

Strengths of Latinas in Spain: A challenge for a resilient Social Work practice

ABSTRACT

This paper aims to break with two social imageries often held about Latinas in Spain. We analyze their main strengths from a resilient and intersectional approach, to consider them holistically within social work interventions. Rather than showing their difficulties we focused on their multiple strengths to move forward. The study took place in the province of Tarragona, Catalonia (Spain). A qualitative approach was used. Participants included Latinas living in Tarragona and social workers from the Tarragona social services. The techniques used were nine life stories and 59 semi-open questionnaires with Latinas, and 14 interviews with social workers. We found a fighting attitude and an entrepreneurial and creative spirit as individual strengths; and also, collective strengths, especially within their social networks. Latinas did not recognize themselves as victims nor did they claim to assume an identity in this regard. The social workers' interventions are implemented in a weak Welfare system based on a model characterized by a paternalistic and victim vision. We conclude that adopting approaches such as intersectionality and resilience would allow the creation of fairer policies, programs, and projects addressed to Latinas, **not just in Spain, but also in other countries.**

Key words: Latinas, resilience, Social Work, Spain, intersectionality

INTRODUCTION

This study presents through a resilient perspective a different approach to women migratory realities. It addresses, through a qualitative method, the multiple strengths of Latinas in Spain, instead of focusing just in their multiple difficulties. Over the last 20 years, the migratory trend of Latin Americans has made Spain the second favorite destination country, only preceded by the United States of America (IOM, 2015). In the middle of the first decade of the 21st century,

almost four out ten international immigrants in Spain were of Latin American (DRC, 2007). According to the IOM report (2015) in 2013, 53% of all Latin American immigrants in the EU, 2,221 million people, resided in Spain and of these more than 10% resided in Catalonia. Moreover, on 1 January 2015, according to data from the population registered in Catalonia, the percentage of foreigners in the total population was 14%. Of those, more than 50% were women (García, Jiménez y Redondo, 2009), generating for social workers in Spain a new challenge to tackle.

From the point of view of the Spaniards, immigration was one of their main concerns. In this context, from the beginning of this century Latin Americans have tried to insert themselves into Spanish society by tackling at least two imaginaries. On the one hand, immigrants are considered the cause of many of the current problems (collapsing social services and limiting resources to Spanish people). On the other hand, they are perceived as victims unable of succeeding by their own efforts. In both cases, immigrants are not considered in their full dimension as persons.

Under these perceptions and added to other difficulties and injustices regularly met, immigrants in general, and Latinas in particular, have had to struggle both alone and collectively to move forward. Usually, they succeed, showing that migratory challenges are not always synonyms of failure and defeat (Seller, 2008). Therefore, our aim is to analyze the main strengths of Latinas in Spain, from a resilient and intersectional approach, to consider them holistically in social work interventions. Thus, contributing to deconstruct negative stereotypes of them and valuing other intervention approaches more focused on individual and social empowerment.

Resilience and intersectionality perspectives

Etymologically the term resilience comes from the Latin word "resilius" which means "to bounce." In social sciences, the concept has been used to describe human qualities in an analogy

of the capacity of certain materials to recover their original form after having been subjected to strong pressures, understanding it as the capacity of individuals and social groups to positively face and overcome adversities and risks (Masten, 2001; Rutter, 1985; Ungar, 2011; Vanistendael, 1998). One of the most frequently used definitions refers resilience as *the capacity of a person or a social system to live well and to develop positively in spite of difficult conditions of life, and this in a socially acceptable way.*” (Vanistendael 1998;8). This construct considers that every human being has the capacity to reconstruct positively from adversity. Nevertheless, resilience is not just a personal and static attribute but also a continuous process that can be developed by a person, group, family or community. Against the critiques of the concept, arguing that it tends to have an individualistic focus and neglects of structural forces (Garrett 2015; McMurray et al. 2008), resilience grows in an interaction between persons and environment. Therefore, its study addresses biological, social and cultural levels. As Greene (2002) and Ungar (2011) explain, resilience should be understood from a contextual social ecological perspective; offering a multifaceted conceptual base build on an interactional perspective.

In addition, as intersectionality theory argues a person’s social identity cannot be described solely by one dimension. An individual's social identity is made up of multiple parts that are grounded in a specific social and historical context (Collins and Bilge, 2016). These different parts of identity within resilient factors must be discussed in relation with one another and cannot be separated out from each other (Ungar, 2011). Resilience perspective considers risks and strengths, intersectional theory considers how oppressions and privileges intersect between each other (Nash, 2008).

Meanwhile, resilience connects also with Social Work principles, empowering people and societies from their own strengths to reach social transformation in environments of injustices. In

this context, research has been promoted from Social Work, among other disciplines, with a resilient perspective to incorporate this approach into social intervention.

Migration studies on women

Most of the explanatory theories of international migration (neoclassical perspective, world system theory and the historical-structural one) have focused their analyses on economic issues as the main reason for population movements. Regarding the gender approach, the theories mentioned agree in invisibilizing or keeping migrant women in a secondary place as objects of study. From these perspectives, the labor force is considered as eminently male and the male worker as the protagonist of population movements, while women are represented as alien to the public sphere and the labor market (Morokvasic, 1984).

In the early 1980s, the articulation theory, among other issues, analyzes international migrations as complex processes in which the configuration of links and networks of relations between origin and destiny play a fundamental role (Massey 1989; Taylor 1986). From this approach, increased attention is paid to migrant women by giving more importance to reproduction and gender relations in the domestic group. In these years, along with the recent birth of women's anthropology, the concept of gender emerges as an analytical category in social research. The work of Morokvasic (1984) and Phizacklea (1983) sheds light on the position of working migrant women in host societies or on their interaction with patriarchal structures of the home society. Thus, the different manifestations of gender inequality that persist in the countries of origin are also beginning to be considered as another cause of female migration.

Studies on women in migratory processes increased due, among other reasons, to the fact that flows were increasingly feminized, to the increase in autonomous migrations and to the existence of personal motivations that encourage women to migrate. Furthermore, although studies agree

that the women immigrant are the strongest physical and psychological and the latest IOM report (2018) recognizes the importance of self-agency in all general migration theories, most studies are usually done from a risk paradigm (as mention above).

Over the last 15 years, the study of migration from a resilient social work perspective has raised progressively; probably boosted by the global increase of international migration and by the challenge of their presence for social workers practices (Obrist and Büchi, 2008; Wu, Tsang and Ming, 2012). Most of the studies agree that migrants perform resilient and innovative strategies of survival and that resilience must be understand as part of the migratory agency. **Bekteshi, Hook, And Matthew (2015)**, Berger Cardoso and Thompson, (2010) and Sellers Campbell (2008) have focused their research on the Latinas strategies to survive **in the USA**. However, few studies have been interested particularly on the strengths of Latinas in Spain (Gentil, 2010), which is why this study intends to contribute to this effort.

The attention to immigrants in Spain

In the last 30 years Spain ceased to be an emigration country to become a destination one for hundreds of migrants. Therefore, the approach to immigrants has become essential. In Catalonia, Catalan Government has the competences to receive and integrate immigrants, ruled by the “*Organic Law 4/2000 of 11 January, about Rights and Liberties of the Foreigners in Spain and their Social Integration*” (LOE/4/2000), framed within an immigration policy conceived as an integration one. This integration is understood as a complex process that involves multiple dimensions: social, legal-work, socio-economic and cultural, which should be considered in the social intervention with immigrants. As a result, policies, programs and projects were created to achieve the immigrants’ integrations (Forns i Fernández, 2018). This was done as a reaction and/or adaptation to the rapid and unexpected increases in migratory flows in Spain and

Catalonia. As in the rest European Union countries, immigrants in Spain are entitled to the same benefits of the Welfare State as the local ones, based basically on the principle of normalization and equal opportunities (LOE/4/2000). The social benefits and public services of attention to immigrants can be conceived as a right of all citizens without any type of discrimination (of sex, race, and class). Also, as a form of protection against situations of injustices, exclusion and vulnerability addressed to solve the possible needs of the population. Even if the Law makes no differentiation between immigrant women and men, it considers and regulates some specific situations. In cases of gender violence, the women are protected by the current national and autonomous legislation, with independency of her legal status (article 17, LOE 1/2004).

However, the access of the immigrant population to the different services provided by the Spanish Welfare State does differentiate between EU and non-EU foreigners, determined by the possession of citizenship and residence rights. The lack of authorization for residence or stay leaves people from a non-EU country (as in the case of Latin Americans) in a situation of irregularity and great vulnerability, with legal, social and economic consequences, and only with the possibility of accessing regulated benefits through census registration.

METHODS

Consistent with our research objectives, the methodological design uses a qualitative approach on an ethnographic basis, from an emic perspective. We explore the construction of reality and the interpretation of meaning according to perceptions and social interactions of participants in the study (Leavy, 2014; Kwame Harrison, 2014; Taylor and Bogdan, 1987). This research is part of a broader study approved by the board of the Department of Anthropology, Philosophy, and Social Work, in September 2011. We had two groups of participants. One group consisted of 14 social workers in the Tarragona province of Spain. We selected them with the snowball

technique covering the main fields of social intervention with the immigrated population: Social services (6), health (1), NGOs (2), Education (1) and migration (5). The second group consisted of Latinas, who arrived in Tarragona before 2010, with ages ranging from 18 to 55. They were recruited by references from social workers; by meeting them in places often frequented by immigrants, and by the researchers' personal networks. *Data collection method:* A literature review was conducted prior to the commencement of the data collection. Fieldwork was carried out between 2011 and 2012 in Tarragona (Catalonia). The research methods used were considered the best to meet the objectives and allow insight into both groups of participants' experiences:

- *Nine life-story interviews* with Latin American who were asked to relate freely their complete life story, from birth, childhood, adolescence, migratory project to their current situation. Main criteria of selection were sex, time living in Spain, modalities of arrival, reasons for migration and the integration process in the host society.
- *A semi-open questionnaire* completed by 59 women of Latin-American. It was designed to complete and expand the information collected through the life-story interviews and was divided into five sections with 27 questions centered on their migratory project, adversities faced, their coping mechanisms, and attendance to Social Welfare Services.
- *Interviews with professionals:* six with Social Services social workers (Health, education and primary care) and seven with social workers in the immigration ambit (two from NGOs and five from public institutions). We focused on their interventions with immigrants and particularly with Latin-Americans women.

All participants gave verbal informed consent. Voluntary participation and anonymity were assured in both groups. The quotations used have been translated into English for this article.

Table 1: Life Stories information

Method of analysis: Using qualitative approach information was collected, organized and coded (Leavy, 2014; Taylor and Bogdan, 1987) Participants' narratives were analyzed inductively by all four authors with regular meetings and cross-checking to ensure consistency. Previously, one of the authors constructed categories according to the variables of immigration, social work and resilience factors. This author did an initial coded or -pre-coding- (Saldaña, 2009) isolating quotations related to the main research objectives identifying patterns, themes and similar points. Then after sharing and receiving feedback from the rest of authors a second cycle of coding was done to collectively produce a conceptual framework for further analysis. The retrospective narratives of immigrants' lives and social workers' professional practice allowed the analysis to have both a personal and social dimension. All interviews were digitally recorded and transcribed in Spanish. Referred interviews' coding process and data management was done with Atlas-ti software support; and the questionnaires with Access data base.

FINDINGS

Despite migrating is a recognized right, Latinas in Spain usually found themselves with difficult and unfair situations. Identifying this injustices and difficulties allows a better understanding of the circumstances in which they developed the resilient mechanisms. Therefore, although our principal aim was to analyze their main strengths, we consider important to briefly show some of the difficulties these women suffered as immigrants and coped with. We classified them in a) labor and economic difficulties as their not regular immigrant status related with the migratory policies, precarious insertion into the labor market, underemployment conditions, labor exclusion; b) cultural difficulties related to discrimination based on prejudices because of their cultural and physic differences; and also associated with cultural differences as linguistic ones,

different ways of establishing non-verbal communication and different relationship protocols ; and c) emotional distresses product of the cultural and structural injustices. The impact produced by these difficulties are a source of new adversities, which we understand as emotional distresses. Most of them were related to migratory mourning due to the separation and loss of family, love ones and traditions among others.

1. Strengths / resilient factors: A dynamic and diachronic relation was found among resilient factors and injustices and difficulties (Rutter, 1985; Vanistendael, 1998). As we said, resilient factors cannot be understood by its own, nor without a context and a complete vision. They are related with each other to overcome the injustices. Thus, resilient factors in different levels were found. Due to limited space, here, we will highlight the personal strengths of the Latinas framed in four external circumstances identified as crucial for them: migration context, Spanish context, cultural proximity and social support received.

First, migratory projects of Latinas analyzed were not involved in extreme situations. They have not crossed oceans or deserts putting their lives at risk as other migrants **do to get to Europe or the United States**. They are not totally without a support network, nor are exposed to stressful limits. Second, the socioeconomic context in Spain when the major part of the women studied migrated was one of the betters of its recent history (2000-2007). Despite, the difficulties mentioned before, this context allowed economic, legal and political conditions that fostered the resilience of the participants studied. Third, there was a cultural proximity between Latin American immigrants and the Spanish society, which acted as advantages for an earlier and less conflictive incorporation as they have common traditions, symbols and religion practices. Fourth, unlike other immigrant groups, few Latin American immigrants have found themselves totally alone in Spain. Migratory chains have been identified usually providing them social support (**as**

had occurred in the United States). It was an indispensable factor for the development of resilience, and it protected the Latinas studied.

My three brothers were here in Spain. They came when my father died. My older brother was the first to come, then my younger sister came, then my other sister who follows her. Then when they found out that I was widowed they wanted to bring me, with permission, or as asylee.... They helped me a lot... (Nidia, 56 years old)

In many cases social support was emotional, but sometimes it was also material. Friends, compatriots and people from the Church usually were also an important source of support, as providers of migratory information, a place to live, or an arm to hold on. This support has been more intense during the first phases of their migratory projects, given the vulnerable conditions in which many of them were.

When you come alone, it costs you more. But since I already had my son, I already had a house at least where to sleep. There are people who come and don't have a place, they have to stay in the street. I don't know how they do it, but they suffer. I came and already had a house, then I work. I haven't suffered at all. (María, 56 years old)

Nevertheless, probably for the 31 of the 59 surveyed that left their children in their country of origin, the main support came from other women of the same family at destination and/or origin. Edna, like hundreds of Latin American women, migrated alone, leaving her two young children in the care of her mother. Her story, like that of many other women, reflects the value of women's support, as a resilient factor.

The one who supported me the most to come was my mother. It was my decision and she was the one who supported me more than anything. She said: 'If you've decided, you

leave the children to me, I'll take care of them for you.' Although it was supposed to be for a year, but it's been almost four. (Edna, 31 years old)

The sole presence of resilient factors corresponding to the social environment has not been enough to achieve a positive coping of the migratory adversities of Latinas. Personal factors interacting together has also been necessary. Three personal strengths were identified: individual issues as age, education and health, fighting attitude and entrepreneurship.

1.1 Individual issues: The high educational level, the youth, and the good health enjoyed by almost all of the Latinas studied have been key elements for the construction and interaction of the resilient elements. A majority of the interviewed have at least secondary education and approximately half of them have higher education. This condition has played a protective role especially in coping with work-related adversities. In fact, the high level of education is a factor that although it has not always guaranteed them a job in accordance with their abilities, it has facilitated better working conditions.

About the age, the most are young people. 66% were between 18 and 40 years old at the time of emigration, meaning that they were at an economically productive age, and in many cases, this had a positive influence on the emotional, work and physical levels. Indeed, we found that in general they were healthy, which can be a protective factor to face adversities (Gentil,2010). Immigrants themselves recognized it as an important factor, as María, Honduran explained: *"It has also helped me that I have not been very ill. Thank God I've always been healthy"*.

1.2 Fighting attitude: This attitude can be considered as an active response - closely related to an optimistic vision- that made these women fight against problems and difficulties. This attitude has been with them throughout their life cycle and has been strengthened with the passage of time, as they have been able to overcome diverse challenges or difficulties

developing a perception of significant self-efficacy (Rutter 1985). Again, Maria tells us about this:

It's been a long time since I remembered my childhood (...). I think it helped me a lot to mature. I think I matured younger. Because with the things I've been through, I haven't gotten depressed, as they say here. I've come out ahead. What am I going to do? Moving on. I know that I've given a lot and I ask God to keep me going and there I go.

We found that sometimes the fighting attitude was based on the idea that the problems are temporary. In the life stories, almost all showed an attitude of struggle with life in general, and in particular, with the adversities of migration. When we asked how they had managed to overcome adversities, the answers were in line with Ana and Marielos respectively: *"What's the point of complaining... if you still must move on. I see that people complain and complain and why do you complain if there is so little to do. That's where you keep moving forward."* (Ana, 47 years old)

Just move forward. What am I going to do? Am I going to cry all the time? There's no point in crying.... I feel down [sic] like everybody else, but I don't see myself spending two or three days in bed.... (Marielos, 35 years old)

Finally, this fighting attitude can also be associated with the meaning of life, in this case, based on their migratory project (Anleu-García, 2014). In other words, they consider that is worth fighting for and seeking the achievement of the goals and objectives set when they decided to emigrate.

1.3 Entrepreneurial and creative women: Related to the fighting attitude, entrepreneurial capacity and a high degree of creativity were found in a significant group of the interviewees. In the past, they had already moved them to create their own businesses or look for creative ways to

survive economically in their countries of origin. A sample of it is the case of Adela, a Colombian, who received financial support, from her mother and some church leaders from her neighborhood to study at a university outside her hometown. However, she did not have enough for her food, so she sold jewelry to her classmates and managed to survive for a year. In addition, since she obtained an honors degree, the following years of her career (in Psychology) she was won a scholarship. This same quality led her years later to successfully negotiate with a religious group in Bilbao, Spain, sending Colombian handcrafts in exchange for receiving financial support for a master's degree in that city.

Nidia, Peruvian, who migrated alone and regrouped her five children two years later. In Peru, with the support of her spouse (now deceased), she set up an auto parts business and a canteen. Once in Spain, she recalled:

In 2003, my son bought a restaurant. Later, I set up a fruit shop. It was difficult, the trespass cost me 4 thousand euros. Shortly after, my son came to the coast and went to beach bar for the summer.... In 2005 I took out a loan from a bank and gave the fruit shop to my daughter. We were renting for four or five years, cooking, making fast food. Then we found a bigger place next door, for 60 thousand euros. We went to another place, because in the summer he worked in the bar, but I wanted to work also in winter. Since 2006 we have the restaurant. And now we have this one too." (Nidia, 56 years old).

Whilst, Wendy, 51, from Chile, remembered how shortly after arriving in Spain, she carried out procedures *"to sell yogurts. I was not allowed to work yet, so I became self-employed... that's one way of being able to have papers. But many don't know it or are afraid of it....* And along the same lines, Edna, a 31-year-old Guatemalan, has a plan to improve her financial situation by setting up a business linked to her birth country: *"If I am not called from the agency of*

unemployment in three or four months, I'll dare with a business.... Bringing clothes from Guatemala., I'm investigating whether or not it is worthy. I'm making a business plan."

Lastly, it should be noted that these internal strengths, were developed in their countries of origin. According to the life stories, we detected that during their childhood facing difficult events in their countries they developed some of the strengths that allowed them to cope positively with the adversities of migration.

2. Social Workers intervention with Latin American women

Social workers experiences show that Latin Americans, has the same tendency that the local population to be the women the ones who most seek the different social protection facilities.

"When we talk about Latinos, we talk about women, at least I visualize women" (Social Worker

3). Although, when they compare it with other immigrant groups, they all agreed that Latin Americans women are the less frequent collective that asks them for any kind of social help.

Nine out of ten social workers highlighted certain strength in Latin American women to cope with problems or difficulties. *"Latinas perhaps have more of that strength, more of that capacity to understand that it's going to be good for them, that they're going to do better."* (Social Worker

6). Social workers interviewed consider Latinos to be less vulnerable than other immigrant groups in Spain. This can be positive, if strengths and capabilities are collected and worked with as an opportunity to support their empowerment. However, there is also the danger that the professional accommodates unconsciously, based on a "let do and let pass."

The ones who ask for any kind of support are those who have low incomes. One of the social workers in the health system says: *"...they really come in a very precarious situation and only come to ask for work. Overwhelmed mothers, women with children.... They still know that they can't ask for other jobs because they are illegal...."* (Social worker 5). Nevertheless, and without

denying the injustices and difficulties of immigration, we found that interventions are often based on a rather victimized vision of the immigrants. Vision that is frequently enhanced by the tendency of the media in Spain to show the most dramatic face of immigration, inducing to compassion and pity on the audience. In this way, it usually has been invisibilized and minimized any type of protagonism that Latinas have within their own overcoming processes.

At the same time, the intervention, in general, is limited to what happens in the destination and in the current moment, not considering neither the past and its diverse successful experiences, nor what has occurred in their countries of origin and its relevance to their lives. The importance of this group's culture and subjectivity are not sufficiently considered; neither is the past, their diverse successful experiences or what happens in their countries of origin.

If you have to work on an improvement plan you have to at least, know about what was before...but only if it is a very concrete thing. Past life of the immigrant is not considered.

It is only noted that it comes from another country and general issues. (Social Worker 6)

This is reflected in the registration instruments employed by social workers. As some interviewees pointed out, these have become increasingly standardized, focusing on the weaknesses and failures of users in a fragmented manner. Thus, the interests and emotional/subjective needs of Latinas are consigned to a secondary position.

All the social workers involved in this study indicated that they have rarely considered the knowledge, experiences, and resources of Latina to guide their interventions (neither of local population). The social worker 4 remarked that in general, basic primary care services "*are absolutely focused on the perspective of risk, needs, problems, pathology and not on strengths. You see that in practice and in social reports, [...] in the detection research phase the strengths are not explored at all*" (Social Worker 4). When the diagnostic of each case is done, although

some of the strengths of the immigrants are identified, these are not usually registered in the social history. There is no specific field to register it since what is important to detect are the needs and risk factors. In other words, without failing to recognize the personal effort of various practitioners who in their work consider the resources and potential of individuals, the registration systems of social services do not facilitate interventions that seek and sustain resilient factors and strategies.

Limitations

Some of the limitations of the study can be related to three issues: a) it was done in a single territory (Tarragona). In the future we intend to extend the study to other countries and/or other provinces in Spain to deepen our analyses, b) it addressed the phenomena understanding Latinas as a group, but maybe it could have been interesting to identify also resilient factors distinguishing some specific characteristics defined by the differences emerged by their birth country, c) the number of social workers from NGOs included was probably not completely representative of this field. Their incorporation may have enriched the results and proposals.

DISCUSSION AND FINAL CONCLUSIONS

The theory of intersectionality holds that a person's social identity cannot be described by just one dimension. As Collins and Bilge (2016) and Ungar (2011) point out, a person's social identity is composed of multiple parts that cannot be separated from each other, nor from the specific social and historical context. According to Morokvasic (1984) and Phizacklea (1983), our informants, **and probably immigrant Latinas in other countries**, revealed the injustices they suffer at an emotional, socio-economic and cultural levels, linked to capitalist productive activities and in interaction with patriarchal structures of both, origin and destination societies. These adverse structural conditions have repercussions on a family and personal level,

manifesting in our informants in various distresses, which are related to socio-structural determinants such as migration and gender. According to several studies there is also a relation between emotional states and the social construction of emotions linked to gender (Abu-Lughod, 1986; Zafra, 2015).

While it is true that these discomforts, injustices and socio-economic inequalities could place the participants of our study on the position of "victims", it is also true that it is precisely this situation of oppression that often favors the emergence of resilience and coping strategies. Latinas recognize individual strengths, a fighting attitude and an entrepreneurial and creative spirit; as well as the support of social networks. They do not recognize themselves as victims nor do they claim to assume an identity in this regard. Most of them have made great efforts to face the difficulties and succeed. We are not saying that they are superheroes or extraordinary people with special qualities; rather, they represent what Ann Masten (2001) calls an 'ordinary magic' of human resources developed biologically and socially in everyday life.

It is important to consider the interpretation that people make of their environment and their lives. Although these facts are conditioned by structures, they also leave room for subjectivity (Bourdieu, 1984) and for people's decisions or strategies, what is called "agency capacity", and related to their ability to act. Gold (1997) associated it with the power to do something and, therefore, to be considered as an active subject. This position leads to consider how personal decisions can modify one's life trajectory. And it is, indeed, where Social Work plays a main and relevant role. As the 2000 IFSW document to define Social Work points out, one of the missions of this discipline is to facilitate the full development of people's strengths and to enrich their lives.

However, as also assured by social workers, welfare policies and the Spanish public system as well as the citizens only consider immigrants from the perspective of "victims"; reinforcing a social intervention marked by paternalistic vision (Anleu y García, 2014). In the case of immigrant women, this could mean a revictimization based on gender.

For all these reasons, we consider necessary a Social Work that co-creates, along with other disciplines and Latinas themselves, a truly participatory and inclusive **model** of psycho-social intervention. This model must include the experiences of women in general, and Latinas in particular, as active subjects of their own immigration process and project.

Our proposal is centered on group social work implemented through workshops and group dynamics to promote participation, moving away from those protocols that tend to limit intervention. Social workers and Latinas (or other migrant women) would participate in these workshops with the objective of sharing these women's successful life experiences, rescuing and valuing their strengths and positive position in life. Latinas who have been former users of social services and who have had successful trajectories could also be invited, as well as those who exercise certain leadership in the territory as they could facilitate access to community resources. We believe that these workshops would also be an opportunity for analysis and reflection on professional practices. The aim would be to identify significant aspects that can contribute to the theorization of social work practice and to rethink the parameters of effectiveness and efficiency of the intervention.

The idea is to promote a model of social work intervention based on the experience of those women who have been able to overcome the difficulties to promote strategies of individual and social empowerment, in the sense defended by S. Resende (2008). This means an empowerment

that promotes autonomy, participation, critical reflection, intervention capacity and co-management of social problems by individuals and communities, and which results in the increase of the capacity of individuals and collectives to define, analyze, act and transform their own problems (Resende,2008).

We are convinced that adopting approaches such as intersectionality would allow better policies, programs and/or projects usually marked by an incomplete intervention (García-Moreno and Anleu-Hernández, 2019). In the first place, because it would enable diagnoses closer to the socio-cultural and changing complexity of our times. In second place, because with more precise diagnoses, it is more likely to design strategies and methods more effectively and adjusted to the reality of the beneficiaries from a general, structural, positivist and phenomenological points of view of their lifestyles. Therefore, it is fundamental to modify the data recording system to carry out complete social diagnoses and consolidate key activities of the discipline. Thus, sufficiently exploring the most influential factors in a person's life, consolidating the helping relationship and evaluating the capacities and resources of the people assisted should be the central axis for designing intervention plans. The information obtained must be shared with the person assisted who should be involved in his/her own assessment, diagnosis and resolution of the problem. This approach should also be included in the groups' workshops, as well as in the training of future professionals through central subjects in the undergraduate studies.

Even though our proposed model emerges from an experience linked to a specific territory, we consider that it can also be implemented in other countries with high presence of Latinas. It must be adapted to their own attention systems towards immigrants. For instance, in agreement with others authors (Bekteshi, van Hook and Mathew, 2015; Berger Cardoso and Thompson, 2010; Sellers, 2008), in the American reality social workers could: 1) capitalize the bicultural situation

in which many Latinas live and where they have developed the ability to adapt to the hegemonic culture without losing their origin culture; 2) value the contributions that the Latin culture can offer to its techniques and styles of intervention (type of relationship, social skills, positivity, capacity of fight, etc.); 3) focus their attention on the Latinas' extensive and consolidated family and community networks in the United States and on how to give them (networks) a greater role in the intervention process, as they represent one of the main protective factors to cope with necessity situations; and 4) investigate these women perception about possible situations of discrimination faced by them, knowing and placing value on their own proposals for coping with it.

Finally, the role of social work in this empowerment model are fundamental for users in general, and Latinas in particular, to be able to "manage" what is happening to them, and to take responsibility for the implications that the migration process has on their corporeality - understood in its broad sense- and also to participate in dialogue with the practitioner in the construction of their life itinerary and trajectory, and not just their problems.

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Table 1: Life stories information

No.	Pseudonym	Age	nationality	Education	Civil status	Children
1	Marielos	35	Argentina	Superior	Married	2 girls
2	Adela	42	Colombian	Superior	Married	1 boy
3	Edna	31	Guatemalan	Secondary	Married	1 boy and 1 girl
4	María	56	Honduran	Primary	Divorced	2 boys
5	Ana	47	Colombian	Secondary	Married	2 boys and 2 girls
6	Wendy	51	Chilean	Secondary	Married	1 boy
7	Nidia	56	Peruvian	Superior	Widowed	1 girl and 2 boys
8	Ingrid	53	Chilean	Superior	Married	2 boys
9	Jessica	20	Ecuadorian	Secondary	Married	0

Font: own elaboration