or race minority. To keep pace with the changing demographics of the United States, the armed forces must foster an EO climate. The findings illustrate a need to explore methods to improve the perceptions of EO for Hispanic enlisted women. Past research has suggested the implementation of virtual networks and mentoring for women, especially since a positive EO climate may be related to important organizational effectiveness factors such as organizational commitment and engagement (Knouse & Webb, 2000 & 2001). With the proper planning and support, Hispanic enlisted women could experience the same climate as Hispanic officers.

***(3) Intimate Partner Violence and Employment: Supervisor Support and Work Outcomes***

Low-wage employed women and Latina women are among the groups most at risk for intimate partner violence (IPV) and are disproportionately represented among those living in poverty (Tjaden & Thoennes, 2000). Due to cultural and language barriers, Latinas have fewer resources available to assist them with IPV. Mainstream interventions for intimate partner violence are typically tied to the use of health and social services, such as domestic violence shelters, health care, and law enforcement agencies. These formal systems have been critiqued for not meeting the needs of Latina women, needs shaped by cultural, economic, political and social contexts. Given the interest employers have in worker health and safety and the need to address IPV incidences that occur at work, the workplace is a logical site for IPV prevention. There is a critical need, however, for data-based knowledge that could inform effective, behavior-based and culturally specific workplace interventions.

**Study Purpose**

This study examines supervisor support congruency and work outcomes for Latina and non-Latina, abused women. Specifically, the study purpose is to assess the psychometric properties, including construct validity and reliability, of a behavioral measure of wanted and received supervisor support. The IPV-WSA, as a behavioral measure of wanted and received support, will provide more specific information than that provided from a global measure of support and, therefore, will be more useful in informing the development of behavioral interventions for IPV in the workplace. The IPV-WSA will be assessed to understand how the measure performs when compared to a global measure of supervisor support and a measure of LMX relationship quality between the supervisor and employee. The final study purpose is to determine which support measures best predict work outcomes for Latina and non-Latina survivors of IPV. These comparison measures include the IPV-WSA behavioral measure of supervisor support for IPV, perceived supervisor support, relationship quality (LMX), and relational demography variables of gender match, ethnicity match and workplace gender composition. Work outcomes of interest are job satisfaction, job reprimands, work withdrawal, voluntary turnover, and job termination.

**Method**

The Intimate Partner Violence Work Support Assessment (IPV-WSA) was administered in a community sample of Spanish-speaking Latina and English-speaking non-Latina women who have experienced IPV in the past year (N=180). Face-to-face interviews were conducted with 95 Latina and 85 non-Latino participants aged 18 or older, currently employed or employed in the past six months, and involved in intimate partner violence relationships within the past year. Bilingual, bicultural promotoras, Latino community health workers, recruited and interviewed participants in Spanish. English-speaking participants were contacted through the county courthouse restraining order room and through domestic violence support groups in a five county region. To protect women's safety the study was referred as the "women's health" study.

### Preliminary Findings

All analyses controlled for hours worked per week and job tenure. The IPV-WSA was examined on dimensions of positive congruent support (support wanted and received) and support omission (support wanted but not received). Positive congruent support (PCS) and support omission (SO) were significantly related to a general measure of supervisor support and to a measure of leader-member exchange in the expected directions, thus demonstrating convergent validity. Criterion-related validity was established with the finding that PCS and OM significantly predicted work withdrawal behaviors and job satisfaction. Finally, incremental validity was established with PCS and SO predicting work withdrawal after accounting for the control variables and general supervisor support and leader-member exchange. Support omission was also significantly predictive of job satisfaction in a negative direction after accounting for control variables and general supervisor support and leader-member exchange. Finally, differences in wanted and received support (PCS and SO) and related work outcomes between Latino and non-Latino employed, abused women will be discussed.

***(4) Cardiovascular Wellbeing in the Financially Healthy:  
Ethnic and Sex Differences***

Hypertension affects approximately 50 million US adults and is a major factor in the development of cardiovascular diseases (CVD's) such as heart disease, kidney disease, and stroke (American Heart Association, 2000). The combination of individual and business costs from CVD's has led to much research on work influences on hypertension (see, e.g., Landsbergis, et al., 2003, for a review). Very few studies have, however, included Latino working people (James et al, 1994; Krieger, 2000; Piotrkowski, 1998). There is some evidence, though, that hypertension levels and predictors differ between the Latino and White segments of the U.S. population, indicating that comparative (or Latino-worker-only) studies of hypertension outcomes and influences are important. This paper uses data from a large (N=34,232 for the analyses reported here) U.S. national household sample study conducted in 2004 to compare the incidence of hypertension across middle- and upper-income Latinas (i.e., females), Latinos (males), white females, and white males. The prevalence of mental health problems sufficient to provoke treatment seeking was also compared across the same set of sex-by-ethnicity groups. Limiting the comparisons to the financially well off was intended to minimize confounding by income-associated factors such as access to health care. In a result similar to some past comparative data, Latinos had significantly lower levels of hypertension and mental disorders than did Whites. The difference between the ethnic groups was even more substantial for the current sample, however, than for past full-income-range samples. In accord with past studies with low-income skewed Latino samples, the Latinas in this study were found to have significantly higher levels of hypertension than the Latinos. Latinas also had significantly higher levels of mental disorders than Latinos. In keeping with past studies, the white female group had sought treatment for mental-health problems more than the white male group. Contrary to the results of most past studies of the full-range of income groups, however, hypertension was also significantly more common for the white-female group in the current sample than for the white-male group. Finally, Phi tests of the correlations between mental disorders and hypertension yielded non-significance for the Latinas, the Latinos, and the white females, but resulted in a significant correlation ( $\Phi=.15$ ,  $p<.05$ ) for white males. Some potential explanations are offered for the differences between groups observed in the current study, as well as for those differences seen between the results of this study and past ones on hypertension among whites.

***(5) Transitioning From Public Assistance to the Workplace: An Exploratory Investigation***

Recent changes in welfare legislation resulted in the dramatic increase in the number of welfare recipients, many of whom are single mothers, who now must transition from public assistance into the workplace. According to the National Council of La Raza (NCLR), the largest Hispanic civil rights and advocacy organization in the U.S., both native-born and immigrant Latinas who have a strong desire to enter the workforce face a unique set of challenges in achieving this goal. They are often unable to take full advantage of welfare-to-work services, given both their lack of English fluency and the limited worthwhile job opportunities that exist for limited English proficient (LEP) workers. As a result, Hispanic women have tended to leave the welfare rolls at a slower rate than their White and Black counterparts. NCLR advocates a comprehensive reform of the welfare-to-work programs to allow Latina mothers to have equal opportunities to move into stable employment and out of poverty. The main objective of this exploratory longitudinal study is to provide new insights in the psychological processes involved in welfare-to-work transition by investigating some unique challenges faced by Latinas and their families. The goal of this study is to develop a set of culturally-appropriate recommendations that will help ensure success in Latinas' welfare-to-work assistance.

Working in collaboration with a state-supported work assistance agency based in the Northeast, the researchers have surveyed a sample of agency clients who are mostly Latina at the time of their entry into the work assistance program. The researchers collected information about participants' health, availability of social support, global self esteem/self-efficacy, English and Math proficiency, and a variety of other demographic and SES factors that have been identified as barriers to employment success. As the participants enter the workplace, the researchers are collecting data related to employment success. Preliminary analyses suggest that English level proficiency, rather than ethnicity, emerges as a main predictor not only of job success but also of well-being. LEP participants report lower levels of self-esteem, more health problems, and lower levels of social support compared to their English-proficient counterparts. The implications of these findings will be addressed in the presentation.