"TODO POR MIS HIJOS" (EVERYTHING FOR MY CHILDREN): EXPLORING THE PARENTING EXPERIENCES AND NEEDS OF GUATEMALAN MOTHERS

By

Ana Rocío Escobar-Chew

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ABSTRACT

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Guatemalan women are exposed to various health and mental health disparities due to the scarcity of appropriate interventions aimed at responding to their life experiences and specific parenting needs. This investigation had two major goals: (a) To understand the life experiences of a group of Guatemalan mothers, particularly as it refers to being a woman in the Guatemalan context, and (b) to identify the participants' parenting experiences and needs. A series of focus groups were implemented with a total of 30 low-income Guatemalan mothers. Findings from this investigation clearly describe the multiple challenges that Guatemalan mothers experience in their daily lives, which also impact their parenting practices. Moreover, data show relevant individual and contextual variables associated with the participants' extraordinary sense of resilience. Finally, research findings describe the participants' high desire to participate in interventions aimed at improving their quality of life and parenting skills. This investigation constitutes the foundation of a long-term program of research aimed at culturally adapting and disseminating mental health and parenting interventions responsive to Guatemalan mothers and their families.

I dedicate this dissertation to my loving husband,
mi compañero de muchas vidas,
Douglas Leonardo Gordillo Santizo,
and *mis amados y generosos padre y madre*,
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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

"Todo por mis hijos" (Everything for my children) is a common phrase describing the sense of unconditional commitment to their children that is embraced by Guatemalan mothers. This commitment also conceals complex layers of meanings that are critical to consider. For example, unconditional love for children highlights the important place that family has in the Guatemalan context as a solid foundation of society. In addition, the phrase communicates that Guatemalan mothers strive for the sake of their children to find the strength to overcome the many challenges in their lives.

"Todo por mis hijos" also speaks to the fact that children bring both a status and a sharply defined role for Guatemalan women. Another popular phrase reflects the challenges that impact the life of Guatemalan mothers: "*Los hijos que Dios nos mande ese es el número que tendremos*" ("However many children God sends us is the number we will have") illustrates the cultural, religious, and contextual challenges that impact the daily lives and the lifetimes of Guatemalan women. Specifically, the phrase "*Los hijos que Dios nos mande*" reflects centuries of patriarchal teachings from religious institutions and other sectors of society, an indoctrination women are expected to accept and embrace (de Broe, Hinde, Matthews, & Padmadas, 2004; Shiffman & Garcés, 2004).

Unfortunately, such teachings keep women in a subordinate position in society, a "place" that is difficult for them to challenge (Aguilar, 2005). Furthermore, this phrase illustrates the pervasive ways in which women in Guatemala, as well as much of Latin America, continue to be disadvantaged in social, economic, and political systems (SEGEPLAN, 2010). This patriarchal message conveys the mandate that women are limited to home and children, reminiscent of the Nazi slogan for women's place, "*Kinder, Kirche,*

und Küche" ["Children, Church, Kitchen"] (Stecher-Hansen, 2011). Scholars have argued that such messages carry a sense of finality and hopeless acceptance of social rules (Aguilar, 2005). This reflects a social structure in which women are relegated to a supportive, secondary role as mothers, while men maintain the highest positions in social, economic, and political spheres (Montenegro, 2002).

Researchers have highlighted the challenging nature of these socio-cultural and religious mandates because any attempt from women to question socio-religious expectations constitutes a direct challenge of "God's will," as well as to the will of men in the power structure. As a result, women are told to surrender to their oppression in society by accepting that these limitations are beyond their personal control and have a "higher religious purpose" (de Broe et al., 2008).

These phrases about motherhood and women's roles capture the complexity of the social, political, cultural, and religious realities experienced by Guatemalan mothers, as well as the ways in which such contexts profoundly shape their identities, life experiences, and parenting practices. Unfortunately, research into these women's experiences as women has been very limited (McMillan & Burton, 2008).

Problem Statement

Latin American and Guatemalan women are exposed to immense health and mental health disparities because of the scarcity of appropriate interventions aimed at responding to their life experiences and specific needs (Flores, López, Paz, van Tullen, Vásquez, & Montes, 2006). For example, there is a lack of culturally-appropriate and gender-informed mental health services capable of addressing the problems experienced by Guatemalan women, especially in indigenous or poor communities (Caldas de Almeida & Horvitz-Lennon, 2010).

Women in Guatemala are also affected by serious violations of their human rights. These violations are closely related to traditional patriarchal values that were deeply influenced by Spanish colonization (Aguilar, 2005; Casáus Arzú, 2007); and the pervasive effects of the armed internal conflict that have lasted for decades in Guatemala and elsewhere in Central America (Albuja & Aguilar Umaña, 2009). In this civil war, thousands of Guatemalans lost their lives and many thousands were traumatized by their experiences. As a consequence of this violent past, there has been a dramatic increase in violence and crime throughout Guatemala, with particularly deleterious consequences for women, children, and youth (Ramírez, Cetina, & Ávalos, 2009). Furthermore, as Guatemala strives for consolidation of democratic principles, youth gangs (locally known as *maras*) have proliferated, bringing new forms of violence, extortion, organized crime, and terror. Although several efforts have been undertaken by the government to restore the rule of law in the country (Loudis, del Castillo, Rajaraman, & Castillo, 2006), experts continue to emphasize the need for prevention interventions, which could have powerful and positive effects in the lives of Guatemalan families (Ramírez, et al., 2009).

Scholars focused on Latin American contexts are clear about the need to promote prevention initiatives among the most vulnerable members of the Guatemalan society (Aguilar, 2005; Morales Alvarado, 2012). Research has shown that fostering positive experiences for children at an early age are critical in order to prevent young children from joining gangs and organized crime (Albuja & Aguilar Umaña, 2009). However, such early intervention/prevention programs have not been implemented widely in Guatemala.

Research has shown how Guatemalan citizens perceive their social reality. A groundbreaking qualitative research conducted in nine Guatemalan communities provided

detailed accounts of the effects of poverty and violence on families, as well as perceptions from participants with regards to their understanding of the causes of the violence that has continued since the end of the civil war (McIlwaine & Moser, 2003). Participants in this study saw the current state of violence as a result of multiple factors: extreme poverty and economic inequality, lack of opportunity and education, disintegration of the family system, absence of positive parent-child relationships, and social isolation. These Guatemalans highlighted the vital influence of family in their lives, as well as the immediate need to strengthen the basic family structure (McIlwaine & Moser, 2003).

The need to positively influence children at early ages has been extensively confirmed in longitudinal research across the world (Beldavs, Forgatch, Patterson, & DeGarmo, 2006). Specifically, untreated childhood aggressive and disruptive behaviors are closely associated with adolescent behavioral problems such as criminal and delinquent behavior, poor educational performance, association with deviant peers, and substance abuse and dependence (Frick, 2009; Ogden & Hagan, 2008).

Although research indicates that children's disruptive behaviors can be corrected through positive parenting skills (Forgatch, Bullock, & Patterson, 2004), such research has not been attempted in the Guatemalan context. Furthermore, rigorous randomized trials have demonstrated the positive effects of evidence-based parenting interventions developed specifically for mothers facing intense contextual challenges (Forgatch & DeGarmo, 1999; Forgatch, Patterson, DeGarmo, & Beldavs, 2009; Granic, O'hara, Pepler, & Lewis, 2007; Ogden & Hagen, 2008).

Researchers have documented the need to disseminate culturally-relevant and efficacious parenting programs among diverse disadvantaged populations (Parra-Cardona et

al., 2012; Turner, Wieling, & Allen, 2004). However, much remains to be done at international levels. The need is particularly great in developing Latin American countries, such as Guatemala, that continue to be negatively affected by extremes of social violence and poverty (Hoffman & Centeno, 2003; Menjívar, 2008). In order for evidence-based interventions to produce lasting effects among women and children, the most vulnerable segments of these populations, a rigorous process of cultural adaptation must be undertaken (Castro, Barrera, & Martínez, 2004). A basic step in any cultural adaptation study is ensuring that the process is thoroughly informed by the voices of the potential beneficiaries of such interventions (Kumpfer, Alvarado, Smith, & Bellamy, 2002).

The Guatemalan Context

Guatemala is a developing country facing multiple social challenges. Although the country is categorized as a low-to-middle income nation (World Bank, 2006), poverty and inequality levels are alarming. Over 50% of the general population and over 75% of the indigenous or native population live in poverty (World Bank, 2006). Additionally, because of the years-long civil war and because Guatemala is a key route for drug and human trafficking (Loudis et al., 2006; OIT, 2006), the levels of community violence and organized crime have remained high over decades (Godoy, 2005). Unfortunately, crime and insecurity have taken on a central role in the lives of Guatemalan families (McIlwaine & Moser, 2003). Although living in a poor community is detrimental to their well-being, low-income mothers may consider that the adverse effects of poverty are not as deleterious as those associated with being victims of gang violence or drug traffickers (McIlwaine & Moser, 2003).

The current high levels of community violence in Guatemala are closely related to decades of internal civil war, a struggle for democracy and inclusion of the majority Mayan

population (Moser & McIlwaine, 2001). After ten years of challenging negotiations, the National Peace Accords were signed on 1996. This action officially ended a 36-year civil war, which left an estimated of 250,000 dead and many more traumatized and/or dislocated. Most of the victims were innocent Mayan (indigenous) civilians (Erlick, 2001). Although important social and economic reforms have been proposed and pursued since the end of the war (MINEGUA, 2004), violence, kidnapping, drug trafficking, extortion of businesses and civilians, as well as violence against women, have continued to increase in dramatic proportions (CIEN [Center of National Economic Investigations], 2002; MINEGUA, 2005). This situation has left Guatemala catalogued as one of the most violent countries in Central and Latin America (McIlwaine & Moser, 2001).

Parenting practices in the Guatemalan context

Contextual and cultural factors have key influences on parenting behaviors everywhere (Quinlan & Quinlan, 2007). Such factors include the nature of the nuclear and extended family, the influence of challenging contexts in which families live, and the institutions that are supposed to serve families and individuals (Lochman, 2004). The deleterious effects of challenging contexts are evident in Guatemalan families. Slow economic growth, along with extreme social and economic inequalities, limits the possibilities for parents to maintain frequent and nurturing interactions with their children (Barreda, 2007; Hoffman & Centeno, 2003). Outmigration for work in the US and elsewhere has dramatically separated families in Guatemala, with many cases of parents not being able to see their children for years or even decades (Suárez-Orozco, Todorova, & Louie, 2002). The continuing high levels of violence leading to injury and death, the legacy of structural colonialism (Foster, 2007), social class segregation, patriarchy, and racial/ethnic

discrimination (Casáus Arzú, 2007) have a deleterious effects on the well-being of parents, impeding their ability to focus on their parenting practices (Vásquez, 2011). Furthermore, years of prolonged instability and corruption in the country have led to weak governments and ineffective social institutions that often fail to offer services that would promote women's rights, strengthen parenting practices, and enhance positive development for parents, children, and youth (Ruhl, 2005; Vlach, 2003).

Women, Gender Roles, and Parenting

In Latin American countries such as Guatemala, women are expected to adopt the central role in childrearing, household chores, and support their husbands or male partners in their role as primary breadwinners (Carter, 2004). This is not to say that Guatemalan fathers are uninvolved in any parenting practices, as they may take an active role in supporting mothers during pregnancy in the context of the mothers' health care issues (Carter, 2004; Myers, 1994; Schrader McMillan & Burton, 2009). However, the patriarchal social discourse in Latin American cultures continues to reinforce the assumption that fathers can and should limit themselves primarily to the role of provider, delegating the majority of childrearing responsibilities to mothers (Suárez & Jordan, 2007).

Significance of the Study

The significance of the study resided in the need for first-person accounts from Guatemalan mothers with regards to their life and parenting experiences. The current investigation also constitutes the foundation of a long-term program of research aimed at culturally adapting and disseminating an evidence-based parenting intervention in Guatemala. The intervention to be adapted in the future is known as Parent Management Training-the Oregon Model, PMTO (Forgatch, Patterson, & DeGarmo, 2005). This intervention was

developed originally to support the efforts of low-income and underserved mothers in the US (Forgatch & DeGarmo, 1999). Although the intervention was developed primarily to enhance parenting skills and reduce disruptive child behaviors, longitudinal data indicate that mothers participating in the intervention reported sustained reductions in maternal depression and increased per capita income over a 9-year period (Patterson, DeGarmo, & Forgatch, 2004). Based on the strong potential for the PMTO intervention to increase the quality of life of low-income and underserved women in various contexts, the data collected in this investigation will inform the future cultural adaptation of this intervention to be disseminated with low-income and underserved Guatemalan families.

Developing this line of research is important because Guatemalan families continue to have minimal exposure to evidence-based interventions aimed at enhancing personal and familial well-being (Flores et al., 2006). Finally, it is expected that the primary focus on women that this investigation had, will support efforts towards the promotion of country-level initiatives aimed at empowering women in this society. Specifically, Guatemalan community partners have already initiated exploratory talks with the Guatemalan federal government and researchers from local universities to explore the possibility of utilizing this program of research as a model program to be duplicated in several schools across the nation.

Purpose of the Study

This investigation had three major goals: (a) To understand the life experiences of a group of Guatemalan women, particularly as to what is like being a woman in the Guatemalan context, (b) to understand the participants' most relevant parenting practices in the Guatemalan context, and (c) to understand the participants' needs, particularly as they refer to their parenting experiences.

In order to reach these research goals, five focus groups were implemented with 30 low-income Guatemalan mothers. Focus groups have been particularly useful for engaging marginalized underserved populations as research participants perceive focus groups as a respectful and culturally sensitive approach (Umaña-Taylor & Bácama, 2004).

Research Questions

The main research questions guiding this qualitative inquiry were:

- What are the participants' most relevant life experiences with regards to being a woman in the Guatemalan context?
- What are the participants' most relevant parenting practices, particularly as they refer to being a mother in the Guatemalan context?
- What are the participants' needs, particularly as they refer to their parenting experiences?

Theoretical Perspectives Informing the Research Questions

This study was informed by Human Ecological theory and the principles of community-based participatory research framework (CBPR, Israel, Schulz, Parker et al., 1998). A Latin American Feminist perspective was also taken into account, particularly as it informed the concepts of gender and cultural values. Next, I will address each of these approaches, which guided this research study in the context of Guatemala.

Human Ecological theory. Interventions informed by ecodevelopmental and cultural frameworks limit the risk of stigmatizing and pathologizing diverse populations, particularly because knowledge is generated from the complex realities of participants (Bernal & Sáez-Santiago, 2006; Falicov, 1995). This is particularly relevant when considering that human experience is embedded within unique systems, cultures, and

contexts (Bronfenbrenner, 1986). Therefore, culture and context are key determinants with regards to which factors have the greatest influence on individual development (Quinlan & Quinlan, 2007).

Human Ecological theory guided this investigation. This theory conceptualizes behavior as embedded in multiple social contexts (Bronfenbrenner, 1977; 1986; Coatsworth, Pantin, & Szapocznik, 2002). The major components of this theory as they apply to this research project are described as follows:

Microsystems refers to those systems in which mothers participate directly. For example, the relationships that mothers have with their nuclear and extended families are examples of immediate systems for participants in this study. *Mesosystems* are relations between microsystems. For instance, the nature and level of interactions between mothers and school teachers are examples of mesosystems. *Exosystems* refer to systems that have an indirect influence on the individual. For example, if women are married and work at home, the pressure and demands experienced by their partners at their work settings is likely to influence the level of stress that men bring into their family interactions. *Macrosystems* refers to society's larger factors such as the economy, political climate, and cultural values. Finally, the *chrono-system* refers to the role of time in the development of individuals, particularly as it refers to the different phases of life.

Community-based participatory research (CBPR). CBPR constitutes a respectful method to engage community settings from a collaborative perspective. It involves, for instance, the inclusion of key community members and administrative agents as research partners (Israel, Schulz, Parker, & Becker, 1998). This involvement implies taking into account their feedback, perspective, and knowledge about the focus of the research project,

as well as other investigative processes (e.g., development of research instruments, manuscript elaboration, and dissemination of research findings). More specifically, participation in the research process as community representatives act to keep the communities' best interests in mind, because they should be the main beneficiaries of the investigation that will be conducted. Therefore, CBPR helps promoting a relationship of trust between research partners and researchers.

CBPR tenets are particularly concerned with the awareness about how contextual factors (e.g., social exclusion, poverty, discrimination, lack of basic services) influence people's mental health quality in their communities (Israel et al., 1998). This is particularly relevant when approaching mothers who reside in a marginalized urban community in a developing country like Guatemala. The CBPR approach also has the potential to empower people in the midst of inequalities when taking into account the influence of historically oppressive gender, race, and class relations (Schrader & Burton, 2009; Suárez & Jordan, 2007).

CBPR approaches help researchers determine how to implement research protocols in a culturally sensitive manner while also increasing participants' safety in the study process. For example, a collaborative approach is needed for exploring the sensitive topic of ethnicity and race among participants (Adams, 1994). Instead of imposing socially constructed, rigid categories about race and ethnicity, a more respectful approach would be to allow participants to freely define their preferred ethnic identification (de Broe et al., 2005).

CBPR research participants are co-developers of knowledge and interventions. Therefore, mothers empowered through this approach can guide the researcher regarding their life experiences and their local wisdom (Israel et al., 1998). Finally, CBPR is

particularly relevant for Latinos/as based on their history of exclusion and health/mental health disparities (Baumann, Domenech Rodríguez, & Parra-Cardona, 2011). In Guatemala, over 65% of citizens are from indigenous groups (e.g., Mayan) with long histories of oppression, state-directed violence, and poverty.

Feminism and Liberation Movements in Latin America. Given its main focus on Guatemalan mothers, this study was guided by a gender perspective informed by Latin American Feminism. Feminist viewpoints in the Latin American context remain critically attentive to the close intersections of gender, class, and racial oppression as they apply to the Ibero-American continent (Gargallo, 2006; Ríos Tobar, 2003). This critical analysis has been particularly strong in the midst of patriarchal and authoritarian regimes in several post-colonial Latin American countries (Barrig, 2001). In Guatemala, feminist scholars and social leaders have been particularly preoccupied with the promotion of poor and disadvantaged indigenous native women with regards to their dignity, freedom, and advancement in society (Gargallo, 2006).

In Latin America the movement of pedagogy of the oppressed (Paulo Freire), liberation theology (Leonardo Boff), and liberation psychology (Ignacio Martín-Baró) have been critical frameworks associated with a feminist movement, aimed at challenging patriarchy, colonialism, and oppressive contexts (Freire, 2005; Kater, 2001; Martín-Baró, Aron, & Corne, 1994). For example, the legacy of Martín-Baró reminds us that psychology and other social sciences can be a "refined instrument of power structures" if they limit themselves solely to critical discourses that do not translate into specific changes. These changes must take place at multiple levels, and be aimed at promoting social change and the improvement of underserved populations (Martín-Baró, Aron, & Corne, 1994). Similarly,

Paulo Freire's pedagogy of the oppressed calls for promoting change in close collaboration with oppressed groups, a process called *conscientizacão* (in Portuguese), which refers to developing critical consciousness within strong collaborative frameworks (Freire, 2005). For example, mothers experiencing intimate partner violence (IPV) can be empowered by facilitating a collaborative approach, instead of mainly focusing in prompting them to leave their current abusive relationship. In fact, many women in Latin America have reported their preference for remaining in intimate relationships as long as the extreme abuse, control, and manipulation stop (Menjívar, 2008). Finally, it is vital to highlight the way in which Latin American feminism is grounded in Latin American culture. For instance, in order to support mothers' childrearing practices, professionals should focus on their natural sources of support, coping mechanisms, and cultural expressions of resilience such as having a strong orientation towards spirituality, family, and community (Jones, Bogat, Davidson, von Eye, Levendosky, 2005).

Long-term Implications of the Investigation

This investigation was the first step towards the implementation of a long-term program of research aimed at implementing CBPR focused on the cultural adaptation of an evidence-based parenting intervention. The following goal is to disseminate the program among Guatemalan mothers and their families. In addition to implementing this line of research in one identified school setting in Guatemala, I have established partnerships with local interventionists and researchers whom have already initiated exploratory talks with Guatemalan government representatives to discuss the possibility of utilizing this program of research as a model program to be duplicated in several schools across the nation.

This study was focused on the exploration of participants' life experiences to advance the well-being of Guatemalan mothers. The current investigation was also centered on exploring relevant life experiences associated with what is like being a woman in the Guatemalan context. The participants' parenting experiences were explored to learn about their challenges and successes as mothers. Participants were asked recommendations regarding ways to offer parenting interventions in their communities.

Scholars have repeatedly expressed the need to promote strength-based research focused on identifying and promoting protective factors among Guatemalan families (Foxen, 2010; McMillan, 2007; Roberts, 2010). The current investigation embraced such approach in order to facilitate the identification of protective factors described by research participants. Therefore, the current study focused on giving voice to the experiences of Guatemalan mothers in order for them to define what is like being a woman and a mother. I also investigated the alternatives that participants consider are relevant ways to support them in their parenting efforts.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

The Guatemalan Context

Guatemala is a syncretic society. Cultural values and beliefs from indigenous groups have fused with colonial Spanish cultural values and beliefs (Foster, 2007). Guatemalan culture has evolved, creating a diverse and complex society (Rodríguez, Matzer & Estrada, 2007). Guatemala's official language is Spanish, spoken by 60% of the population. However, there are 24 officially recognized indigenous languages (e.g., K'iche', Kaqchikel, Q'eqchi', and Xinca) (CIA, 2012). Despite this rich heritage and multicultural diversity, Guatemala has one of the highest levels of socioeconomic inequalities in the world (McMillan & Burton, 2008). Although Guatemala has a moderately low rate of inflation, it also has a slow rate of economic growth (Legatum Institute, 2011).

Guatemala's troubled present reflects a bitter, 36-year long civil war, the longest in Central America. This conflict between military and insurgent groups pursuing the redistribution of land for peasant populations (Foster, 2007) cost over 200,000 lives, the majority of whom were indigenous people. Other 40,000 persons disappeared into hands of the military, supported by the Guatemalan government at the time (McMillan & Burton, 2008). Between 500,000 and 1.5 million people were displaced internally during the civil war (Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre, IDMC, 2011). Additionally, 150,000 people fled to México as refugees (CEH [Historical Clarification Commission], 1999). In effect, this was a war against indigenous civilian populations perpetrated by a repressive government dominated by a European-descent oligarchy.

All facets of democracy were affected by this long-lasting armed conflict, including the development of social institutions. The capacity for social change (McMillan & Burton,

2008), the development of greater community cohesion (Taylor, 2007), and the development of social capital (McIlwaine & Moser, 2001) have all been limited. Today, Guatemala's economic resources are largely in the hands of a small privileged portion of society, upper-class, European-descent Ladinos. The poorest 20% of the population survives on only 2.1% of the nation's income, while the richest 20% take 63% (Rivadeneira, 2001).

The 1996 Peace Accords formally ended the civil war; however, Guatemala continues to be an extremely violent society. Guatemalans experience high levels of crime, and live with constant personal insecurity. A recent survey found that 6 out of 10 citizens feel unsafe walking alone at night (Legatum Institute, 2011). This personal insecurity is a particular threat to women. However, personal insecurity is not the only problem faced by women.

Violence and discrimination have been longstanding challenges for Guatemalan women since the Spanish conquest over 500 years ago. They affect all aspects of women's lives, including their physical, cultural, psychological, sexual, and socioeconomic development (Aguilar, 2005), as well as their role as mothers. These contextual factors restrict or block, for example, the development of attachment between children and maternal caregivers, as well as limiting parents' childrearing practices (Lynch & Cicchetti, 2002).

General demographics, ethnicity and race. In a nation that is slightly smaller than Tennessee, 14,713,763 people live in the most populous Central American country (INE [National Institute of Statistics], 2011). Nearly 60% of Guatemalans directly rely on the lands and other natural resources for their livelihood (Taylor, 2007). About a quarter of the people live in Guatemala City, the nation's capital. The majority of citizens are young, with 4 of 10 people are under 15 years of age; and 6 of 10 are under 20 years of age (SEGEPLAN,

2010). Less than 4% of the population is 65 years or older (CIA, 2012), reflecting the limited incomes and lack of medical/mental health services for the majority of the population.

Gender, race and class-based discrimination affect Guatemalans' life at multiple levels. Despite having a 95% enrollment rate for elementary school children, only 57% attend secondary schools, and only 18% go on for tertiary education (Legatum Institute, 2011). For every 100 boys in school, only 94 girls attend school, creating a disadvantage for women. The European-descent population has an average of 6.5 years of education; yet, indigenous Guatemalans have only 3.7 years of education (OIT, 2006). Guatemala once had one of the highest illiteracy rates in the world. After a heavy investment in elementary education, 74.5% of Guatemalan adults and 86.5% of youth are able to read and write (UNESCO, 2009). In spite of this progress, almost 20% of the population over 15 years is illiterate (National Literacy Teaching Committee, CONALFA, 2009).

In the multicultural context of Guatemala, there are four recognized ethnic groups: (a) Mayans (Western highlands Multiethnic Native American groups), (b) Xincas (Southern Native Mesoamerican), (b) Garífunas (Caribbean Afrolatinamericans), and (c) Ladinos(as) (Mestizos and White Latin-Americans) (CIA, 2012). Mayans comprise almost 40% of the total population and include 21 recognized native indigenous groups. The indigenous population size is underreported due to many Mayan descendants self-report as Ladinos/as to avoid discrimination (International Office of Employment, OIT, 2006). Ladinos comprise 58% of the total population. Xincas and Garífunas comprise about 0.2% of the population.

The Status of Women in Guatemala

While women and girls comprise the majority of the population in Guatemala, they are also the most underprivileged sector of the population. This is particularly true for

indigenous women and other women living in poverty (SEGEPLAN, 2010). Between 2001 and 2006, the percentage of women and girls in the population increased by 8%. Because women and girls are also at higher risk of gender violence, their homicide index increased by more than 117% in this same period (Alston, 2007).

Guatemalan women have an average of 5.9 years of school (i.e., less than an elementary education), and the 73% female literacy level is below that of males (Rivadeneira, 2001). Given that mothers' level of education is inversely related to maternal and infant mortality, this lower literacy level is a serious issue. Maternal education is also a factor in seeking health care, having a better organization of resources available in the household, and determining the parenting behaviors and skills (McAlister, 1998a, 1998b; McAlister & Baskett, 2006). About 75% of reproductive-age women who reside in Guatemala City area are literate. In contrast, only 45% of reproductive-age women who live in the North and Southwest rural areas are literate, lacking full access to formal education (Rivadeneira, 2001).

As urbanization increases, larger numbers of women join the workforce. In turn, the need for childcare outside the family or through informal networks increases. In Guatemala, the urbanization rate increases by 3.4% a year (2010-15 estimate; CIA, 2012). This urban growth has gone hand in hand with an increase in the number of female-headed families. Nearly 20% of homes in urban areas are headed by women (Hallman, Quisumbing, Ruel, & de la Brière, 2005). The percentage of women working outside the home in urban areas has increased from 23% in 1990 to a 28% in 1999 (World Bank, 2011). There are significant differences between genders in terms of wages. Reflecting gender-based discrimination, Guatemalan women continue to be segregated to low paying positions. They are also more vulnerable to labor exploitation (BBC News, 2002; World Bank, 2011). In the urban area, a

woman makes 63 *centavos* [cents] for every Quetzal (national currency) earned by a Guatemalan man. In the rural areas, where the population is considerably poorer, a woman makes 69 *centavos* for every Quetzal a man earns (SEGEPLAN, 2010).

Guatemalan women's situation, social position, and life conditions are strongly shaped by social, political, economic, and cultural factors. These factors allow for the continuation of inequalities in income, education, and other disparities, while maintaining the hierarchical positions in a male-dominated society (SEGEPLAN, 2010). As a result, female Guatemalans are subject to systemic and systematic patterns of disadvantage, placing them in a constantly vulnerable position.

Women's Sociopolitical Context

Ethnic and gender discrimination, linked with geographical isolation of the female population in rural areas, limit women's political rights as citizens (SEGEPLAN, 2010). These conditions affect their potential as human beings, and their personal safety on a daily basis. As Guatemalan sociologist, Ana Leticia Aguilar states, "*Femicidio: la pena capital por ser mujer, en Guatemala las mujeres no estamos seguras, ni en la casa, ni en la cama, ni en la calle*" ["Femicide: [is] the capital punishment for being a woman in Guatemala. We, as women, are not safe, nor at home, not in bed, not in the streets"] (Aguilar, 2005, p. 5).

Since 2000, more than 3,000 women have been victims of brutal killings, and 98% of these cases have been closed without a conviction (Suárez & Jordan, 2007). There is a pattern on the part of the judicial authorities of blaming the murder victim (Musalo, Pelleguin, & Roberts, 2010). Often, officials decide (without proper evidence or investigation) that the murdered woman was involved in drug trafficking or that she was a prostitute (Aguilar, 2005; Sanford, 2008). In Guatemala, 1 in 3 women is a victim of some form of violence,

psychological, physical, sexual and/or financial (CIMAC [Women's Communications and Information], 2008). Violence against Guatemalan women is often blamed on criminal organizations associated with drug trafficking and gangs (Menjívar, 2008). However, femicide's origin lies in the long history of gender-based violence in a historically patriarchal society (Aguilar, 2005; Carey & Torres, 2010).

Over a thousand cases of intimate partner violence (IPV) were reported from January to May 2010; with an additional 987 cases reported during those months in 2011 (*Procurador de los Derechos Humanos* [Human Rights Prosecutor] PDH, 2011). Even though Guatemalan law prohibits violence against women, this offense carries no prison sentence (Social Institutions & Gender Index, SIGI, 2009). In fact, domestic violence has legal consequences only when the victim exhibits visible signs of abuse 10 days after the abuse (SIGI, 2009). Until 2005, rapists had the right to be absolved of their crime if they married their victim (Musalo, et al., 2010). It is still the case that the legal system must establish that the woman is "honest" in order to consider her a victim of abuse if the sexual perpetrator is married to the victim (Musalo et al., 2010). Amnesty International (2006) has called immediate action to change this and other discriminatory legislation. However, little progress has been made in this regard (Sanford, 2010).

Women tend to leave their abusive partners, particularly when the abuse is so extreme that they fear for their lives. One of the consequences of widespread IPV is the growth of single parent, mother-headed households (Moser & McIlwaine, 2001). Single mothers reported that discrimination against them was their greatest source of distress. They also reported that their abusive partners often left to go and live with younger women with whom they were already having an affair.

In this country, women are widely relegated to being mothers and caring for the household, and are expected to assume attitudes of subservience and compliance (Montenegro, 2002). Women's participation in the public and political arena is restricted by their limited life roles. Guatemala is among those Latin American countries with the lower number of women serving in Parliament (Montenegro, 2002). Land constitutes one of the most essential assets for people's survival, particularly for women in rural areas (USAID, 2002). Yet, women own only 27% of the land (SIGI, 2009).

Guatemalan women face restrictions on their political participation, economic power, and legal rights. Strong patriarchal hierarchies impede women's right to equal treatment and life conditions. The circumstances of female-headed households are a matter of great concern, given the diminished power that women have in Guatemalan society (*Ministerio de Educación y Ciencia* [Education and Science Ministry], 2006). However, efforts to aid working mothers and their offspring in Guatemala have begun through the establishment of community daycare centers (Hallman et al., 2005). These centers are a service provided by the Program of the Secretary of Social Works of the First Lady of the Republic of Guatemala (*Programa de Hogares Comunitarios de la Secretaría de Obras Sociales de la Esposa del Presidente de la República*). Daycare centers and other programs have supported women's participation in the workforce. In addition, the centers offer an affordable childcare service with safety, healthy nutrition, and a nurturing environment for children (Hallman et al., 2005).

Women's Physical and Mental Health

Guatemala has serious problems in the areas of education and health, and is the country with the lowest rating in human development in Central America, (Banco Mundial [World Bank], 2006). It is estimated that 500,000 to 600,000 women die annually from

complications related to childbearing, the leading cause of mortality for reproductive-age women in Guatemala (Shiffman & Garcés, 2004). Only 30% of indigenous women receive medical care during pregnancy and delivery, while 70% of non-indigenous women (Ladinas) receive services. Furthermore, only 40% indigenous women report the use of birth control, compared to 63% of the Ladina population (SEGEPLAN, 2010).

Women are also vulnerable to HIV/AIDS in Guatemala. The number of women diagnosed with HIV/AIDS in the country has grown continuously, and almost 30% of all cases are women (*Banco Mundial* [World Bank], 2006). The machismo culture, which strongly influences gender relations, has a clear role in this problem. Even though the source of the HIV/AIDS epidemic is the sector of sex workers and their male clients, 74% of the cases are housewives (Banco Mundial, 2006). The only risk these women face is having sex with their regular partners. Therefore, men's promiscuous sexual behavior, influenced by the culture of machismo, poses a health risk for women. This is further complicated by the fact that men often resist the use of condoms (Vargas Ruíz, 2006).

The complexity of the factors affecting Guatemalan women in every sphere of their lives also has taken a definite toll in their mental health. The recent armed conflict has left women with profound personal and collective mental and psychological injuries (Godoy-Paíz, 2005). Post-traumatic stress, disrupted grieving processes, actual and ambiguous losses, depression, and anxiety are only some of the negative results of the national and local violence. In a cross-sectional survey conducted in Mayan refugee camps in Chiapas, Mexico, refugees in these communities reported suffering from psychiatric conditions directly associated to human rights violations 20 years after fleeing the armed conflict (Sabin, Lopes Cardozo, Nackerud, Kaiser & Varese, 2003).

The fear and intimidation that are still present in postwar Guatemala deeply affect the well-being and mental health of all its citizens (Godoy-Paíz, 2005). Adding to this issue, historical discrimination and exclusion against indigenous populations and the poor permeate everyday life (González Ponciano, 2000). Of women who work in domestic services 55% are indigenous, migrants into the metropolitan area (*Mujeres en Red* [Women in the Network], 2012). Domestic work in Guatemala is regarded as a stereotypical type of labor for indigenous women (OIT, 2006). Women who occupy these positions typically live with the families they serve, and are exposed to covert or overt forms of discrimination and other forms of abuse by their employers (Valladares, 2009).

Intimate partner violence (IPV), as mentioned before, affects thousands of Guatemalan women every day, and is exacerbated by the high rates of men's alcoholism (Godoy-Paíz, 2005). Some 16,000 cases of sexual violence, mostly against young girls and adolescents, are reported annually (Suárez & Jordan, 2007). In response to the deficiencies and corruption reigning in the country's judicial systems, there are several Guatemalan organizations and institutions in place that provide legal and psychological support to victims of violence. *Fundación Sobrevivientes* (Survivors Foundation) in Guatemala City was established by Nora Cruz, whose own daughter was sexually assaulted. Facing barriers and experiences of re-victimization by institutional authorities as she tried to denounce the crime against her daughter, Cruz created this foundation in 1999 (Fundación Sobrevivientes, 2012). *Fundación Sobrevivientes* offers legal support, crisis intervention, as well as advocacy and counseling services, to victims of the various forms of violence and their families.

Far from being passive victims of this challenging context, many Guatemalan women have started taking steps to heal their emotional wounds and better protect themselves. They

have taken action and started organizing to create change. Their activism has resulted in the creation of organizations to support themselves and their families, demand changes in legislation, and denounce human rights violations (Aguilar, 2005). One example of this courageous activism is the creation of *Grupo de Apoyo Mutuo* (GAM [Mutual Support Group]) in 1984 in the midst of the Guatemalan military regime (Montenegro, 2002). GAM denounced the illegal detention and disappearance of people by the military. *Madres Angustiadas* [Anguished Mothers] is a women's civil rights group that has focused on the construction of peace, justice, and security since 1995 (Madres Angustiadas, 2009). *Madres Angustiadas* has created campaigns to raise awareness regarding children's safety, acts of crime and violence, interfamilial and intrafamilial violence, and sexual abuse. These organizations have provided empowerment to women, positively influencing their mental and emotional health.

The Cultural Context of Guatemala

The Guatemalan cultural context is of particular importance to understand the parenting practices of Guatemalan mothers. Guatemala is multicultural, multilingual, and ethnically diverse (Rodríguez, Matzer, & Estrada, 2007). Culture as context is understood as "shared world views and adaptive behaviors derived from simultaneous membership in a variety of contexts" (Falicov, 1995, p. 2). Guatemalan mothers participate in multiple contexts and have diverse memberships, depending on their demographic characteristics. The ecological setting may vary from an urban or suburban to rural setting, with different religious and spiritual practices, language, ethnicity, race, socio-economic status (SES), age, sexual orientation, occupation, political ideologies, family composition, migratory patterns, stage of acculturation, and generational identity (Falicov, 1988; 1995; McGoldrick & Carter,

2002; Walsh, 2003). This interplay of multiple contexts and memberships creates a unique personal context for each Guatemalan mother. However, through the lens of an ecodevelopmental model, each systemic level helps organize the diversity provided by culture. Then, within each of the levels, risk and protective factors influencing parenting practices can be identified.

An Ecodevelopmental Perspective on Guatemalan Mothers

Mental health interventions, such as parenting interventions, informed by ecodevelopmental and cultural frameworks limit the risk of stigmatizing and pathologizing ethnic groups by avoiding an ethnocentric approach (Bernal & Sáez-Santiago, 2006; Falicov, 1995). Such cultural and ecological understandings increase the effectiveness of interventions (Trickett, 2011), as well as pointing toward a more appropriate investment of resources (Glasgow, Vogt, & Boles, 1999). The most effective use of these resources is particularly important in the context of a developing country with scarce funds (Calderón & Cordón-Rosales, 2011).

Context, Culture, Risk and Protective Factors

Context and culture exert influence over parenting behaviors in every setting (Quinlan & Quinlan, 2007). From the most immediate effect of changes in the family's ecology (e.g., loss of job) to the effects of the neighborhood where the mother lives (violence or lack of violence) to the institutions with which they interact (changes in laws), all have implications on her parenting practices (Lochman, 2004). The broader ecological perspective captures how Guatemalan contexts act to shape mothers' childrearing behaviors. These contexts include poverty maintained by social inequalities and slow economic growth (Barreda, 2007; Hoffman & Centeno, 2003), along with a legacy of historical and present day

colonialism (Foster, 2000). Women in general suffer from discrimination based on gender, added to the discrimination based on class and race that permeates Guatemalan society (Vásquez, 2011). There are multicultural, religious, and gender values that influence women's lives. Annual population growth of 2.4% reflects large family sizes (World Health Organization, WHO, 2007), but the highest infant and maternal death rates in Latin America burden families with grief and loss. Even the environment conspires against family stability—hurricanes, landslides, and earthquakes add to the stress of family survival. No indigenous Guatemalan family was untouched by the years of genocide masquerading as civil war that was sustained by Guatemalan military regimes, which were supported by the US government and the country's corrupt political elite (Ruhl, 2005; Vlach, 2003). To add to the day-to-day challenges of surviving, there is the current horror of crime and violence, fueled by narco-trafficking, gang activity, and human trafficking. Guatemalan women and their families cannot find redress in a defective judicial system that allows crimes to go on unpunished (Musalo, Pellegrin, & Roberts, 2010), particularly those committed against Guatemalan women and girls (Menjívar, 2008), including the maximum expression of gender-based violence: femicide (Aguilar, 2005).

These contexts influence the relationships that mothers develop with their children and partners, and limit their access to resources and opportunities within their communities (Schensul & Trickett, 2009). These contexts also shape the meaning of the mother's social position, her lack of power in larger systems. This powerlessness is particularly acute for mothers living in poverty (Swope, Cadigan, Schmitt, & Shupp, 2008; Turró & Krause, 2009). Together, these conditions create more risk than protective factors for mothers and their families (Reiss & Price, 1996).

Risk and Protective Factors for Guatemalan Mothers

Across all ecodevelopmental levels, there are risk and protective factors, which affect mothers' child rearing practices. These factors are categorized as the traits present at individual and contextual levels. Each carries a weight in the development of mental health issues (Reiss & Price, 1996). Some of these traits can be influenced and managed so that protective factors are reinforced while the effects of risk factors are diminished (Fagan et al., 2007).

Ecodevelopmental levels often overlap with each other. Hence, macro or chronosystem elements, such as cultural values or legacies, can also be addressed at the micro or mesosystems level because they inform family-level interactions.

Microsystems Level: Guatemalan Mothers' Parenting Practices

Mothers' resilience. In postwar Guatemala with its levels of insecurity and intense socioeconomic challenges, it is critical to recognize and better understand how mothers face, resist, and cope with multiple stresses within their families. As mentioned before, the creation of organizations and supportive groups has been central in empowering mothers in their efforts to raise their children in a safer environment (Montenegro, 2002). Mothers who lost their loved ones during the time of civil war in massacres have been able to start their healing process by providing a proper burial for the victim's bodies (Godoy-Paíz, 2005). Moreover, through the Reconstruction of Historical Memory Project in Guatemala (REMHI), hundreds of mothers, affected by the horrors of war, were able to share their story for the first time. This has offered yet another opportunity to start a healing process and begin social reconstruction (Beristain, 1998). Other manifestations of resilience take the form of public protests against injustices and in support of social change. The outcry of a group of rural

K'iche' women against an ex-military commissioner, Cándido Noriega, who tried to repossess land that had been rightfully given to this Mayan community, started the process that later convicted this commissioner for war crimes (Foxen, 2010).

In urban areas, mothers living in poor communities have also manifested their resiliency through social action. After participating in a parenting intervention, mothers formed neighborhood committees and advocated for improving the infrastructure of their community (McMillan & Burton, 2008). These mothers were strongly motivated to provide a better, safer environment for their children.

Mother's childrearing behaviors are strongly informed by their cultural values, which reflect strong collectivistic and familial bonds (Brice, 2000). The collectivist part of the culture is demonstrated in the involvement of extended family members in supporting mothers with childcare (Myers, 2004). Family unity, willingness to sacrifice oneself for the child's wellbeing, and support from extended family and community networks are sources for the resilience and strength of Guatemalan mothers.

Parenting challenges and needs. The most stressful challenges that Guatemalan mothers face in their communities have been addressed in previous sections. In terms of parenting practices, the one that is most concerning is the widespread use of physical punishment. In a nationally representative survey, both women and men expressed the belief that physical punishment was necessary (Speizer et al., 2008). Furthermore, there was a strong correlation between women who had been exposed to severe physical punishment during their childhood and their later experience of IPV. This finding reflects the intergenerational repetition of patterns of physical punishment as a disciplinary method. Parents who experienced physical punishment as children were likely to continue using this

approach with their own offspring. Finally, more women reported being physically punished when they were children.

Given the prevalence of physical punishment among Guatemalan mothers (and fathers) and its potential to scale into abuse (McMillan & Burton, 2008; Myers, 1994), it has become an issue of concern in Guatemala (PDH, 2011). Aside from physical punishment, there also is a higher incidence of current psychological abuse among mothers, who were exposed to violence within their family of origin (López-Núñez & Ruíz-Bartolomé, 2010; Speizer et al., 2008).

In the oppressive and repressive setting of postwar Guatemala, parenting practices are more likely to be authoritarian and punitive (Estrada, Ibarra, & Sarmiento, 2007). The normalization of violence in the wider culture further justifies these practices (Menjívar, 2008). This style of parenting, along with other risk factors, is strongly associated with children and adolescent maladjustment, including delinquent behaviors later in life (Domenech-Rodríguez, Davis, Rodríguez, & Bates, 2006; Loudis et al., 2006).

Ethnicity and Race in Guatemalan Families

Mayan mothers. Mayas and Ladinos are the two groups that make up the vast majority of Guatemala's population: "Maya" is an umbrella term that includes multiple indigenous groups, each with their own language, traditional dress, and cultural identity (England, 2003; Foster, 2007). The majority of Mayan groups live in rural, agricultural areas (Rivadeneira, 2001). Mayas are disproportionally poor, but there are a growing number of upper middle-class families, who are owners of prosperous businesses, typically related to agriculture and commerce. As noted, Mayan women are one of the most vulnerable groups among Guatemalans, given the interplay of gender, race, and class discrimination they face

(Montenegro, 2002). Furthermore, the majority of Mayan women in the rural area are monolingual, and they are, thus, excluded from educational opportunities and participation in larger context where Spanish is the dominant language (*Mujeres en la Red*, 2012).

Mayan mothers living in rural settings[1]. The inhabitants of rural areas are commonly marginalized and discriminated against. Mayan families are typically large. They hold strong traditional gender roles (Miller, 2011), and there is profound community solidarity (*Colectivismo*) (Pueblos Mayas, 2009). Mayan kinship relationships are maintained vigorously and are highly valued (*Familismo*). Mayan children, especially girls, are taught to obey and defer to their elders and male figures in their families and communities (*Respeto*) (Adam, 1994). Central to their lives are synthesized native and Christian traditions and spiritual beliefs and practices. These traditions help shape and define family organization and interactions. It is common for mothers and fathers to think of having "*los hijos que Dios nos mande ese es número que tendremos*" [However many children God sends us is the number we will have]. Women often bare 8 to 10 children, reflecting a convergence of many elements—the father's proof of his virility, the mother's identity as a mother, the lack of access to birth control, and the low level of maternal education, among other factors. Having many children is strongly supported by family microeconomics; often, children are depended upon to add family financial support (OIT, 2006). Traditional religious beliefs strongly oppose any "artificial" birth control method because such methods are believed to hinder mother's and child's health (Suárez, 2011).

[1] The greater majority of Mayan families live in rural locations, but a growing percentage live in urban areas. In the cities, the majority of the population is Ladino. However, Ladinos are also distributed across different rural regions.

Cultural identity in Mayan mothers. Descendants from the pre-colonial Mayan civilization, today's indigenous families maintain the core traditions of their ancestors through oral traditions and cultural practices. The Mayan cosmovision centers on love and respect for Mother Nature and all living beings, seeking of harmony and balance; and the concept of duality (light and dark, spirit and matter). Mayan religious practices, a fusion of Christian values and ancestral polytheistic beliefs, embrace a complex amalgam of spiritual expressions. In their rural settings, Mayan communities are in direct contact with nature. Their perception of time has a slow pace, especially when compared to the pace of urban life (Pueblos Mayas, 2009).

Social positionality of Mayan groups. For generations native indigenous groups have been consistently marginalized and discriminated against, first by European colonizers, their *criollo* descendants, and then, by the European-indigenous mixed Ladino group (Cojtí Cuxil & Díaz Montejo, 2005). Today, Ladinos tend, in their great majority, to identify with their European-descent heritage while denying their Mayan identity (Rodas Núñez, 2006). They occupy a position of power and privilege over Mayans. Consequences of oppression are evident in the poverty, illiteracy, and multiple violations of basic human rights of indigenous families, particularly women and girls (Rivadeneira, 2001).

Overt and covert discrimination. Psychologically, racism hinders a healthy mental development. Negative stereotypes of Mayas include being perceived as "less than," dirty, ignorant, dumb, born to be a servant, quiet, sounding stupid when speaking Spanish (in reference to their native accent) (Matías, 1996). These harmful experiences lead to and reinforce a negative self-concept. In the case of Mayan mothers, such stereotyping hinders their sense of authority with their children. Sometimes, the racial and ethnic aggressions

suffered by parents translate into hostile reactions towards their own family members, a symptom of internalized discrimination.

Setting. Living in rural contexts translates into having more limited access to basic resources (e.g., education and health services) to meet the needs of children. At the same time, being in touch with nature and living in a traditional ethnic community can facilitate the transmission and maintenance of traditional cultural values, a source of family cohesiveness and identity.

Language. Families that speak their native language exclusively are more connected to their cultural beliefs and traditions. This can be a protective factor in terms of identity development. However, being monolingual means that the speakers are at a disadvantage, marginalized, and isolated in areas where Spanish is the dominant language and native languages are not recognized. Bilingual families have increased opportunities to adjust to both worlds and access more resources, benefitting their children.

Extensive family networks and having numerous children. As mentioned before, Mayan families tend to be large. This can affect families by limiting the ability of parents to meet their children's needs. Families with several children often rely on child labor or child domestic work to survive. Working alongside their parents, children can have a positive experience of bonding with their parents and learning a responsible work ethic. Yet, child work also has potential psychological consequences, limits opportunities for education, and has other dangers if the child is working alone (parentification, household accidents, abuse, and maltreatment, OIT, 2006).

Conversely, a large family can be a network of support in which practical and emotional regulation are learned, e.g., sharing, compassion, patience, and developing a sense

of life priorities. In Mayan families, children are highly valued. Children are loved, cared for, and protected, according to their parents' resources and context. A large family can be a source of pride for parents. It reaffirms the father's virility and masculinity, and fulfills the female identity expectations for the mother.

Adherence to culture and traditions. Maintaining customs and beliefs is an important part of Mayan families' cultural identity. However, some beliefs can operate to the detriment of families. If the cultural belief is that women's primary role is home and family, parents may not support their daughters' education. If the family trusts only traditional forms of healing, *curanderos* or *brujos* [witch doctors], then they will not seek Western medical services. How they are treated in Western educational or medical settings will also limit their willingness to seek services (Suárez & Jordan, 2007).

Acculturation. Privilege and power exercised by Ladinos exerts pressure on indigenous families to acculturate in order to survive. Thus, because speaking Spanish increases their job access, children must attend Spanish-speaking schools. This pressure is more pronounced for Mayan families that migrate to the city. Ideally, families can develop a dual identity that allows them to navigate both cultures (Parra-Cardona, Busby, & Wampler 2004). However, indigenous families may become detached from their cultural roots to favor mainstream customs. Indigenous families who speak Spanish and assimilate mainstream Ladino culture might gain increased access to some resources. However, the cost is the rupture with their own culture and being ostracized by their own extended family (Adams, 1994). There also are potential intergenerational conflicts between children exposed to and embracing Ladino language and values and their parents who adhere more strongly to traditional indigenous values and are more isolated because of their limited Spanish.

History of trauma. Mayan families experienced extreme trauma in the context of violence by the military, the government, and other powerful groups. This leaves them vulnerable to psychosocial problems, including domestic violence, unresolved grief, ambiguous loss, post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), depression, and anxiety (Comas-Díaz, Lykes & Alarcón, 1998). Oppressive inter-ethnic relations add to the experiences of trauma of Mayan families. Accordingly, parental abilities to work and provide for their family and attend their children's needs are limited. These factors can also hinder their capacity to develop a healthy attachment with their children, adding to negative intergenerational legacies. When parents keep silence about the traumas, family dynamics are disturbed, and the trauma may be acted out in other ways (e.g., family violence) or by maintaining such rigid family boundaries that isolate them from their community (Hernández, 2005).

Rural demographic protective factors, gender relations and parenting. In rural settings, advanced education frees women to extreme dependence on their husbands, as does learning Spanish (Suárez & Jordan, 2007). Women who are legally married have increased household decision-making (Carter, 2004). On the other hand, conservative religious beliefs about the place of women, marriage, and motherhood also influence gender dynamics. Overall, Catholic women, more likely to be Ladino, appear to be less vulnerable to unequal gender dynamics than Christian Evangelical women, who are more likely to be indigenous and whose religious leaders are more conservative (Carter, 2004). Married women find support for higher levels of shared authority when living with or close to their family of origin. Work-related migration exposes women to urban social norms that reflect more egalitarian gender roles. Female involvement in community activities also supports gender equality (Carter, 2004). Greater balance supports a healthier development for children by

modeling equitable gender roles (positive legacy). It also reduces the likelihood of domestic violence, and improves access to resources, especially for daughters (Foxen, 2010).

Mayan resilience. Mayan families often have been relegated to domestic servitude and exploitative agrarian labor (OIT, 1996). In response, Mayan families adopted submissive attitudes as well as passive ways of resisting oppression. These attitudes and behaviors are perceived by Ladinos as "stubbornness". There is a growing political awareness and cultural consciousness in Mayan families. This is reflected in their pride for their ancestry, greater visibility and recognition, and greater political presence (Foxen, 2010). Increasingly, Mayan parents are advocating more openly for their children's needs and reclaiming the respect they deserve for their culture and identity. Parents can pass on more positive legacies of success about their ethnic group to their children, although the system of political, economic, and social oppression still operates (Casáus Arzú, 2007).

Ladina mothers. The term "Ladino/a" describes a heterogeneous ethnic group that includes a wide SES range and segments of society (Adams, 1994). It includes the mixed Euro-indigenous population, as well as families of Mayan descent who have adopted Ladino sociocultural values and behaviors. Typically, people in urbanized areas call themselves Ladinos and speak Spanish. Their cultural practices represent a combination of broader Latin American cultural values with Mayan cultural elements.

Mothers living in urban areas. In the capital city, family urban life is shaped by the SES divide, which defines families' places of residence and access to services and opportunities. Guatemala City is viewed as the center of progress; 22% of all Guatemalans live there. Many are internal migrants from rural areas (Valdés, 2007). There is an increased inter-ethnic integration (Ladino-Maya) given a shared community life, at least at the barrio

level (González Ponciano, 2000). Upper class families live in more modern and well-kept areas. Disadvantaged families live in the neglected periphery of the city. These contexts increase variability in family systems.

Ladino family cultural identity. Historically, upper-class Ladinos have held the power in the country, including governmental and private systems. At the micro-level, upper-SES Ladino families have a privileged position and act as oppressors with Mayas and low-SES Ladinos. Scholars argue that Ladinos have a fragmented identity because they are neither Mayan nor European and, throughout history, both groups have rejected them (Matías, 1996). Guatemalans assign a high value to typical white features, fair skin, hair, and eye color. This reflects a disjointed identity and internalized discrimination. Exclusive identification with their European heritage leads to the negation of their Mayan heritage. While admiring pre-Columbian Mayans, Ladinos denigrate and exclude their Mayan descendants (González Ponciano, 2000). Ladino parents often lack consciousness about their fractured identity and the pain of historical discrimination. However, the effects are present in dynamics of intra-family discrimination.

Racial/ethnic privilege. Guatemalan institutions and laws reinforce the intergenerational transmission of discrimination (Cojtí Cuxil & Díaz Montejo, 2005). The ethnic/cultural disconnect Ladinos have about themselves deprives them of a sense of multicultural pride. Children take on the discrimination, which affects their subsequent interethnic relationships (OECD Alvarado, 2012). This perpetuates the division between ethnic groups and dynamics of power and oppression in the country. Middle-upper class Ladino families are "protected" by their privileged position (Casáus Arzú, 2007). Nonetheless, they have that protection at the cost of disenfranchising the majority of the

population. There is a generalized lack of awareness and critical consciousness among Ladino families about their social positionality and what it means in their relationship to the Mayan group as a whole (SEGEPLAN, 2011). In fact, there is a perpetuation of oppressive dynamics that maintains the status quo through regarding this situation as natural and "*así es como son las cosas*" [that's the way things are], or "*es la voluntad de Dios*" [it's God's will]. This retards the country's development as a nation in which all its inhabitants attain equal access to opportunities and resources, and all can contribute equally to the advancement of the nation.

Intra-family discrimination. Another source of oppression of Ladinos within their families is the preference for being "*blanquito/a*" [whiter] (Rodas Núñez, 2006), a legacy of Spanish colonial oppression. There is an overtly-expressed desire to marry people with lighter complexions for "*mejorar la raza*" [improving one's race]. At the family level, parents favor children with lighter complexions. These children are viewed as having positive characteristics (intelligence, beauty, personality). In contrast, there are negative attributions of children with darker, indigenous-like features. Rodas Núñez (2006) called this "naturalized racism at the family core" (p. 19). This preferential treatment extends to other family members and across generations. It is reinforced by the need for social mobility, facilitated for Guatemalans with lighter complexion. This also speaks to the feelings of inferiority and shame that many Ladino families carry regarding their background. However, now there are an increasing number of families who are proud of their native origins and have discovered ways to appreciate both aspects of their heritage (England, 2003; López García, 2004).

General risk and protective factors at the micro-level. Some risks, such as the presence of gangs, are more relevant for urban families from disadvantaged backgrounds. However, other factors, such as feeling at risk or unsafe, cut across rural and urban families and SES categories.

The gang problem at the micro-level. The gang problem, or "*maras*" in Guatemalan Spanish, arises from many sources. In the marginalized areas around the city, the inequalities are clearly visible: high rates of unemployment, lack of police protection, the absence of social resources, the effects of migration and deportation, lack of access to education and employment, increased levels of intimate partner violence (IPV); abuse of alcohol and drugs, and the absence of the father (Loudis et al., 2006). The presence of gangs affects mothers and their families in many ways, including fear of being attacked and actually becoming the victim of the gangs. They must also worry about the risk that their children will join a gang. The more risk factors present in the family and their context the greater propensity for children from these families to join gangs.

Fortunately, there are protective factors against gang membership. These include family cohesion and positive communication, positive attachment, appropriate monitoring, parental supervision, support for children's education and development of healthy life skills, access to resources and services, and financial stability (The Community Solution to Gang Violence, 2006).

Mental health issues. Specific mental health issues affecting mothers are IPV, with its consequent anxiety and depression, and patterns of child neglect and abusive behaviors. These forms of violence are widespread, given the violent history of the country. Mayan

women and children are the most vulnerable. Traditional gender stereotypes have reinforced this violence against women and children (InterCambios, 2006).

Alcohol and drug addiction. The average age for first-time alcohol use in Guatemala is 13 years (MacKenney, 2004). Members of AA (Alcoholics Anonymous) groups are increasingly younger, despite laws that regulate consumption (Font, 2008). Machismo and the media encourage male teens to demonstrate he is "a man" by learning to drink alcohol under pressure from their own fathers or peers. For Mayan families, alcohol is part of religious rituals as an offering to Maximón, a folk saint (Castellanos, 2008). The illicit production of *cusha* (popular alcoholic drink) is also common in Mayan and low-income communities. Thus, alcohol is widely available, is a normalized habit, and has cultural connotations. Guatemalan specialists estimate that the drinking problem exists equally among genders. However, for males, it is socially accepted to drink alcohol openly; women tend to drink in private (Sandoval, 2011).

Marijuana is widely available, and the average age of initiation is 12 years (Obregón, 2004). Drug addiction is also a widespread problem, especially for young people, and is aggravated by drug trafficking. The type of drug use varies according to SES. For example, wealthier sectors of the population tend to use methamphetamines for recreational purposes (Acuña, Sas, & Reyes, 2007).

The culture of terror and social exclusion increases the mother's and other family member's vulnerability to substance use as a coping mechanism. Intergenerational patterns of substance abuse also have a strong influence. Addiction problems severely hinder parental productivity and home management, decrease family cohesion and communication, increase marital conflicts, and add to the risk for abuse and neglect (Grant, Jack, Fitzpatrick, & Ernst,

2011). All this leads to child maladjustment. Lack of education about addictive behaviors, as well as the social and cultural normalization of alcohol and marijuana use masks the addiction and retards early detection and treatment of this family problem.

Daily exposure to violence. In general, all Guatemalan families have been exposed in one way or the other to multiple experiences crime and violence. Many families have lost relatives or people within their close social networks. Traumatic experiences of crime and political repression have led to severe emotional and relational damage, affecting family members across generations (Hernández, 1996; 2005). As mentioned before, PTSD and other responses to trauma, can severely limit healthy parenting practices as well.

Mothers have developed ways of coping with and protecting their children from violence. Mothers (and fathers) hold a "normal" sense of paranoia as a defense mechanism (Ramos, 2011). Being *desconfiado/a* [distrustful] and lying about one's money-spending plans or daily itinerary are responses to hostile and dangerous settings. Mothers try to limit the time spent and places frequented by their children, and teach them to practice safety measures. Stringent rules are perceived as critical to keep children safe. Mayan fathers may forbid their daughters to go to school as they reach adolescence (Suárez, 2011), because this is when they become more vulnerable to sexual attacks. Sadly, this protective measure limits educational development and future opportunities.

Violence, affection, and parenting. Guatemalans perceive themselves as having a strong tendency to be violent, react violently, and resort to aggression to resolve disputes (González, 2011). This fits with the current and historic violence in the country. The use of corporal punishment and harsh discipline, a high risk factor for negative child outcomes, is an example of how parenting practices are affected. A common Guatemalan saying "*El que*

te quiere, te aporrea" [The one who loves you, beats you] is a sad expression of how violence is seen as normal and even as an expression of affection or care for somebody. In other cases, violence has become the norm and is almost invisible (Menjívar, 2008). A level of numbness is sometimes necessary for families to go on with their daily lives. However, once violence becomes expected and ordinary, it creates a passive attitude and a sense of hopelessness. Children run the risk of not being able to develop a sense of sensitivity or compassion for others.

Self-perception. Guatemalans may perceive themselves as conformist, tardy for social activities, but not for work, and having the tendency to not plan ahead of time (González, 2011). In terms of parental behaviors, the mother's need to have her children conform in attitudes and behaviors would be expected to lead to an authoritarian style of parenting. Constant tardiness and procrastination can lead to neglectful behaviors disrupting the family's stability. If parents do not or cannot save money for times of need, they are likely to find themselves in situations that threaten family well-being.

Resilience. Guatemalans define themselves as "*cariñosos/as*" [loving or affectionate]. This quality in parenting can provide a protective factor when parents can express affection towards their children. Another source of resilience for families is the common practice for Guatemalan low and middle SES parents to work several jobs in order to support their families (González, 2011). Guatemalans also see themselves as survivors, capable of overcoming adversity. These are key resilient traits for parents and families to have, particularly in such challenging contexts. Many mothers directly affected by the horrors of the armed conflict and the current violence have demonstrated their resilience by uniting and forming support and activist groups (Montenegro, 2002).

Religious and spiritual beliefs. Guatemalan culture is deeply embedded in Catholic-Christian and traditional folk beliefs, e.g., beliefs in the supernatural, magic, or bewitchment (Walsh, 2003). These beliefs can serve as a coping mechanism for families facing various contextual challenges by giving them a sense of control over their lives and ailments. Many Guatemalan mothers across SES backgrounds provide their newborns with a "*pulsera de coral*". This is a red bracelet traditionally used to protect children from "*el mal de ojo*" [evil eye], a folk illness caused by negative emotions.

Evangelical Christian parents may rely on Bible teachings about "*dar vara*" ["to hit with a stick"] in reference physical punishment as child discipline. A wide variety of objects can be used when parents feel words are not enough to correct bad behavior. This belief may lead to maltreatment and abuse.

Religious beliefs endorsing rigid gender roles result in unequal treatment of boys and girls. Daughters must be protected and restricted, while boys are given greater freedom but subject to more demands. These double standards affect children's sexual behaviors. Teen boys are often urged by fathers to lose their virginity with a sex worker, to meet the expectations of *Machismo*. Conversely, daughters are taught to preserve their virginity until their wedding, a reflection of *Marianismo*. Daughters are also supposed to limit their social interactions with males; while boys are encouraged to seek out social interactions with females (González-López, 2005).

Cultural and spiritual beliefs for Guatemalan parents translate into both protective and risk factors. They protect by promoting resilience, encouraging a sense of empowerment and hope in a challenging context. They can become a risk when promoting parenting practices

that are not healthy for their children, such as relying solely on natural remedies, without seeking Western medical services, such as vaccines for preventing illnesses.

The Mesosystem: "It takes a village…"

Social networks. Parental relationships with their social networks are strongly informed by cultural values, such as *colectivismo* and *personalismo*, which favor the development of personal, harmonic, and solidarity relationships. Mothers' social network can include a *padrino* and *madrina* (godfather and godmother), and a *compadre* or *comadre* (close friend, companion or close associate, who can also have a godparent-role) (Torres, 2004). However, the climate of insecurity in Guatemala has affected social networks. Parents' perception of insecurity has become a risk factor because they break social ties and limit taking part in communal actions. In unsafe neighborhoods, families may remain at home most of the time to avoid danger (Taylor, 2007). Outside home activities may be limited to work, school, and church. Parents' interactions with their networks are affected by negative feelings such as fear, mistrust, and suspicion (McIlwaine & Moser, 2001). This limits parents' access to resources, opportunities, and potential supports.

Social networks in church settings. It is possible for Mayan and Ladino mothers to have more positive interactions within church because of cultural/religious values. However, the split between Evangelical indigenous and Catholic women cannot be ignored, and microagressions are still common because of income disparities, suspicion, and cultural differences. When the religious leadership is more culturally sensitive, Mayan mothers and their families are able to incorporate some of their beliefs, and Ladinos are encouraged to appreciate the cultural richness this brings (González, 2000). Mothers' relationships with their church social networks can be vital. Through these networks in the church setting

mothers can socialize, receive and provide support, share information, express their spirituality, develop more positive inter-ethnic relationships, renew their hopes and resilience capacity, and feel safe for a moment from the surrounding contextual chaos.

Employment and parenting. Stress from work conditions and demands can negatively affect a mother's efforts with her children. Working long hours poses a strain on mothers, limiting the energy, time spent with children, and quality of parenting (Bronfenbrenner, 1986). This is particularly problematic for working mothers who do not receive support from their partners in terms of childrearing (Myer, 1994). Furthermore, unemployment, job insecurity and job dissatisfaction, gender discrimination regarding salary, and low earnings are issues of great concern for mothers (Ortíz, 2011). These elements can provoke feelings of guilt, exacerbate irritability, and diminish patience with their children. For disadvantaged and poor mothers, work opportunities are limited, hindering their ability to provide for their children. Finally, work schedules can create barriers to family time, particularly for mothers working two or more jobs.

Mothers can also have a positive experience with their employers. Values of *colectivismo*, *simpatía*, and *personalism* inform supportive relationships that can benefit parenting. For example, an employer may provide her/his employees with resources for their family (e.g., clothing, construction materials for their home). Nevertheless, employers may exhibit paternalistic, disempowering behaviors towards employees. The value of *respeto* (deference to elders and figures of authority) can play a dual role in job interactions. *Respeto* can be positive when there is a mutual consideration between employer and employee. Yet, *respeto* can also be a risk factor when employees cannot challenge an authority figure. These negative experiences translate to the parenting realm by diminishing parents' sense of

authority. Parents oppressed by authoritative employers may replicate the same oppressive dynamics at home by practicing an authoritarian parenting style (Schrader & Burton, 2009).

Work-related stress and cultural values. *Marianismo* can mean that a mother will bear challenging work conditions for the sake of her children. A poor mother might continue working at the *maquila* [sweat shop], despite being paid very little or much less than male workers, or being exposed to sexual harassment (Noticias EFE, 2005). For fathers, a socially positive *Machismo* stance enforces fathers' role of responsible provider. Thus, a father works hard even under harsh or dangerous conditions (e.g., transportation, construction), and acts as family protector and defender, deriving pride from his role.

Mothers' relationship with schools. Parents hold disparate opinions regarding public and private education in Guatemala. In a recent survey, 54% of Guatemalans reported that public education was "fair" or "bad." Private education was viewed only somewhat more positively, but still 43% disapproved of it (Barreto, 2011). Opinions are likely led by the fact that the public education system is poorly funded and very limited in the quality and quantity of the services it provides (Barreda, 2007). Also, education as an institution and teachers as its representatives receive frequent criticism from local media, reflecting part of the reality of the educational system. However, negative reports influence parents' attitudes about their local schools and teachers. Conflicts between parents and teachers are marked by feelings of frustration, mistrust, and disappointment. Recently, a group of upset parents took over a rural school and changed the locks, preventing teachers to enter the facilities. Parents were demanding that the teachers make up for missing days when the school facilities were used as a voting center during presidential elections (Grave, 2011). On the other hand, many parents feel disempowered when interacting with schoolteachers given that teachers have an

average of 14 years of education while parents have average only 2.5 years. This power differential can make underprivileged parents less likely to fight for their children (Font & Aceña, 2004).

From a cultural viewpoint, parents' relationships with schoolteachers can be influenced by the value of *respeto* for the teacher that is common in rural areas. Teachers can be an important resource as advocates for the communities, providing support and resources to parents in isolated or marginalized areas.

Structural violence is another influential factor in the educational context. The presence of drugs, crime, and violent acts at schools augments mothers' concerns and mistrust of the institutions and their representatives. Corrupt behavior by school staff, including teachers demanding "gifts" from students and private schools forging grades, adds another negative layer to the interpersonal relations (Torres, 1992).

Mayan mothers and their children historically have found that schools are another setting in which oppression and discrimination is common. Education was viewed by the power elites as a way to "*civilizar a estos indios*" [civilizing these Indians] (Adams, 1994). Children's reactions when moving from monolingual families to Spanish schools was interpreted as meaning the children were ignorant, stubborn, and unintelligent. Today, thanks to the efforts of civil rights groups, there is a better understanding and respect for cultural differences. Government efforts include the provision of bilingual education for Mayan communities (Bastos & Camus, 2004; Rodríguez et al., 2007).

Exosystem: An Indirect Powerful Influence over Mothers and their Families

Transportation system. Over a million of Guatemalans use public transportation services on a daily basis (El Periódico, 2008). Urban and rural buses are unreliable, unsafe,

and chaotic, and road conditions are poor. Safety on public buses is a concern because public bus drivers have become a target of gang extortion and assaults (Villalobos, 2011). Bus drivers are notorious for their failure to follow traffic regulations or provide vehicle maintenance. Time is a concern because waiting for and riding public buses can take hours (about 6 hrs. daily), depending on distance and traffic congestion. The public's stress in increased because of the crush of morning rush hours. People experience sleep deprivation to be on time to work. Unreliability of service is common with frequent strikes by bus drivers who are demanding better and safer work conditions. The limited number of buses is often overcrowded and unsafe for children and adults. The overcrowding is a cause for accidents.

These issues are relevant to performance as parents in an indirect way. The stresses of managing public transportation hinder parents' child-rearing capacity. Mothers who depend on a potentially irregular and unsafe public bus system to take their children to school can be affected when the bus is late or never arrives. Her ability to be punctual for her job is affected, along with her own safety when using a bus system that is prone to gang attacks.

More privileged Guatemalans own vehicles. However, they remain vulnerable to contextual risk factors, such as the threat of crime or the high rates. It is fairly common for armed delinquents on motorcycles to assault and rob vehicle drivers who are stopping at a red light (Dougherty, 2010). Neglectful drivers and poorly maintained streets create frequent traffic accidents that tie up traffic.

Educational system. With 80% of secondary education in private hands, learning is inaccessible for the larger, poorer population. Even though education is meant to be affordable, many parents cannot pay enrollment fees. Thus, education beyond primary

school becomes a privilege, mainly accessible to middle and upper classes. This increases the gap between social groups and fuels prejudice and discrimination between sectors. The abuse of power and oppressive dynamics characteristic of classism commonly unfold when divergent social groups interact in other settings. Furthermore, as noted earlier, women are particularly affected by gender discrimination and access to education.

Illiteracy and low levels of education affect mothers and children in the opportunities and services they obtain, as well as the development of their self-concept, positive family dynamics, and general emotional, behavioral, health, and financial progress. These deficiencies are strongly related with being poor, and all the difficulties related to this condition (Green, 1998).

The health system. There are simply not enough resources to meet the needs of a population of over 14 million Guatemalans (Panamerican Health Organization [OPS, Spanish acronym], Gramajo & Balladelli, 2011). For instance, there is a lack of organization in service provision, poor inter-ethnic relationships, social exclusion in health, high rates of infant and maternal mortality and malnutrition. The ability of mothers to care for their children's health needs, as well as their own health, is limited by the lack of accessibility, coverage, resources, quality services, and social acceptance.

Mental health services. Guatemala has no official mental health policy or plan in place. The only institutions taking action in this regard are the National Program of Mental Health (PNSM, Spanish acronym) and the Office of Human Rights (PDH, Spanish acronym). There are fewer than 2.5 mental health providers per 100,000 Guatemalans. Most practitioners are concentrated in the cities, leaving many rural areas where the indigenous are concentrated without services. The National Hospital of Mental Health in Guatemala City

receives 90% of the government budget for mental health. This leaves little financial support for community-level interventions and prevention programs (Flores et al., 2006). Mental health education has been promoted through public education campaigns by government agencies, NGOs, private foundations, and international organizations. These campaigns have been directed variously to the general population, children, adolescents, women, trauma survivors, ethnic groups, and disadvantaged populations.

In the area of preventive parenting efforts, support has been offered sporadically to the population, mostly in urban areas, in a one-day workshop format. Some of these presentations have been organized by government agencies or NGOs, such as "*Organicemos un Mundo Mejor*," OMM [Let's Organize a Better World]. The topics addressed range from cultural values, recognizing signs of domestic violence, sexual education, promoting parental patience and tolerance, family communication, increasing awareness about the parental role, among others. These conferences have a strong motivational and inspirational component; however, their one-day format is not sufficient for adequate parent training.

Limited efforts have been made regarding parenting intervention formats, which take into account community culture or values (Schrader & Burton, 2009) or the use of specific guidelines for healthy discipline methods. Most interventions do not go beyond a one-time, one-shot, Spanish-only format. Specific prevention topics relevant to parenting such as children at risk of gang involvement have not been presented. Also, aside from a few exceptions, there has been no follow-up or post-intervention evaluation process to assess the effectiveness of these interventions, despite the great need (Schrader, 2007).

Religious institutions. Catholic and Evangelical churches have a strong influence, providing support for families and communities in various ways. Historically, the Catholic

Church played a key role in the process of colonization and evangelization of Mayan populations, to the detriment of those populations at times. However, some Catholic leaders have fought for the fair treatment of Mayan and disadvantaged people. An example of these efforts is the Recovery of Historical Memory Project, REHMI (Archdiocese of Guatemala, 1999). This project collected and published hundreds of victim's testimonies about the political brutalities perpetrated against them. This project helped bring greater awareness of the injustices and atrocities, and contributed to a healing process, including promoting social change and social activism.

Evangelical and Catholic churches have had an influence at the governmental level through different political leaders. In a context of alarming population growth, both churches have been criticized for their opposition to the use of birth control methods, other than the "natural" method (Shiffman & Garcés, 2004). Clearly, religious institutions play relevant roles in the lives of mothers, influencing their parenting behaviors through the reinforcement of particular beliefs and values and by increasing or limiting their access to health services. Their support of social justice efforts and activism is important in future progress.

Government and other state institutions. There is a general lack of trust by the majority of Guatemalans regarding their government and institutions (Lemus, 2011). There is also a lack of faith in democracy and the effectiveness of justice and criminal systems, the result of widespread impunity and corruption (Snodgrass, 2005). Despite reforms, some national policies continue to be ineffective and outdated. Laws that promote the oppression of vulnerable or marginalized groups while favoring the interests of specific groups in power are still in force. Specifically for women, oppressive laws that favor men over women are still widely practiced (Musalo et al., 2010).

In this climate of low morale, pessimistic expectations, and a historical mistrust for governmental agencies institutions, parenting behaviors are affected. For instance, parents might respond with an individualistic attitude, trying to take advantage of the system's resources before someone else, specifically corrupt government officials, does. Also, some mothers are affected particularly by a sense of hopelessness and mistrust towards those authorities who are failing to protect her them violence and crime (Suárez & Jordan, 2007). This is intensified due to the history of human rights violations by authorities that specifically target women (Moser & McIlwaine, 2001).

Other mothers in the same circumstances might react by fighting for social change (Foxen, 2010). Apart from the policies, type of resources, and support mothers may receive from government institutions, parental attitudes are influenced as well. Divergent attitudes create divergent parental legacies, as government institutions and the situation of the country influence them.

Private institutions. The role and influence of private institutions has been relevant at the exosystemic level. Reflecting the goals of the oligarchy, they have been dominant in Guatemala through family networks since colonial times (Casáus Arzú, 2007). Currently, private companies/families dominate the areas of agricultural exports (the country's greatest resource), commerce, industry, and finance. Some of today's Guatemalan powerful families can document a direct connection with their ancestors, Spanish conquerors. One of Guatemala's former presidents, Álvaro Arzú, comes from one of these powerful families. The complex connections between governmental and private sectors often converge, with the personal interests benefiting a small powerful group. In turn, this restricts opportunities for the larger population.

The power exerted by the private sector has influenced, mothers' access or lack thereof to certain resources. Land ownership has been limited for both men and women in rural areas, given that richer families own the land. Traditionally, owners have rented or "allowed" rural families to live on their lands in exchange for agricultural labor. However, this type of arrangement limits a rural family's quality of life and promotes exploitation. As mentioned before, women have the least access to owning property (Montenegro, 2002). This further limits her ability to secure her family's quality of life, especially when she is the sole breadwinner.

Some private enterprises support the development of the country by providing employment, developing and using advanced technology, and financing state or NGO initiatives that benefit the population, including mothers. Still, the strong legacy of racism is pervasive in the minds of private industrial leaders (Casáus Arzú, 2007). The racism is detrimental to the disadvantaged majority of Guatemalans, mainly indigenous women.

Non-governmental organizations. Independent national and international institutions operating in Guatemala have had an important role. In many instances, they emerged as a response to the multiple needs of the majority of Guatemalans which governmental institutions are unable to meet. When receiving international funding, they are more stable politically than governmental institutions, yet financially limited (Barrig, 2001). However, in many cases these institutions function autonomously, and they lack communication with other organizations working for the same cause due to structural barriers or a divergent perspective of the problem addressed. However, without this sort of collaboration, the risk of replicating services and wasting resources is likely to occur. In

general, NGOs help promoting protective factors for Guatemalan parents by attempting to close the gaps that the government is unable to resolve.

Some NGOs have been instrumental in promoting women's quality of life, as well as their family's well-being. NGOs provide education, psychological and social services, and support the cultural development of communities. For example, the *Asociación Cambiando Vidas* [Changing Lives Association] is an entity founded by Guatemalan women to provide good-quality education to poor children. An NGO that benefits women is *Nuevos Horizontes* [New Horizons]. This entity provides shelter, life skills and job training to abused women (and their families) since 1993; it also focuses on preventive efforts by encouraging awareness about women's rights (Suárez & Jordan, 2007).

Macrosystem: Guatemalan Women in the Larger System

The broader systems I will address here include general cultural values and other philosophies influential in creating the ecology of women and their families in Guatemala.

Guatemalan cultural values. Guatemalan families' beliefs and practices are manifold due to their diverse ethnic and religious and spiritual backgrounds. However, there are shared core values across groups, similar to those of other Latin Americans. *Machismo* and *Marianismo* define and limit gender roles. *Respeto* defines relations with elders, parents, employers, etc. The value of extended family and social support systems is reflected in *colectivismo* and *familismo*. There are key influences of patriarchal and agrarian philosophies that shape and define power distribution and gender roles (Caulfield, 2001). Cultural values, such as *familismo* as a strong inclination to family unity, can be powerful protective factors by promoting positive parenting. However, other values can be risks when they promote stereotypes or inequities (*Marianismo*, in the realm of IPV).

Gender values. Guatemalan society operates under patriarchal structures and values (Carey & Torres, 2010). Hence, traditional gender roles are reinforced by values of *machismo* and *marianismo* (Hernández, 2005). These values in turn shape the roles parents play. In rural families, husbands determine household affairs like administration of income, access to health services, and acquisition of groceries and medicine (Carter, 2004). Rural and urban women may be able to take part on the work force, but that does not guarantee gender balance. Working females are more likely to be maltreated and have lower salaries than males, mainly in factories (Menjívar, 2008; Noticias EFE, 2005). Even though higher SES families have more access to resources and education, gender inequalities are strongly present too. In many two-parent, high-SES households, mothers are still viewed as the main caretakers. Thus, gender values are relevant as they govern parenting roles in terms power decision, and resource management.

The culture of silence. Silence is fueled by the years of incessant human rights violations by state authorities and other powerful groups (Snodgrass, 2005). Aside from judges, community or religious leaders, and professionals, any person openly denouncing social injustices, promoting social change, or having been witness to crimes can be at risk. Death threats, kidnapping, raids, extortion, and other forms of intimidation continue to occur in postwar Guatemala. Many of the reforms stated in the Peace Accords have gone unaddressed (Clouser, 2009). Hence, this impunity of silence across levels of society also affects families. IPV, family violence, maltreatment, drug, and alcohol addiction are disregarded in many cases. Influenced by past and present political repression, the tentacles of fear and intimidation extend to the family context, leading to underreporting situations of all kinds of abuse. This in turn blocks obtaining help, services, or resources needed to

address these issues, particularly for female victims. Hence, this is a concerning risk factor for Guatemalan parenting practices.

Chronosystem: Influence of Guatemalan history on parenting practices

I have addressed specific intergenerational dynamics influenced by history in previous sections. Inter-ethnic and sociocultural relations have been crucial since the Spanish invasion and continue to be key today in terms of social positionality. Through violence and exploitation, Spaniards oppressed indigenous populations despite their resistance. Subsequent, and many times violent, mix of European and indigenous bloods added complexity to interethnic relations (Casáus Arzú, 2007). This situation evolved into today's unequal social structure with widespread legacies of racism and classism. Dominant groups' systematic efforts to exterminate Mayans have been repeated over recent years. Despite such challenges, resilient Mayan groups have been fighting for justice. Today, many groups struggle for reconciliation, healthy inter-ethnic integration, and social change (Foxen, 2010). However, as mentioned before, Guatemalan women (including mothers) continue to be among the most vulnerable among the population.

The legacies of conquest. The violence, divisiveness, and individualistic attitudes found in some sectors can be traced to legacies from Spaniard conquerors. In their quest for power over natural resources, many of the Spanish betrayed their own peers and killed Mayans who were actually on their side (Foster, 2007). Later on, colonizers favored their families by practicing *nepotism*, keeping power within closed family groups (Casáus Arzú, 2007). Today, this practice is visible in the reigning corruption and lack of accountability of institutions and the government. These legacies affect families by impeding access to equal opportunities or resources and by the replication of discrimination dynamics.

Strong legacies for women stem from the time of the European Invasion. Only males arrived in the first Spanish groups. A number of years passed before the first Spanish women came. In the meantime, male settlers established voluntary and forced sexual relationships with indigenous women. Very few marriages between Spanish-descent men and indigenous women existed from the beginning (Casáus Arzú, 2007). Many women were taken by force and raped (Komisaruk, 2008). This is one example of how patterns of oppression for women were established, particularly women of color.

When women of European descent arrived to Guatemala, they became an important asset at a time when skin color and family name were valued highly as a sign of status. Arranged marriages were very common. These unions had the particular goal of maintaining the economic resources within a family group or to expand family's power and influence by forming alliances with other powerful families (Casáus Arzú, 2007). Thus, women's role was largely relegated to being a "*reproductora*" [breeding, childrearing]. Yet, European-descent women were also seen as responsible for evangelizing indigenous populations and recreating a traditional model of family (Rubio de Orellana-Pizarro, 2007).

Other Events through Time

Thirty-six years of civil war. As noted, gender roles have a great relevance for parenting practices. Several factors influenced gender dynamics during the civil war. Some women took an active role in the guerrilla movement (Barrig, 1998; Colom, 2000). Although they fought alongside men, males were always in charge. The military violently repressed these guerrilla groups (Erlick, 2001). After the signing of Peace Accords, both genders remained in traditional roles (Hernández, 2005). Gender-wise, the civil war deepened the culture of violence against women, making assault, rape, and murders a common form of

control over females, particularly indigenous women (Menjívar, 2008; Suárez, 2011). These effects have left women deeply wounded at many levels. As mentioned before, the psychological toll of these traumatic experiences affect parenting practices. For instance, PTSD symptoms can impair mothers' performance of quotidian activities related to the care of their children (Green, 1994).

The legacy of civil war: A state of conflict and violence. The heritage from war and political repression is long-standing even after the Peace Accords signing in 1996. This legacy translates into structural violence across institutions, a hostile environment, an utter disrespect for human rights, distrust of authorities, and a lack of faith for the government and democracy. Injustice, impunity from prosecution, and corruption erode the country's development and the spirit of its people. Also, aggression in interactions within families and across groups is common.

Guatemalan's attitudes range from being reactive and forceful (e.g., taking justice in their hands through lynching) to being extremely passive and "letting things as they are" because of fear or conformity (e.g., not reporting abuses or crimes) (Godoy-Paíz, 2005). All of these characteristics have negative influence and carry risk factors for mothers in their parental efforts, as discussed in previous sections.

Resilience in times of war. Guatemala is the nation in the American continent with the highest percentage of an indigenous population (CIA, 2011; Refworld, 2009). In other regions, these groups were exterminated during conquest. Despite many challenges, Mayans have survived and adjusted. They continue preserving their core cultural traditions and identity. Surviving through the maintenance of strong ties with traditions and culture reflects resilience and represents a protective factor for parenting behaviors (Foxen, 2010). As

discussed before, the creation of social actions and organizations by Mayan and Ladino female groups during the time of the armed internal conflict also reflected the strength and resilience of both groups.

After the war. In the aftermath of war, Guatemalans continue to experience violence in many ways and at even higher rates than during the time of war (Menjívar, 2008). Some forms of violence are deeply related to the military culture of Guatemalans' everyday life (Ruhl, 2005). Other forms of violence are tied to severe social disparities, violations of the rights, wellbeing, and livelihood of so many Guatemalans (Hoffman, & Centeno, 2003).

Throughout the duration of the internal armed conflict in Guatemala, sexual violence against women was used as a systematic strategy to control and terrorize the population (Musalo, Pellegrin, & Roberts, 2010). Despite the fact that this war officially ended in 1996, violence against women in all its forms continues to be rampant, and crimes and offenses against women remain unpunished (Sanford, 2008).

Migration flows within the Guatemalan territory. Families have experienced distinct types of migration that have shaped their parenting behaviors. In the case of *internal migration* from rural to urban areas, gender roles can change. In the absence of a working husband, women usually determine household decisions. When parents move to urban areas, they find themselves exposed to values that support gender equality (Carter, 2004). Aside from influencing their gender dynamics, internal migration can open further opportunities for parents and their families. The majority of internal migrants that move from rural areas to Guatemala City are female (57%), and they have an average age of 24.6 years (Rivadeneira, 2001). These migrant women generally occupy positions in the industrial labor and provision of services (i.e., domestic).

The conditions of *forced migration* that occurred in the context of trauma, turning families into refugees, are the least positive for families. In this process, family ties and cultural practices are severed, there is painful loss and grief at various levels, and many families suffer from PTSD symptoms. These circumstances augment many risk factors, including child-maltreatment and negative intergenerational legacies.

In terms of *International migration (chain migration),* the 2010 US Census, shows that of the four million foreign-born Central Americans living in the United States, about one million are Guatemalan. People emigrate to escape sociopolitical oppression, lack of opportunities and resources, and extreme poverty (Hernández, 1996). It is common for parents to travel first in order to support their family financially. Later they facilitate the migration of other members.

Families affected by chain migration face many challenges. Family development and structure changes as relatives who stay adjust to new roles and tasks. Mothers may temporarily become the only source of family income, and children may take on their absent parent's duties. Reliance on extended family and social networks is stronger (Hernández, 2005). At separation, families experience a form of ambiguous loss (Boss, 2006; Suárez-Orozco et al., 2002), given that an important attachment figure is psychologically present, but not available physically. This experience causes serious difficulties for overcoming grief. Also, the absence of parental figures negatively affects children, increasing risk of gang involvement. Migrant parents established in the US face many challenges (Parra-Cardona et al., 2004), but for the purpose of this section I will not expand on this external context.

Another phenomenon related to international migration is remittances. Guatemala receives remittances from the Guatemalans living in the US. Most remittances are destined

for rural areas and the poor, marginalized areas of cities. Even though remittances cannot resolve the economic crisis, they do provide an essential relief for an impoverished family (Orozco & Hamilton, 2005). Hence, migration has contrasting effects. For example, migration is protective, because it brings financial benefits, but it is also a risk because of the strain that parental absence causes.

CHAPTER 3: METHODS

Research Design

Qualitative research is useful for capturing in-depth descriptions of diverse life experiences (Jarret, Roy, & Burton, 2002). Of particular importance is that qualitative research can be experienced as a personal method of inquiry, which facilitates the promotion of trust with participants because people receive the message that their voices are important and valuable (Umaña-Taylor & Bámaca, 2004). This study followed the tenets of the grounded theory approach because this qualitative tradition allows the researcher to produce explanations of phenomena that are 'grounded' in data provided by participants (Fassinger, 2005). Thus, this investigation facilitated a better understanding of the life experiences of Guatemalan women, as well as their parenting efforts and challenges.

With regards to data collection methodologies, focus groups are particularly useful for obtaining information in understudied areas of study (Morgan, 1997). Because focus groups consist of group interviews in which discussion centers on a topic specified by the researcher, the group interaction produces a type of information that cannot be obtained through an individual interview (Morgan, 1997). In addition, focus groups can be empowering for people who have experienced discrimination or less power in society (Umaña-Taylor & Bácama, 2004). Through the focus group process, participants can realize that the role of researchers is to learn from their experiences rather than the researchers themselves being experts on the topic of conversation (Morgan & Krueger, 1993). Based on the limited history of comprehensive qualitative studies in Guatemala and the intense contextual stressors commonly experienced by this population, a focus group methodology was particularly suited for this investigation.

Site description. The target site for this study was a marginalized and impoverished urban community in Guatemala called Concepción Las Lomas. Due to the growth of organized crime, drug trafficking, and delinquency in recent years (Ramírez et al., 2009), children and youth residing in this area have experienced an increased risk for becoming involved in delinquent activities, substance use, and gang membership.

Back in 1997, the religious order known as *Carmelite Sisters* created "Futuro Vivo" (Live Future), a community-based initiative aimed at providing a variety of services to the community of Concepción Las Lomas. Specifically, a school was founded to provide preschool and elementary education to children living in the area. Futuro Vivo also promotes additional educational activities focused on nutrition, health care, adult education, family wellness, scholarships, youth development, agricultural development, and job training for women (Asociación Futuro Vivo, 2009). According to information provided by Futuro Vivo, families served by them face a variety of contextual challenges such as poverty, community violence, drug trafficking, and domestic violence.

Participant characteristics. Thirty mothers between the ages of 21 and 60 participated in this study. The majority of participants (90%) self-identified as Ladina and reported Spanish as their primary language. The remaining participants (10%) self-identified as Mayan-K'iche' (one of the officially recognized native groups) and bilingual (K'iche'-Spanish). Over half of the participants (60%) were born in the Capital City. The rest of the sample identified alternative municipalities as their birth place with histories of migration to the city throughout their lives.

At the time of the study all participants reported being residents of Concepción Las Lomas in Guatemala City. The sample was moderately diverse in terms of income,

occupation, and education. Forty percent of participants reported a combined family income of Q26,400 ($3,335.23 U.S. dollars)[2] or less per year, 50%, an income between Q20,160 ($2,546.90 USD) and Q48,000 ($6,064.05 USD), and 10% an income between Q51,600 ($6,518.86 USD) and 60,000 ($7,580.06 USD). Women who reported a higher family income were also married or cohabiting with a male partner (73.33%), as opposed to single-headed households. With regards to occupation, 50% of participants were exclusively homemakers. The rest of participants were homemakers and also worked outside their homes in domestic labor, services, or small businesses. Participants' additional sources of income included renting property or receiving financial support from an adult child or relatives. Finally, half of the sample completed elementary education, 26% middle, and 13% high school education. Table 3.1 presents the participants' demographic information.

Recruitment. All recruitment procedures were designed according to feedback provided by Futuro Vivo (FV) collaborators by taking into consideration previous successful strategies in community-based initiatives. Thus, an initial invitation to an informative meeting was extended by FV collaborators to mothers whose children attended the school. Participants were then recruited during a school-based meeting. In addition to providing a climate of trust, this strategy was highly feasible as a large number of mothers were approached at these meetings.

During the informative meeting, I clarified to potential participants that the study was focused only on mothers and that I expected to extend this work in the future to include fathers. The purpose and relevance of the study was also described to women, as well as

[2] Conversion from Quetzales to US Dollars is based on the current exchange rate of Q7.9155 per $1, as of 11/17/2013.

Table 3.1. Participants' demographic information.

Demographic Characteristics	n	%
(a) Age		
21-30	11	36.66%
31-40	10	33.33%
41-50	6	20%
51-60	3	10%
(b) Marital Status		
Single	7	23.33%
Cohabitating	9	30%
Married	13	43.33%
Separated	1	3.33%
(c) Number of Children		
1	3	10%
2	12	40%
3	9	30%
4	3	10%
5	2	6.6%
7	1	3.3%
(d) Education		
No schooling	3	10%
Elementary	15	50%
Middle School	8	26.66%
High School	4	13.33%
(e) Ethnicity / Language		
Ladina (mestizo) / Spanish-speaking	27	90%
Maya (K'iche' Group) / K'iche'- Spanish (bilingual)	3	10%
(f) Place of birth		
Guatemala City	18	60%
Other Departments/Municipalities	12	40%
(g) Annual Combined Family Income		
<Q10,000 ($1,263.47)	4	13.33%
Q10,001 ($1,263.34) – Q30,000 ($3,790.03)	10	23.33%
Q30,001 ($3,790.16) – Q40,000 ($5,053.38)	8	26.66%
Q40,001 ($5,053.50) – >Q60,000 ($7,580.06)	8	26.66%

incentives for participation. In order to avoid coercion to participate based on the participants' socio-economic status, Futuro Vivo agreed to offer participants a gift basket, containing non-perishable local food products ($20 approximate USD value). Futuro Vivo collaborators considered this form of compensation appropriate as it prevents the risk of coercion.

I announced to mothers who agreed to participate in this study that I was going to collect their names and contact information after the meeting. I also informed these potential participants that I was going to follow-up through a telephone call to complete screening procedures. All participants had access to a mobile phone and they agreed to be contacted.

Inclusion and exclusion criteria. To be selected for the study, potential participants had to: (a) have at least one child no older than 12 years of age under their care, (b) reside in the area served by Futuro Vivo, and (c) express an interest to participate in the focus group interview. After initial recruitment, the age of child was expanded to include children ages 13 to 17 because the majority of participating mothers had multiple children in this age range. Exclusion criteria included the following: (a) a serious diagnosed mental health condition (e.g., schizophrenia), or (b) a serious substance abuse problem that impeded their ability to participate in the study. None of the mothers were excluded based on the exclusion criteria. Given the complexity associated with defining ethnicity, mothers were asked to define their ethnicity in their own terms in the demographic questionnaire (see appendices E and F).

Once screening criteria were met, I explained to participants the logistics associated with focus groups. Potential barriers to participation were explored and participants were offered support to attend the meeting (i.e., refreshments prior to the interview, transportation,

and on-site childcare). Prior to the implementation of the focus groups, I contacted participants to explore unexpected barriers to participation and finalize logistics details.

Sample size. According to the grounded theory approach, data collection typically proceeds until coding categories have become fully developed and adding new categories does not provide an increased understanding of phenomena under study (LaRossa, 2005). This is known as theoretical saturation (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). For this study, a sample of 30 mothers was recruited. This sample size is commonly acceptable in grounded theory studies (Creswell, 2007). Each focus group was planned for 5 to 6 parents to maximize mothers' contribution to the dialogue. A sample size of 30 participants was considered feasible for this study, particularly because there was no precedent of studies with this population with higher sample sizes.

Data collection. I implemented all focus groups at the Futuro Vivo School. Data were collected and analyzed following the guidelines of the grounded theory approach (Strauss & Corbin, 1998), as well as all the rules from the Michigan State University IRB. Participants were invited to arrive 30 minutes prior to the scheduled interview in order to place children at the on-site childcare location, have refreshments, and complete demographic forms. The initial social time prior to data collection has been reported by Latino scholars as particularly useful when conducting research with marginalized Latino populations (Umaña-Taylor & Bácama, 2004).

After being offered refreshments, participants were given more detailed information about the purpose of the study, verbal consent was requested, and questions were clarified. The informed consent form was read out loud to participants (See Appendix A and B). This form contained information about the study, staff responsible for the investigation,

procedures to ensure confidentiality, and contact information of the MSU IRB office and the Futuro Vivo Ethical Review Group. After all participants consented to participate, demographic forms were distributed and filled out. Special care was given to ensure that participants expressing literacy limitations received assistance to complete the forms. Once all participants completed the demographic forms, and digital recorders were tested, the interview started. A sample of the informed consent (Appendices A and B) and demographic form (Appendices E and F) in English and Spanish are included in the Appendix section.

Interview format. The semi-structured interview included broad, open-ended questions (i.e., grand tour questions) and inquiries focused on specific content areas (i.e., probes). Each interview started by asking participants the grand tour questions. Follow-up questions were then asked based on participants' responses. Finally, whenever participants did not address specific content considered relevant to this investigation, I utilized specific probes. This interview format was useful for two reasons. First, responses to grand tour questions indicated to me which themes were considered most relevant by participants. Second, the utilization of probes helped me to ensure that themes related to the study were adequately examined in case participants did not to address such themes in their original responses (Kvale, 1996). Appendix C includes a sample interview guide (Appendix D includes the Spanish translation). According to the grounded theory approach, the interview guide was open for modification during the course of the investigation, based on the themes that emerged and were identified by participants as particularly relevant to them (Strauss & Corbin, 1998).

Data preparation. Data were originally saved in digital recorders and then transcribed, utilizing professional transcribing services. In order to immerse myself in the

data, I listened to all individual recordings, and contrasted each of the transcriptions against the recording to ensure accuracy. NVivo software was used to facilitate data analysis (Bazeley & Richards, 2000). This software facilitates the coding of data, organization of data into distinctive graphic clusters, and data management based on specific codes and categories.

Note taking. I engaged in note taking throughout the implementation of this study. This was helpful because key contextual events can have an important influence on the process of the investigation (Umaña-Taylor & Bácama, 2004). For example, community violence was widespread in the target community at the time of the data collection process. In fact, group discussions were influenced by the recent and brutal murder of a mother who was previously involved in the Futuro Vivo community program.

The following types of note taking were used: (a) field notes, (b) audit trail, and (c) reflexive journal. Field notes were useful to record observed behaviors and events that represented an important influence to the process of research (Emerson, Fretz, & Shaw, 1995; Krueger, 1994). Audit trail consists of keeping track of key methodological decisions throughout the course of the investigation (Richards, 2006). Audit trails are highly relevant in qualitative research as all key methodological decisions need to be clearly documented and reported to allow for the future replicability of the study, as well as to demonstrate the rigorous implementation of methods. Finally, reflexive journals are used to record personal introspections, feelings, and reactions (Richards, 2006). Keeping track of this information is essential in order to monitor researchers' biases and preconceptions (Merriam, 2009). Table 3.2 presents a more detailed description of each of the qualitative notes.

Table 3.2. Classification and use of notes during the research process.

Type of qualitative notes	Description
(a) Field Notes	Written accounts (documentation) about personal experiences and observations in the field (e.g., capturing relevant moments during focus group discussions or contacts with community members and partners) (Krueger, 1994). Field notes are a tool for safekeeping the experience of research and enriching the process of reflexivity (Emerson, Fretz, & Shaw, 1995).
(b) Audit trail (log)	Refers to keeping track of key methodological decisions as they unfold (Richards, 2006). The term 'log' is metaphorically used to represent the act of recording each step taken during a journey (Richards, 2006).
(c) Reflexive journal	A journal facilitates critical self-reflection, which is essential to increase the transparency of the research process with regards to the researchers' personal experiences, feelings, thoughts, opinions, expectations, and beliefs. It facilitates keeping track and monitoring the researchers' personal biases and preconceptions (Ortlipp, 2008).

Data Analysis

Data analysis followed the tenets of the grounded theory approach. This entails the creation of theory "that is 'grounded' in data collected from participants on the basis of the complexities of their lived experiences in a social context" (Fassinger, 2005, p. 157).

Constant comparative method. Central to the grounded theory approach is the constant comparative method, which refers to continuously coding and comparing data as categories are identified and selected (LaRossa, 2005; Strauss & Corbin, 1998). This process enables researchers to identify the various properties and dimensions of the data (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). The constant comparative method is essential to the grounded theory process as it can assist researchers to identify contrasting and emerging subcategories of data (LaRossa, 2005). This method was enhanced in this investigation by sharing copies of coded

transcripts and emerging codes with Dr. Parra-Cardona, in order to obtain an additional level of comparison by a researcher not fully involved in the process of data collection, coding, and analysis.

Coding procedures. An analytical method of sequential open, axial, and selective coding was implemented (Strauss & Corbin, 1998; Fassinger, 2005).

Open coding consisted of breaking down data into discrete parts or units of analysis. Each idea expressed by participants was considered as a unit of analysis and separate units were labeled as *concepts* (Fassinger, 2005). Concepts were coded by using words utilized by participants when such words facilitated the integration of a coding schema and identification of relevant coding categories. This procedure is known as *in vivo coding* (Strauss & Corbin, 1998).

Open coding was followed by *axial coding,* which involved reaching a higher level of conceptualization of the data by creating *categories* based on the identification of *properties* and *dimensions* of the data (Fassinger, 2005). The final phase of analysis was *selective coding,* which refers to the process of integrating a theoretical schema of the phenomena under study (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). Samples of coded data sheets were shared with Dr. Parra-Cardona in order to enhance the rigor of the data analytical process (LaRossa, 2005; Fassinger, 2005).

Trustworthiness of the Data

In qualitative research trustworthiness is understood as the quality of the data. The essence of this notion is captured by Lincoln and Guba in the following question: "How can an inquirer persuade her or his audiences (including self) that the findings of an inquiry are worth paying attention to, worth taking account of?" (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 290).

Qualitative research must achieve *credibility, dependability, confirmability, and transferability* (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Morrow, 2005). Credibility in findings translates into clear reflection of participants' experience. In this study, Dr. Parra-Cardona revised 60% of the coded transcripts to ensure accuracy of analysis and identification of relevant themes.

Dependability and confirmability are interrelated concepts and refer to ensuring that findings are reasonable as a result of implementing adequate methodology. In order to accomplish this goal, throughout the process of research I engaged in conversations regarding the emerging themes with Dr. Parra-Cardona and shared with him copies of transcripts and coding sheets. In addition, I kept an audit trail with detailed methodological and analytical notes.

Transferability requires researchers to achieve a "degree of similarity between sending and receiving contexts" (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 316). Because the major task in achieving transferability resides on providing data that makes transferability judgments possible, I included detailed journaling as part of the note taking process. Hence, I provided a detailed description of the context in which the meanings were created. Also, I reflected on the ways in which the data-generating context influenced me throughout the process of gathering and analyzing data.

Finally, I kept track of my personal reactions and experiences by writing constant entries into my reflexive journal. This allowed me to monitor my personal biases and preconceptions.

Ethical Considerations

Confidentiality. Data were saved in my password-protected laptop computer and in a password-protected USB drive. I brought my computer and USB back to the United States

and permanently stored the data in a password-protected desktop computer, located at a research office with restricted access in the Human Ecology building. All data previously stored in the laptop computer were permanently deleted once a backup copy was created in a desktop computer. The USB drive was stored in a locked cabinet at a research laboratory. This research laboratory is a highly-secured area as sensitive data have been previously stored at this location. All transcriptions were created according to MSU IRB regulations in order to ensure the safety of the data and the participants' confidentiality. The data will be stored for a minimum of three years after the project's completion. Only Dr. Parra-Cardona and I will have access to the stored data.

Because this research was implemented with a highly vulnerable population, special attention was given to determine whether a participant is particularly concerned about confidentiality issues before attending the focus group meeting. Thus, when I scheduled the focus groups interviews, I explored with participants if the interview site offered to them the anonymity and privacy that they expected. Participants were also informed that they had the right to refuse to answer any questions that could make them feel uncomfortable and that the interview could stop at any time upon their request.

Participant risks and benefits. I constantly monitored participants' reactions throughout the interview process and intervened by offering to stop the interview whenever a participant became upset during data collection procedures. Participants were allowed to take their time while processing their emotions in a respectful environment and no participant chose to withdraw from the study. Although a level of risk was involved in this investigation, it was expected and observed that the benefits would outweigh the risks. Specifically, mothers received compensation for their participation in the study. Participants commented

on their satisfaction regarding the usefulness of the compensation in the form of non-perishable food items. Also, as expressed by participants after the group interview, they experienced a sense of relief from having shared their stories. Based on previous qualitative studies focused on parenting, it is also possible that mothers also experienced an increased motivation with regards to their parenting roles (Parra-Cardona, Córdova, Holtrop, Villarruel, & Wieling, 2008). In fact, I observed in mothers a renewed sense of hope and awareness about their parenting and female roles, which was later confirmed in the data. Finally, a parenting program will be offered in the community, aimed at supporting the participants' parenting efforts.

Role of the Researcher

In qualitative research methods, the "self-of-the researcher" plays a central role in the research process. This is particularly true because the researcher is the vehicle through which data are collected, analyzed, and synthesized (Morrow, 2005).

With regards to this investigation, I identified main areas of personal strength, which refer to my identity as a Guatemalan woman and my commitment to the well-being of the Guatemalan people. Specifically, having a background as clinical psychologist (since 2003) and couple and family therapist (since 2006) has provided me with an important set of abilities. These clinical skills have allowed me to facilitate the process of rapport and trust in my interpersonal interactions, particularly with female clients.

My background as a therapist also has enabled me to further develop my capacity for perception and sensitivity towards people's needs and reactions. Furthermore, my previous experience in various research projects involving Latino populations has given me the opportunity to develop skills for conducting individual and focus groups interviews. My ethnic identification as a Latina and professional helped me to remain aware of the contextual

challenges and cultural dynamics that pertain to this population. Moreover, when I graduated with a clinical psychology degree, I started working with families and individuals from the community, in which I conducted this investigation. The experience of working with this community inspired me to travel abroad and pursue my graduate education. It is with this commitment and sense of responsibility that I recognize my position of privilege as a middle-class and educated Ladina (*mestiza*). It is my personal and professional goal to contribute towards the empowerment of Guatemalan women and their families through a program of research that responds to their most pressing needs. My familiarity with community members, partners, and target settings also facilitated my entry into the community, as well as my ability to navigate the politics of this particular context. My personal and professional knowledge as an insider regarding the Latino and Guatemalan cultures also helped me to inform my interpretation and analysis of data.

I also recognize the fact that I was an outsider to the local community as I have lived in the US for the last seven years of my life. Further, in-depth discussions with my mentors, clinic supervisors and research team members, allowed me to examine my own biases and recognize my limitations based on the fact that I am an educated, middle-class, heterosexual, married Ladina, who has temporarily migrated to the US. My understanding of local conflict and community dynamics is not likely to be completely accurate based on the various changes that Guatemala has experienced in recent years. In terms of personal experiences, I have yet to experience motherhood, limiting my capacity to fully understand highly relevant experiences associated with being a mother. I am also influenced by my personal experience growing up in a Ladino family with both parents and seven older siblings.

CHAPTER 4: RESULTS

The main objective of this investigation was to understand the life experiences of participants as women and mothers in the context of Guatemala. A grounded theory approach was implemented in order to develop an ecological framework of the participants' most relevant life and parenting experiences. The resulting grounded theory is integrated by three major themes: (a) *Ser mujer* (Being a woman), (b) *Ser madre* (Being a mother), and (c) *Mis necesidades como madre* (My parenting needs). The fully described grounded theory is illustrated in Figure 4.1. Given the complexity of the interrelated categories and sub-categories, an additional figure (figure 4.2) and table (table 4.1) are included in order to illustrate the most salient elements for each major theme.

Data provided by participants illustrate the complexity of their lives. Personal strengths and testimonies of resilience are identified in their personal accounts as women and mothers. Social support networks, spirituality, as well as cultural values and traditions constitute essential resources in their lives. In contrast, mothers also reported intense challenges which primarily refer to their status as women in the Guatemalan society, and pervasive structural violence cutting across several areas of their lives (e.g., couple relationship, neighborhood, work).

In addition to reflecting on personal strengths, resources, and challenges, women also expressed specific parenting needs (see table 4.1). Expressed needs by mothers refer to resources that participants considered helpful to improve their childrearing skills, which included their desire to participate in future community-based programs aimed at supporting their parenting efforts. Specifically, they reported a strong interest to participate in a *escuela*

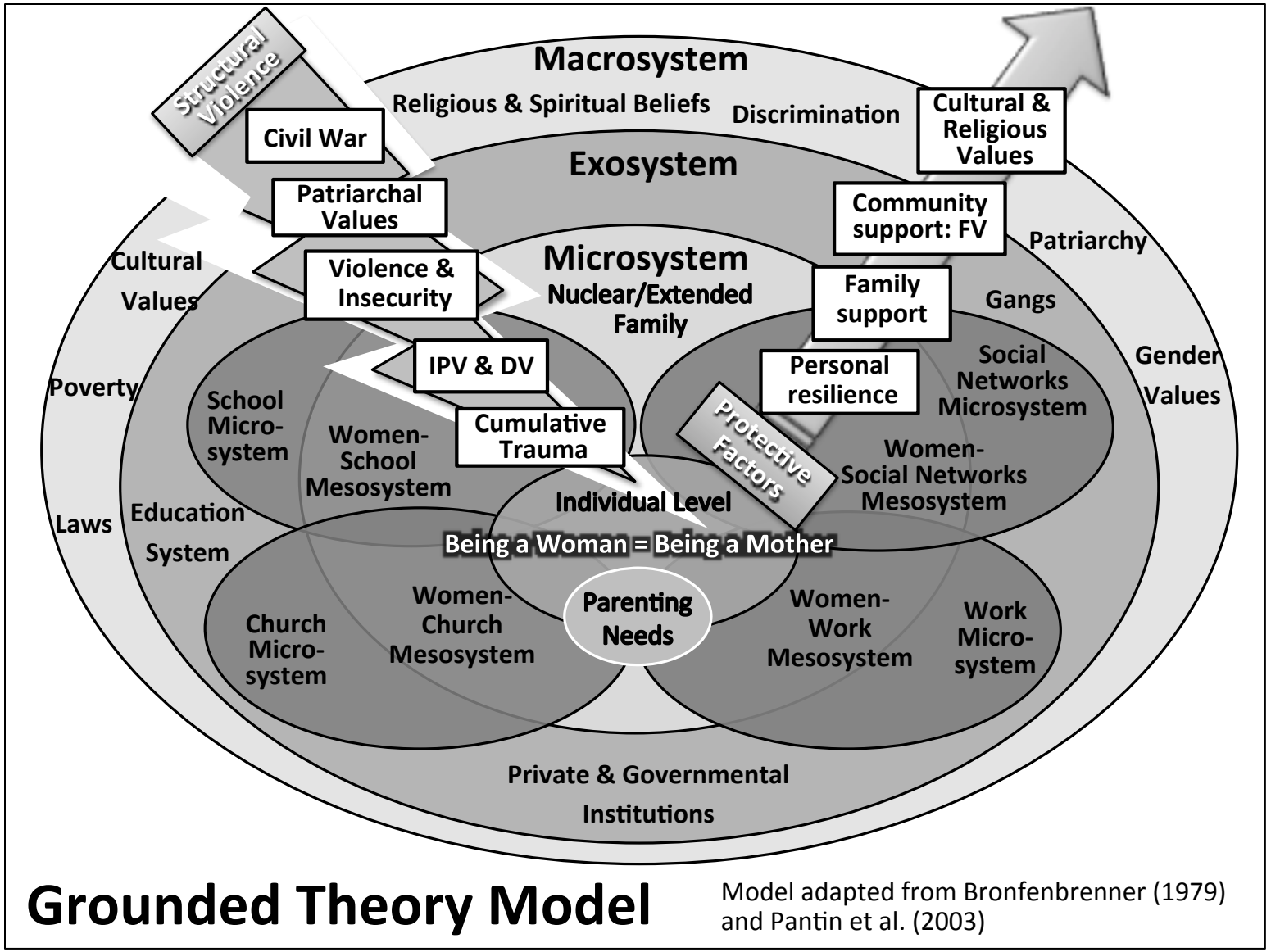
para madres (parenting school). Finally, mothers highlighted the relevance of engaging fathers in these programs whenever possible.

The grounded theory model (see graphic 4.1) is organized according to the most relevant life and parenting experiences reported by women, with individual themes representing the various eco-developmental levels of the ecological framework. At the center of the theory is the individual as a woman and mother because participants' accounts consistently recognized these two identities as deeply interconnected. Structural violence is identified as a salient phenomenon cutting across all areas of participants' lives, ranging from intimate partner violence (IPV) to violence resulting from oppressive socio-economic systems. Additional expressions of structural violence refer to unequal distribution of resources (e.g., poverty), insecurity in the community (e.g., gangs), violent social relations (e.g., racism and discrimination), and IPV. The elements integrating structural violence as they impact all dimensions of participants' lives are depicted in figure 4.1. However, in the face of this structural violence, women provided clear testimonies of personal resilience and agency, closely related to community and cultural factors. For example, women have adapted to the reality of violence by embracing resilient behaviors, such as becoming financially independent, utilizing or receiving support from social networks, or adapting to IPV by considering key contextual issues (e.g., assessing the risk of lethality before challenging the abuser).

A unique element of the proposed theory refers to the key role that community-based organizations can have in the lives of women exposed to intense adversity. Specifically, the model depicts how Futuro Vivo is a community-based organization that has a direct impact in the lives of participants as it offers an array of critical supports that would otherwise be

unattainable to women in this study (e.g., education, nutrition, medical services). Cultural and spiritual values were also identified as central components of the model, in addition to specific protective factors (e.g., family support). Similarly to structural violence, protective factors deeply impact all the areas in women's lives as depicted in the graphic model. Finally, it is important to note that the graphic dimensions of structural violence in the model are more prominent compared to protective factors based on level of adversity reported by participants. Thus, although essential in women's lives, protective factors are at constant risk of being reduced or even eliminated based on the frequency and intensity of multiple forms of violence experienced by research participants.

Figure 4.1. Grounded Theory of participants as women and mothers in the context of Guatemala.



Findings of Research Question A: Women's Life Experiences in Guatemala

The first research question focused on the participants' life experiences as women in the context of Guatemala. To clarify, although results related to participants' experiences as women and as mothers are separated in this report, the original data were highly interrelated across themes. Furthermore, findings are presented according to the eco-systemic levels of the human ecology theory (Bronfenbrenner, 1977; 1986), as well as risk and protective factors frameworks (Fagan et al., 2007; Reiss & Price, 1996).

Ser Mujer (Being a Woman)

Microsystem Risk Factors. Women described detrimental aspects related to their life stories, family, and intimate relationships. These experiences occurred within contexts of intense adversity and trauma.

Individual-level Risk Factors

History of cumulative trauma and adversity. The majority of women in this study reported common stories of cumulative trauma and considerable adversity including child abuse and neglect, death and loss of loved-ones, and witnessing and/or experiencing intimate partner violence (IPV). Some women also reported experiences of abortions and trauma resulting from the civil war. For example, a woman shared her intense experiences of loss and mental anguish:

> **(M3G4):** Sometimes you get sick from your nerves, your worries. You try not to think too much about the sorrows you have. In my case, I also lost my mother. She died. My brother was pushed and fell down the ravine and he was disabled for a year. A little later my father was gone. All three of them... And one is left like you are sick in your head because the problems come one after the other. What you must always do is to ask God for a lot of strength, because if you don't, sometimes you really don't know what you are doing, sometimes is like you lose your mind. You say to yourself, "What can I do? What will happen next?" Because, aside from everything, there's the living expenses you have to cover. Those are experiences that stay in your mind. So it's a little hard too.

This participant reflected on the harsh working conditions her mother endured:

(M6G4): My mother tells me that she felt as if she was living in hell. She said this because every single day, even if it was pouring rain, she had to work out in the field. She had to carry wood in her head, rain or no rain; she also had to pasture cows. People there don't tell you, "Look, it's raining, stay inside." No. You only get paid if you work, if not, there's no money. So it's hard.

The following mother told her story about the way she was pressured by her family to have a clandestine abortion when she got pregnant at the age of 15:

(M3G4): I suffered because of my sisters. They turned their backs against me when I became a pregnant teen. They said I would start having baby after baby. One of my sisters said, "Why don't you have an abortion? Go and have one." So I went to have an abortion when I was four months pregnant. They took me to this lady and she started touching me down there [in the genitals]… I was laying there on my back and my tears were rolling down. Then, I felt my baby's heartbeat and I said, "God, forgive me. I cannot do this. What I have inside me is mine." I said, "No. My child is going to be born, wherever that is. Even if it's in a dumpster, but I will have it."

A woman shared the challenges she faced being raised in a context of poverty and neglect:

(M3G2): For me it has been very hard because we were left by ourselves, only with my mom. My mom had to go out and work. During our childhood we had to grow up in a disorganized life. When mom and dad aren't around you grow up like a little animal, who has nobody to look after you, nobody to tell you "go this way" or something. And my dad suffered from alcoholism all the time. My mom worked so that she could feed us. We were eight children left to her care. Each of us took on a different type of life and it has been a struggle because now that we are adults, we wish we had had somebody to guide us, to give us advice.

A few participants also reported experiences of trauma resulting from war. This woman described how she endured the loss of her father and how painful this period of her life was:

(M7G5): I was six years old during wartime. My father died but we don't know how he died. We never found his body. At that time people would take [abduct] any person. Many women were left [widow] without their husbands and with many children to look after. My father used to travel [from a distant village] to the capital city to sell produce. He would return every two weeks to bring us food to eat. One day he stopped coming, like he stopped existing. It affected us so much. My mother started working. As children we weren't used to staying home alone. The money earned by my mother was not enough for us six children. Then we had to eat only one and a half tortilla. My mother used to say "God will help us… because I can't…." She cried so much (*participant crying*).

The same participant further elaborated on having to work to provide food for her siblings, an experience shared by several mothers in this study. Her testimony also reflects the nature of cumulative trauma reported by other women in the group:

> **(M7G5):** I started working as a domestic worker [maid] when I was seven or eight years old. I went to work with a person that had six male children. I did it because I had to. They took advantage of me. They were going to rape me because I was a little girl. I didn't know how to speak Spanish. I told my employer what happened, that the two boys grabbed me and I started screaming because I didn't want them to hurt me. She said to me, "Those are all lies. They wouldn't harm anybody." She didn't pay attention to what happened to me. Then, the father of the boys came and told me, I don't know if he was joking, but he said, "If you are going to tell your mother about this… I was the one who made your father disappear. I killed him." I don't know if this was a lie. Out of fear of him killing my mother, I didn't say anything about what happened to me. A little after I left from there.

Feeling disempowered. Participants described numerous experiences in which they felt powerless. For example, women reported suffering from depression, suicidal thoughts, intense hopelessness and despair, low self-esteem, and isolation.

One participant described a period of her life when she contemplated suicide, resulting from a profound sense of despair as a mother of four children, two of them with chronic illnesses:

> **(M5G1):** There are days in which one says, "No more"… That happened to me once. I received a call from the school that my daughter had fainted, and I was like a crazy woman. I was on my way there when I walked across the overpass and I said, "What would it feel like to throw myself down?" And in that moment I reacted and said, "You are stupid. I have my children, and my daughter is sick at the hospital." What has been so hard for me is the fact that two of my children are sick all the time. My little girl suffers a heart condition, and part of her brain is sick. And my boy, ever since he was a baby up until now that he is three, has suffered from seizures… and thank to God, here I am.

Another participant reflected on her experience with depression:

> **(M5G5):** My major problem is that I suffer depression. When I start feeling bad and start crying and getting depressed, is horrible. And there are many times when you think that you don't want to be here anymore. Then you remember what you treasure the most and who needs you. So you continue to live and survive whatever you have to face for your children, more than anything.

Family-level Risk Factors

Family-of-origin legacies. Women shared painful stories about their families of origin, and described how these experiences have affected them. These challenges referred to their own families but also to their partners' families. For example, participants talked about strong gender role expectations that are transmitted across generations. A woman addressed her struggle with rigid gender role expectations in her couple relationship:

> **(M3G2):** My mother-in-law used to say to my husband, whenever he got home, "My son, you're here. Here is your hot coffee, here is your dinner." When we got married he would say to me, "If I come here at 5 pm, that's when I want my hot coffee served at the table." I would say to him, "You married a woman, not a maid. So you'll have to get used to that. I eat at 7 or 8 pm. If not, you'll have to help me. I'm not going to do it all by myself." He started adjusting, but it was hard for him because he wasn't used to it. My mother-in-law came one day and told him, "What is it with you? Is this why you looked for a wife? To be the one picking and cleaning everything up?" He would tell me this and I would say to him "Look, the day I'm bedridden I'm not going to be able to stand up and fix food for you. This is the harm that your mother has done to you. If your mom had taught you to cook you wouldn't be depending on a woman. You could get things done in a moment without complications." Then he goes, "Ok, let's see when we can prepare something together." Now he cooks, he cleans up, and washes dishes. Those are things you need to teach your children.

Family as a source of stress and conflict. Participants talked about the deleterious effects their families can have in their everyday lives. One woman described how she was forced to live in a toxic home environment, particularly as it refers to gender discrimination:

> **(M3G4):** I feel that my mother and my brothers discriminate my daughters a lot. They tell my oldest son, "Here, take this money for your bus ticket. Here, buy yourself something nice." They don't do this for my daughters. My son is my child as much as my daughters are too. I would like for them [family of origin] to be fair… if they are going to give money to my son, they should also give money to my daughters… I don't like them to treat my daughters as inferior.

Another woman talked about how her own mother started drinking after becoming a widow and realizing she had to care for her and her five siblings:

> **(M7G5):** My mom started drinking because she felt desperate. I would tell her, "we don't have any money and you are drinking!" Sometimes she would stay there lying

down, drunk on the floor. My mother would say, "[becoming a widow] It affected me so much…" She didn't used to drink like that.

Couple-level risk factors

Dealing with machismo. The great majority of women in the group shared their experiences with *machista* partners and husbands, which refer to men holding rigid gender role expectations and having abusive behaviors. Whereas some women chose to challenge their partners, others reported that the safest option was to tolerate their *machista* behaviors. Machismo was described in different ways including infidelity, gender-imbalance, and intimate partner violence (IPV).

One woman elaborated on the issue of experiencing machismo:

> **(M4G1):** The man is *machista* (macho). Mine is very *machista*. But I do not let him abuse me. You know why? Because I only have one father and one mother. In the first place, I do not have two fathers... At first I suffered. Whenever I wouldn't obey him, he would throw over me the things I was carrying in my hands. But I always promised to myself to not obey him in everything he would demand because it is humiliating. Humiliations are very hard and sad for me. He says to me, "Have you forgiven me?" You forgive with words, but not with your heart.

Infidelity. Several women shared in the group about their painful experiences with unfaithful partners, relating that their own partners would blame them for their infidelity. Women also stated receiving judgmental reactions and criticism from other women, making the experience more hurtful. Two participants reflected about these painful challenges:

> **(M4G4):** I used to see *compañeras* (fellows) that would cry because they were being cheated on, and their partners were beating them. And now that is happening to me. My husband is cheating on me. But he doesn't have the courage to tell me in my face, "I have another person." As a woman it hurts, but you have to love yourself and not humiliate yourself. If I humiliate myself that means I do not love myself. I feel admiration for how one woman can encourage another or say to her, "Look, love yourself, don't cry" or "that person doesn't deserve your tears." Those are words that make your self-esteem grow. But if you are going to let yourself be guided by a person whose self-esteem is low, it will lower your self-esteem even more. It is not helpful to you if you are told, "Maybe it's because you are fat. Or maybe is because you don't look after him".

This participant described the needs other women have for staying with an unfaithful and abusive partner:

> **(M5G3):** Male partners say you cannot make it without them, but you can if you put your mind into it. But there are many women who get depressed because of this and they get sick. They say, "I can't". They do need their male partner, but not because of this [need] one has to put up with insults, beatings, infidelities and even hunger.

Infidelity also led to profound disadvantage and loss of resources for women, particularly if the unfaithful partner left without fulfilling parenting obligations, as one participant (M6G1) expressed, "Sometimes what men do is to look for another person and they leave. Then all the responsibility with your children is yours."

In other cases infidelity had an intergenerational component. This participant talked about growing up abandoned by an abusive and unfaithful father:

> **(M4G2):** Since the age of eight I was without my father. My father left us for another women, but even today I think that I never missed him because he used to hit my mom all the time. So I said, "It's better for her to be by herself than being beaten." And now that I am older I think that I don't really miss him.

The following participant shared a similar struggle:

> **(M6G1):** At that time I didn't know where my mother was. My father used to take different women to our home. Then he went away and I was left there, more lonely than ever. I didn't have any food for my little siblings. My older brother started drinking and hitting my siblings and me. Then my mother returned with a new man. I blame my mom for everything that happened.

Gender imbalance: "Being a woman, the entire burden is on you." The majority of participants highlighted the existence of gender and power imbalances in their lives, particularly as they refer to unequal distribution of housework, childrearing activities, lack of support from partners, and financial abuse from their partners. A participant talked about feeling devalued as a woman with regard to these issues:

> **(G1M3):** As women we carry most of the responsibility. The man goes out to work and all the responsibility is left to us. For us as women is difficult because nowadays men step aside from everything. As women we are the sufferers. Because men say, "I go out and

win the daily bread". But we are breadwinners too. The responsibility is greater for us than it is for men. I feel everything is on us. I say to myself, "I have to do everything. Everything is on me". But I say to myself, "If I'm not there, then who?" It has to be us.

One mother further addressed the multiple challenges and roles women have:

(M3G5): For the majority, being a woman it is the hardest job we have… Everything is relegated to us, we have to do everything, including having children. That is a stage that men are never going to experience themselves. The fact that giving birth it is such a great pain... I had my children through a cesarean, but it is still so very hard. Psychologically you end up bad when you see part of your body all cut up, and having to bleed, for me it was very depressing. I got depressed because of that. And men, I feel like they are just very calm at their house… well, it is true that they get concerned and everything. But the fact of being a woman is that the entire burden is on you… Being a wife is also about splitting yourself up when it comes to having children, your marriage, helping your husband, going to work, and returning home to do the same again. Sometimes I feel like I am going to explode. Why is it only me? Husbands just go out and work all day and they just come home to lie down.

The two following participants further elaborated on the issue of gender imbalance:

(M4G5): Sometimes it becomes a little difficult because we feel the entire burden on us as women. We feel responsible for everything, even for our husbands too. Sometimes is like having one more child who we have to feed and tend to, like if they were our children too.

(M5G3): Sometimes you are intimidated at your own home, you are insulted because you are told, "You are useless!" But we as women are useful because we give birth to children. Only God can give you the strength for giving birth. I feel that a man wouldn't endure a situation like that. When you give birth to a child you lose part of your life. God gives you the strength to be there for everything: for the home, for working outside home, to tend to them [partners]. Because they just show up and are like, "Well, I want my food." They are demanding, "Serve me, now!" You know that he is going to come and you have to have his food ready, so as soon as he sits down at the table you serve the food. As a woman, one has advantages and disadvantages. Only God is the one who helps you to bear, to be determined, for your own children. My partner was so machista. He used to say, "Well, it's going to be done the way I say and that's it."

House management and gender. Participants reflected on the intersection between house management and gender. Although some women expressed the positive aspects of dual-earner families, several women reported not feeling valued or recognized by their partners. In other situations, women earning an income reported abuse from their partners by men taking away their

income. Women also complained that men do not know how to manage money at home. One mother reflected on these challenges:

> **(M4G1):** When I had my third child, my husband prohibited me from working. As a woman, you earn so little and when you pay for childcare you end up with nothing. Well, then I decided to start my sales from home. My husband started complaining. I said to him, "If you are going to give me the extra money I earn, I will gladly take it and stop going out and will stay at home." He would tell me "No." Ah, but when they see that you make enough money, they want to take it away from you. That happened to me. I was earning a bi-weekly salary, Q200 *quetzales*[3] (about $25), and working nights, sometimes until 10 at night. Then, my husband said, "Because you are working and earning money then I will take it from you. I will give you less living expenses money." I said, "No. What I earn is mine. And you have to give me what is for your children if you want. Now, if you don't want to, then keep your children and I will earn my own money for myself, because I come first."

A woman shared about the inability some men have about handling money:

> **(M4G1):** If men give you money they 'go broke' because money is not enough for them. They don't analyze that. They don't value us as women. I wish there was a talk for them where they can learn to appreciate us and what we have. So they can understand our value. For me it has been very hard.

This woman stated how some men, as the main earners, feel entitled to dominate them:

> **(M5G4):** We are discriminated against as women. Men think that you are not going to manage without them. Men think that, "ah, because I am giving her money I can do whatever I want. She is not going to get a job".

Intimate partner violence (IPV). IPV is a particularly deleterious, hurtful, and damaging experience reported by women. Participants reflected on a number of IPV issues including the nature of the abuse, the intensity, and their coping strategies. According to them, IPV is widespread, justified by society, and even culturally expected. Due to this complexity, women also reflected on how hard it is to leave these relationships.

[3] "*Quetzales*" (Q) is the name of the Guatemalan currency. The current exchange rate for US dollars oscillates between Q7.75 and Q8 per US dollar.

When leaving is not an option: Entre la espada y la pared (With her back against the wall). Women identified specific barriers when trying to leave an abusive relationship. For example, they expressed 'feeling trapped' and in fear of the dire consequences for them if they were to leave their abusive partners. A young participant with a small child reflected on these challenges, which were considerably aggravated by the fact that her husband was a "*marero*" (a gang member):

> (**M2G1):** My grandmother… she died (*crying*). She was the only one who would come to my defense. That is why it hurt me so bad when she died, because my little girl would scream, "Grandma! Grandma!" and she [grandmother] would come running to defend me. Now, nobody comes. My mother doesn't live here… One time, my partner put a machete on my forehead and said he was going to kill me. There I was, lying on the floor, covered in blood. My little girl screaming… And now she is five years old, but when that happened she was two. She still remembers. He has even tried to hit my little girl, as he would say to her "Shut up you little brat!" I have this resentment inside me… I wish that he would receive help… Once I tried to leave him and go to my mom's, and he said, "I will grab you by the hair and pull you out and drag you from there." He hit my little girl because she said to him, "Daddy, don't hit my mommy! Don't hit her!" she said to him. "Butt out! Shut up!" he said and then he… (*paused*) he kicked her very hard. The next day she told me, "Mommy, my waist hurts so much." My little girl is really traumatized. She only wants to be with me. She won't stay alone with him. If I go to the store, she comes with me. When I want to go out, he locks the door, "You are not getting out of here you slut, you bitch" he tells me all the time. He locks me in. He wont let me out.

Upon hearing this testimony during the group interview, I witnessed a strong collective reaction from group members, which reflected a sense of impotence towards this situation. This resulted from the realization that, as a member of a violent and lethal gang, her partner could hurt or kill anyone attempting to offer her help. One mother (M5G1) expressed with a sense of despair, "What happens is that one cannot intervene because it is a very serious issue there… one cannot intervene."

"Qué tanto aguantamos" (How much we can stand). Several women reported their endurance towards abusive partners and explained their reasons to stay in the abusive relationship and how they were managing, as one woman affirmed:

(M3G4): The way we are taught at our home has a great influence. If we are mistreated at our homes, we are going to get used to being mistreated. As women we have to evaluate how much we can tolerate a partner. The influence from our own home has a lot to do with it. But we have to see that if at our home we weren't taught how to defend ourselves… Well, we will defend ourselves in our own way. Sometimes our rights[4] do not support us, they do not see it the way it is. We have to be capable of evaluating ourselves to see how much we can tolerate and how much we can't. Because from our point of view we might start thinking about leaving him… And other people take it differently. They tell us to leave him or take our selves out of the situation. If we get used to being abused or mistreated, we are always going to be there. On the other hand, if we try to take ourselves out of the problem in which we are, maybe our life will change. Life for women is the hardest one, for quite a lot.

In contrast, another mother shared the moment when she shifted from tolerance to action:

(M6G1): One time I said, "No, I cannot continue to let him abuse me" so I grabbed the glass jar from the blender and I threw it at him. If I were to continue letting him abuse me… who knows how I would end up. You have to defend yourself. One has rights too.

Women dealing with partners who abuse alcohol. Several women in the group addressed the issue of alcohol abuse from their partners. Their comments focused on the nature of the problem, community views on the issue, their attempts to help partners overcome abuse and dependence, and how women were forced to tolerate the situation. A particular concern for mothers refers to adverse effects for children. One participant stated:

(M2G1): We talk to them [partners] about how we want what is best for the children but they prefer the vice, drinking, and don't spend any time with the children. I think that's bad. I don't want to give children that example. As a mother, I talk to my children about what is good for them, so that they take that with them. I feel so resentful towards him, what he does to me, to my children. He mistreats them. I wish he were closer to them. I have to deal with them by myself.

A participant further reflected about the negative patterns that her child is learning from his father when he sees him drunk:

(M2G1): He comes home drunk and my son is taking it all in. My boy starts imitating his drunken gestures. He tells me, "Look mom, this is how my father comes home" and he starts imitating him. I tell him, "Son, I am asking you not to… (*participant pauses*

[4] Possibly referring to the written laws or rights (*derechos*, in Spanish).

containing her tears) I don't want you all to do that." I want to join a [support] group. I don't want them to repeat that.

Another mother talked about her reasons for staying with an alcoholic partner:

(M6G1): Who is going to put up with him? [an alcoholic partner]. They think that some other woman in the street is going to tolerate them… That is not true! Me, yes, maybe because of the love from so many years, the children we've had. Maybe a woman does not endure it for the man, but for our children, to fight for our children.

This same participant reflected about the way in which men are in need of women's help to overcome their addiction problems, and her willingness to make sacrifices in order to help him:

(M6G1): My husband told me, "What I am doing is wrong and I am going to stop. But I need your help"… Men need our help as women. They need it! My husband sat down with me and told me, "I need you to support me. I need you to be with me." Quitting drinking is hard. Once they start drinking Saturday and Sunday, it is hard for them to stop. I put up with him for one year. He was so angry all the time. It is something we have suffered. I have suffered… It is hard, but if you want to achieve something good, you also have to suffer, fight for it.

Women also reported how partners' alcohol abuse exacerbates IPV:

(M2G4): My husband grew up with his father who was a drunk and used to hit my mother-in-law. My husband has not hurt me physically, but psychologically. He won't let me go out, dress up, or let me buy new clothes. He treats me badly. When he drinks he is very abusive. I also learned he is with another girl. When he is drunk, he looks for her. When he returns he retaliates against me. I look at him with hate in my eyes for everything he's done to me and continue to do.

Mesosystem Risk Factors

Participants identified risk factors associated with the interaction of relevant microsystems in their lives. The most salient risk factors at the meso-level referred to the impact of immediate social, community, and work networks.

Women's immediate community. Women reported adverse social dynamics including feeling isolated and rejected by community members, as one participant said:

(M2G3): When we first moved to this community, we were forming in the line to get water from the community fountain. People in the line would say out loud, "What are these outsiders doing here? We worked here for building the community fountain and

never did we think for whom we were working for." I went away crying because people were mean. For me it was a terrible experience.

Women's work. Participants who work outside their homes reported facing experiences of discrimination and abuse, as well as lack of opportunities. They also talked about the challenges and costs of working outside their homes, including negative interactions with employers. Women who work as maids and caretakers also reported challenges resulting from negative interpersonal dynamics with the family members for whom they work. Furthermore, women often mentioned the barriers set by their male partners regarding their efforts to seek and maintain external sources of income. A mother reflected on the gender-based discrimination that she endured from a female employer:

> **(M2G5):** My boss died and his daughter took his place. I realized that she was different with us women, as compared to how she was with men. For example, she said she did not believe in the International Women's Day, she would say, "Why feminism?" It didn't make sense to her. I would notice how she behaved with other women at work. That was one of the reasons why I left my job, because in my job the treatment was different for men as compared to women.

A participant further reflected on the challenges she experienced when looking for jobs based on her limited educational background and low SES:

> **(M3G5):** I only have a high school diploma. I don't look for high-pay jobs because I can't. I look for normal-type of jobs, I take whatever I can get… working as a housemaid… I have worked at a bookshop. But there are always people that are dismissive to you. And maybe that is why I would last so little on a job, because I would talk back to my bosses. That's the way I am. And I didn't talk back to them in a disrespectful way. I was simply not in agreement with what they were saying to me.

One participant shared the struggles she experienced resulting from age discrimination:

> **(M2G5):** I am 32 years old, and in a job position at a bank they only accept you until you are 29 years old. So, when you are turning in your job application and there is no response, you say, "They never call me back. That is weird, I turned in everything they asked for." Then I saw the newspaper, in the employment section, it said they only accepted you until certain age. That happens at many jobs. There are other jobs in which your age is not an issue, but the salary is so much lower. Employers are always going to do what's convenient to them. They fire someone and hire somebody else with a lower salary or with no benefits. Most companies are like that.

Several women reported working on domestic services, which included a wide-range of activities such as washing clothes by hand, cleaning, cooking, providing childcare, running errands, etc. Several participants related negative experiences in these work environments, as one Mayan woman who migrated from a rural area, said:

> **(M6G5):** I came to the capital city without knowing how to read or write. I worked as a live-in maid for six or seven consecutive months, without going outside because I couldn't… I didn't know where to go out in the city. I didn't know the streets. Sometimes people take advantage of you because I had to work from Sunday to Sunday. I wasn't at fault, I came from the village (rural area) and people here in the city see you as very shy and naive. I didn't even know how to speak Spanish. Until I came here I was able to learn Spanish.

Another live-in maid participant explained the abuse she endured at her workplace:

> **(M6G4):** I am happy working for my female employer, even though I don't have a lot of spare time and don't earn that much. But I'm not happy with my employer's mother. She is 76 years old. She doesn't want my two children there. When I am not around, she says to my children, "Back off!" "Don't be like that" "I want children out of my sight!" My little girl just steps aside. She is studying here at Futuro Vivo and she tells me, "That is mean." Whenever she is there I just hurry up to finish my cleaning tasks, and I take my daughter away with me. Whenever she [the employer's mother] feels like, she stops talking to me.

This participant shared her indignation about how she feels devalued at her job:

> **(M4G2):** It affects me when people don't value my job, which is cleaning houses. For instance, when I just finish cleaning, they throw or spill things around, so I feel like they don't value my work. I put things in order in one room and when I go back, everything is a mess. I question this because even though they pay me for it, they should value having a nice home, and should value my efforts.

Exosystem Risk Factors

Women reported several detrimental factors associated with their surrounding communities. Although the exposure to these stressors fluctuated and, in some cases, it did not have the frequent impact of those reported in the micro- and meso-system levels, they were nevertheless salient in their lives.

Structural and community violence. When female participants were asked about their experience as women living in Guatemala, the first reactions were deep sighs and silence. After gathering their thoughts, women shared several and dramatic narratives describing the intense challenges women experience in this context. Participants overwhelmingly agreed about the pervasive violence and insecurity in their community, which made them feel extremely vulnerable and exposed. Mothers reported how they pray to God on a daily basis to keep them and their families safe in this dangerous and unpredictable environment. Participants strongly agreed that abductions and death are common and a part of everyday life. Violence and insecurity come in many forms, ranging from lost bullets, assaults, rape, robberies, kidnapping, gang violence, extortion, and public executions. Women reported that their fear prevails even when they are at home. As a result, mothers have also limited their mobility within their own communities and have been forced to develop strategies to increase their safety. One woman (M1G1) summarized the participants' general feeling regarding violence and insecurity, "It is difficult with all the murders and all this violence… We are single mothers, and we have to go out and work… We expose ourselves to the insecurity and violence in the community... That is the difficult part, as a woman."

Women reported that the harmful and lethal effects of structural violence experienced in Guatemala have permeated interpersonal relationships that are central to their lives. For example, one participant talked about an unsolved murder case in which overwhelming evidence indicated that the boyfriend had killed his girlfriend and dismembered her. However, the alleged killer is a gang member from a highly violent gang, and the case was never prosecuted. One participant reflected on this violent death:

> **(M4G4):** The most severe situation Futuro Vivo as a community suffered was the abduction and murder of one of our *compañeras* [female friends], who, unfortunately, was found dismembered. As women, we all prayed for her to turn up back alive. When we

> learned that she died in such a horrible way… as a woman, it hurt me so much. We used to work together, and shared, she was so friendly. We all experienced fear. With this, we are all afraid about crossing to the other side of the community trough the overpass. It's a very dangerous place. You can get robbed and raped. With this uncontrolled violence we all as women are at risk, and children too. We are more vulnerable than men. There are always bad intentions towards women, for raping them, human trafficking… We have to lock ourselves in our homes.

Women repeatedly reported the cases of extortion from youth gang members affecting their community. The extortion is sometimes called "war tax", which business owners have to pay to gang members in order to avoid being robbed or killed. The following participant expressed her feelings after reflecting on the dangers associated with opening a small business.

> **(M5G5):** Many gang members want to make a living out of other people's money. You cannot even run a business. I wish I could open a stationary shop, something small to help myself now that I am not employed. But that would be dangerous. There are too many extortions going on. This was a quiet place a few years ago. But with time, it has become like any other place. We live day by day, asking God for everything to go well, trying to survive each day without any bad news. Even a person at home watching TV can receive a lost bullet and get killed. We live in this uncertainty.

Women provided several accounts of their restricted physical mobility and lack of freedom. The two following participants reported:

> **(M6G5):** I feel afraid about going downtown with my grandchildren. When I need to go somewhere, I can't. I'm fearful they will take away my grandchildren. You go out in the street and you fear that you're going to be robbed or that something bad is going to happen to you. Here in our community we hear so much about it, so much evil. That's why you're scared about leaving home.

> **(M5G4):** Before, it was fairly safe here in the community. But it is not the same anymore. There are many things that happen on the street. Where I live, there is an overpass and frequently, around eleven or ten at night, you can hear shootings. You cannot go out at that time. Maybe you have an urgent errand to run, and you are forced to go out… But it is very scary to go out.

Women talked specifically about the violence generated by gangs and the violence directed towards women:

> **(M3G2):** One doesn't feel safe anymore. You go out to the store and with the gangs you don't know if at any given time they are going to pass by shooting or something. Maybe you are out buying bread for your dinner and you get killed, or they hurt women. The

> majority of women that have died, have been raped and strangled. There is no respect for women's lives. You don't feel calm in any way. You go out in fear of everything. Not being sure if you will go back home. Knowing that somebody is waiting for you at home and not knowing whether you'll return, that is insecurity. The gangs don't see the harm they are doing to others, only the money they are going to make from them.

Women expressed feeling as easy targets of violence. They also described the ways by which they attempt to protect themselves, as the following mothers affirmed:

> **(M4G4):** The only way to protect yourself is by not leaving your house. If you know it is dangerous at night, it is better not to go out. Even if there is an emergency, it is better not to go out, and be by yourself at nighttime. Women are easily abducted. You can be taken somewhere else, and then nobody knows where they will leave you for dead. It is better to prevent by not going out at night.

> **(M4G3):** It is very difficult. One goes out to the street fearful of what they can do to you or rob you. The only thing left is to offer ourselves to God, for God to bless us when we go out. It's even worse if you are out with your daughters.

Macrosystem Risk Factors

Research participants provided detailed reflections about the ways in which macro-level factors impact their lives. Examples of these factors refer to specific cultural values and ideologies, institutional barriers to basic services, and legacies of discrimination.

Oppressive cultural values and beliefs. Participants talked about oppressive cultural issues and dynamics commonly embraced by the larger society which perpetuate the status-quo. These cultural values or worldviews pose a risk for women and their families as they become stressors that negatively influence their physical and emotional well-being. For example, women talked about the need for practicing a culture of silence in order to survive. This is a particularly deleterious practice to them as it is promoted by people and groups in positions of power, a pervasive pattern that has been present throughout Guatemalan history. Women referred to a culture of silence by which members of underprivileged groups must not denounce situations of abuse, violence, and injustice. Within this context of impunity and structural violence, women

have learned to remain silent when experiencing violations to their human rights. One woman expressed:

> **(M7G4):** Many neighbors in my village have died, others have disappeared just like that [abducted at wartime]… Some have left, and others were taken away. Just recently, we learned about this because at the time you couldn't tell anybody about it. If they [informants] were listening to you, they would kill you if you were to say anything. My neighbors told me that soldiers would get inside people's houses asking for food and then they would rape women. In the middle of the night, they took the men in their underwear; they would kill them first, throw them to the side, and then take the wives. I try to think about it and I can't, I cannot wrap my head around why that happened.

Another predominant worldview among participants was fatalism. This belief centers on the notion that powerful forces, such as God, fate or destiny, govern one's life. This worldview can be a copying mechanism against adverse circumstances, which are perceived outside individual control or influence. However, it may also reinforce a sense of hopelessness as one participant affirmed:

> **(M5G5):** For me it was hard to get a job cleaning houses. Sometimes people humiliate you. In my first job, the lady would tell me, "I want these diapers white clean." Then, when the stain didn't come out, she grabbed it and throw it to the sink and said, "That shit is not clean. Either I throw it to the trash or you clean it again" she told me in a bad tone. So, sometimes I say, "Well, that's the life of us poor people." I say to myself that if I had education or if my parents had money, I would've studied like everybody else. But I feel OK the way I am. I don't know how to read, only God knows. But God has me here.

Poverty conditions. In a context characterized by severe marginalization and poverty, the majority of women expressed the negative consequences resulting from lack of access to economic stability. Examples of these are extremely limited or no access to basic services, physical health and mental health services, malnutrition, work exploitation, and hunger. These challenges negatively impact the women's ability to secure their own family's well being. One woman reflected on some of these issues:

> **(M6G2):** It affects me to think about my family's living expenses… I always wonder, "Is it going to be enough to pay for school, electricity, water?..." I am concerned all the time. Until the month is over, I don't feel at peace and then I have another month to survive. Everything is more expensive every time you go to the store. You say, "My God, where

am I going to get the money to feed ourselves?" You buy clothes from time to time, but your stomach doesn't wait. So I have to see how am I going to stretch the money I have so that we all can eat.

A couple of participants further discussed the challenges resulting from lacking basic services, such as running and clean water:

> **(M5G2):** In order to have water at home, we have to wake up at 3 in the morning to stand up in line, and carry water from the communal supply. If you don't do this, by the afternoon you barely have any running water at home.

> **(M1G2):** What affects me the most everyday is water. I have many children, and many clothes and dishes to wash. We receive a limited water supply every other day. We need to figure out how to use it best. The important thing is for our children to remain clean.

Another woman shared experiencing starvation, and how she barely survived as a child:

> **(M7G5):** At home, sometimes we ate, sometimes we didn't… until I started to work and earn money. When I was a kid, we used to wake up at two in the morning to leave home and walk two hours to the nearest town, so we could sell our produce. My mother had to carry a load of firewood in her head and another one on her back all the way.

Lack of access to medical services. Women and their families experience dangerous challenges by not having access to medical services. One participant shared about the death of her sister, resulting from lack of access to medical services:

> **(M2G5):** My father abandoned us. He left to the United States. He told my mother he would send money. We were six children, but my little baby sister got very sick. My mom used to say to my dad, "Send us money so we can take the baby to the doctor." He would say, "I will send you the money." Then my sister got sicker. But he never sent the money, and then she died. When I turned eleven years old, I told my mother, "I'm old enough to go and work." She said, "Ok, my daughter, you go." I remember that the Q300 (about $37.50) I earned per month, as a live in maid, was just for my sister's medical bills.

Discrimination towards women. Discrimination is a prominent macrosystemic risk factor for women in Guatemala. Participants expressed their feelings about gender discrimination and the need to rise above it through their spiritual beliefs. One woman reflected on these issues:

> **(M1G3):** It's difficult because we are not valued as women. We are discriminated against, we are considered useless. You can see it in the facts, the discrimination towards women. Here in Guatemala, we repeat the pattern of other countries in which women are not valued. I feel that we have to overcome that, get God involved because he made us

women, and we can't be dominated by that type of treatment. If God made us women, we have to move forward.

A participant further reflected on these issues by discussing how, despite the fact of new opportunities for women, they are drastically diminished by an oppressive context:

> **(M2G5):** In comparison to other years, we as women have better opportunities in some ways but there are always limitations. As women, we are fighters for what we need. What is limiting in this society is that they keep trying to put us down as women... It's a little more of a free country, in comparison to past years, in which they wanted us just to be at home. And we were useful only for that and nothing more. Somehow, they are giving us more opportunities to get educated and other things… As a country, we have changed a little and have but we still have many limitations.

Despite signs of change, one participant discussed how pervasive gender-based discrimination continues to be in the Guatemalan context:

> **(M3G5):** As a woman you are discriminated against, because other men tell your husband, "Wives have to be at home, and men out in the street." You become everybody's talk. Sometimes men say, "Your wife is not in charge of you." I never told anybody, but when I got pregnant, in my mind I would say, "I hope it's a boy" because girls come here to suffer too much. I told this to my husband and he said, "But it is the same for a boy, the same dangers and everything." But I feel that a man is given more respect than a woman. A woman, she cannot wear short skirts. As a woman, I feel that all men think that they have the right to touch [molest] us.

The challenges experienced by being women, are further aggravated by socio-economic discrimination, as one woman affirmed:

> **(M2G5):** I hope for my children to graduate from school, at least for them to have their diploma so they can work, because without a diploma one cannot work. I see other ladies who return home from their work and say to myself, "I wish I had a job like that but I can't" (her voice breaks). I tell my children to continue to study, so that they can be respected as individuals in their work, so that they are not humiliated like we have been. For example, in my job, I make tortillas by hand, but people always humiliate you.

Several participants also addressed experiencing discrimination related to women's physical appearance, as one participant said:

> **(M6G2):** It affects you psychologically. If they think you are fat and they tell you, "She is fat or this and that." First you don't pay attention, but then, you get sick psychologically because they offend you. Those are harsh discriminatory words.

Microsystem Protective Factors

Participants reported important protective factors related to their capacity to overcome challenges, embrace resilience, and the identification and challenge of oppressive gender dynamics.

Individual-level Protective Factors

The following elements refer to personal attributes, which help women in dealing with multiple detrimental influences in their environment.

Feeling grateful for being a woman. The most salient individual-level protective factors reported by women refer to clear expressions of resilience, strong sense of empowerment and self-identity, capacity to reframe adversity, and an extraordinary capacity to overcome contextual challenges. These remarkable strengths can be observed through the sense of pride and gratitude for being a woman expressed by some participants, as one mother affirmed:

> **(M4G4):** What I like about myself is my body. For me, a woman is the most beautiful thing that God created. He granted us the gift of loving and being loved. I am grateful to God for being a woman. We are all beautiful. I say to other ladies, "If you don't call yourself pretty then you aren't going to believe you are pretty."

Gender-awareness: Coping with and resisting machismo: In contrast with narratives of abuse reported by younger women, older participants reported various ways in which they have learned to defend themselves and set limits with abusive husbands. Referring to the powerful expression "*Yo no me dejo*" ("I do not let him abuse me"), women described the ways in which they deal with abusive behaviors from *machista* partners. One mother elaborated on this issue:

> **(M4G1):** My husband started searching for God, and he became Christian. But right now he has left God again. But now, I tell him that I am not going to let him abuse me. I don't even let him raise one hand against me. I don't let myself being abused. That way, I won't give my daughters a bad example. I tell him, "Look, if you come here angry… we'll leave." So, my daughters and I, we leave and go wherever and let him alone to bite himself. And I tell him, "Bite yourself, but we are not going to pay for the broken plates from somewhere else." And that's difficult and hard, but you have to stay firm.

Another mother, not willing to be abused, talked about coping with IPV through the development of awareness. She recognized the damaging and pervasive effects of IPV and how common it has become in her context:

> **(M6G1):** Intrafamilial violence is becoming so common. All men are mistreating women. There are always the beatings, the verbal abuse. My husband has treated me very badly… but I wouldn't let him hit me, though. I am a conscious woman; I don't let him hit me. But just for them to say one word to you, just with that is like they are stabbing you.

One participant talked about confronting her abusive partner, not letting him hit her, and eventually leaving him and becoming the sole breadwinner for her family:

> **(M5G3):** There is too much machismo. One time he wanted to hit me. I faced him and said, "You dare to hit me! I'm not a handless person. At least I have my fingernails." I was shaking. I thought he would hit me and I wouldn't be able to defend myself. When he hit me, I dodged his blow. It passed right by my side. I realized he wasn't joking. I ran out. I was so angry when I said, "Hit me" but I knew I would lose. But I didn't let him hit me, and he never did it again. I said to him "If you hit me, I will leave with the children." He said, "How are you going to support them?" Yes, we are discriminated in our jobs, and it's hard, but you can do it [support children as a single mom].

Family-level Protective Factors

Participants reported protective factors associated with family relationships such as family support in the face of adversity. However, whereas women frequently reported family support, support from partners was the exception rather than the norm.

Family support. Participants described the support received from their nuclear and extended families. Specifically, women reflected on the lessons learned from their parents as their advice informed several of their life decisions. Some participants even expressed remorse for not following their parents' advice, as one mother (M5G1) shared, "That is why your mom warns you, right? That you need to be careful about whom you marry... Years go by, well, ever since I got together with him, since the first day he started mistreating me."

The following participant reflected on how her parents' support was critical in her struggle to overcome her low self-esteem resulting from the IPV she experienced:

(M6G1): For many years I lost my value as a woman. But thank to God and the advice from my mother and father, I was able to recover, and here I am fighting for my children, and for him [husband] too. Because this is a struggle for all of us, to put up with him, tolerating so many things.

Women also reported examples of support from extended family. A woman affirmed:

(M2G5): I am grateful to God because I have my uncles who have never abandoned us (including her mother and siblings). They have been there for us. Recently my grandfather died, then my grandmother, and now one of my aunts is sick. But my uncles have always been there for me, supporting me. They have let me borrow money from their savings so that we (husband and daughter) could build a roof, and they also gave us a little piece of land where to live in. I am grateful that my uncles are good to me, unlike my father who abandoned us.

Supportive partners: No todos los hombres son iguales (Not all men are the same). Only a few participants reported examples of supportive partners. They described them as being present, responsible, appreciative of women's role, caring to their children, and nonviolent. One participant reflected about this issue:

(M3G5): At home, whatever little money I earn is to help my husband, to help us at home. I used to work three days per week and my husband used to tell me, "Wow, you really help me so much." And I said, "But I only give you Q120 each week." "But is a lot, you help me a lot" he used to say.

Another example of a committed partner was expressed by this mother (M2G2), who shared that she attends church regularly with her husband, "Well, we both participate in church [husband and wife]. That helps us to give our children a good example. And blessed be God, up until here, we are doing well."

Few participants reported that their partners became more supportive as a result of sharing household responsibilities, as two women affirmed:

(M4G2): When I gave birth to my first child my husband cooked that whole week. One day at around two in the afternoon he told me, "Oh, no, darling I'm tired. I haven't finished the housework, but I'm tired and I'm going to lie down and rest. Now I am aware about how women work and work, and how we don't value women's work. One believes that because they are at home they spend all day resting." I laughed and said, "See? And with no salary."

> **(M6G4):** Among men there are good men who appreciate their wives. They help them and support them in anything. And there are men who are very bad with their wives. Instead of helping them they make them work harder, they maltreat them or beat them.

Mesosystem Protective Factors

Women reported relevant protective factors at this level. Examples of these include meaningful social support networks and positive relationships with employers who extended benefits to their families.

Women's social support networks. Women shared how vital the support from community members, friends, and extended family is when facing life problems. A mother talked about the social support she received after experiencing the violent death of her only daughter:

> **(M4G5):** Unity with your neighbors is very important. I have gone through very difficult moments. I am trying to find a way to overcome it, to move forward. I don't wish to anyone what has happened to me as a mother. I noticed that unity with my neighbors because everybody supported me. I am grateful to God because people didn't leave me. Even today people visit me, call me. My husband is not with me, but people are. My neighbors, my nieces, my friends from school have visited me, and they've told me, "Be patient, move forward. Now you have a boy that needs you, for whom you have to live. You have to fight and live for him." So it is very good to have communication with friends, neighbors, because at any time you can help out each other.

Positive relationships with employers. Some participants described positive experiences related to receiving support from their employers, particularly as they facilitated resources for their families. Women also reported the benefit of having close relationships with employers, as one woman affirmed:

> **(M5G4):** When I was 12 years old my mother kicked me out from my home. That is why I migrated to Guatemala City. I was an innocent girl. My mother didn't give me any money for food. I suffered so much. Thank God I found a lady to whom I told my problems… She gave me a place to live and I started working for her. She took care of me as if I was her daughter.

Exosystem Protective Factors

Women identified the benefits that Futuro Vivo brings to their lives, as a community program, educational institutional, and critical source for various types of support.

Women at Futuro Vivo (FV). Women repeatedly expressed the critical role that FV plays in their lives, as one mother said:

> **(M4G4):** The nicest thing about sharing here with Futuro Vivo, with all the mothers that I see, we are like family. Each neighborhood sector forms its own group. Each of them supports one another. If we ask for help among women, we all give each other a hand. I see that one mother understands the other. Sometimes women are carrying a very heavy load and here we receive advice. Just the fact of telling us that they love us, or just saying, "*salgamos adelante*" ("let's move ahead")… you feel so relieved. I do my shift at the kitchen at Futuro Vivo, and sometimes I bring problems and my *compañeras* (co-workers) encourage me, they cheer me up. That is what I like about being a woman, I understand women and women understand me. It is like we already went through that and we know how awful it is. Even if I haven't gone through what she is going through, that doesn't mean I am going to ignore it. We all support one another through bad and good times. As mothers we understand what is like to have a child, what is like to experience hardship with diapers, to be waiting for the biweekly payday to buy food, or to be working. You are at work, at home, with the children, and as women we perform more than one role. We are like octopuses because we have hands growing all over. We give affection to anybody. We support any woman.

Women also identified FV staff and religious nuns as a highly important source of support in their lives. For instance, they identified the mental health-oriented workshops provided by FV as making a unique difference in their lives, as several mothers affirmed:

> **(M6G1):** With the help of the [Futuro Vivo] school… If it wasn't for the talks, if it wasn't for the group in which I participate, well, people wouldn't even have the opportunity to communicate with each other, or know that there is help, right? Because one needs it and you won't receive from anywhere else.
>
> **(M3G1):** Yes, that's true.
>
> **(M6G1):** That's what is good about here at Futuro Vivo.
>
> **(M4G1):** Here we have been supported.
>
> **(M6G1):** One learns to share and learn many things that you don't know about.

Women expressed that the interventions from the FV School provide them with the opportunity to reflect on relevant themes (i.e., family-based meetings, home economics, preventive medicine, gender-based education, continuous literacy programs). One mother (M4G2) shared, "It personally helps me when sometimes Futuro Vivo offers topics that give us

value as women. In those talks, you have the right to give your opinion and say what you feel and you experience this with the rest of the women."

Mothers also reflected about the importance of being supported by religious nuns with regards to various family matters. For example, one mother described the occasion in which one of the religious sisters talked to her partner about becoming more involved with his children and supportive of his wife at home:

> **(G1M3):** Here in Futuro Vivo they've achieved for some fathers to get more involved with their children… The FV leaders have sat down to talk to partners. My partner is one of them. They sat down with him, talked to him. Little by little he has started to learn… Not all the way, though, because I still feel that I hold most of the responsibility at home.

Women highlighted the critical role that FV had as a source of support to help them deal with partners abusing alcohol and/or drugs. In the case below, a woman sought help from a FV religious sister (Miss Z.). The sister acted as an advocate in this situation:

> **(M6G1):** My husband was drunk on Saturdays, Sundays, and sometimes Fridays... I really thank God and Miss Z., because she sat down with him and told him, "Look, Ramón[5], this is it. You have to put an end to this because Blanca[6] came to tell me this and this… and she is willing… so, you decide." And thank God he understood…

Macrosystem Protective Factors

Participants identified key protective factors at the macro-level such as cultural values, religious beliefs, and a strong sense of solidarity embraced by women in their communities.

Cultural values and religious beliefs. Participants described cultural and religious beliefs as critical sources of strength. Women provided detailed accounts of how these values are critical for helping them overcoming adversity. Women frequently expressed a sense of gratitude for everything positive in their lives, including their own existence. They constantly identified God

[5] Pseudonyms were used to protect participants' confidentiality.

[6] See previous footnote (#2)

as their source of strength in the midst of challenges. Participants also expressed the value of humility and the importance of hard work and honesty. The following woman captures these sentiments, as she reflected on her spiritual beliefs as a vital source of strength:

> **(M6G5):** Every night my two older children pray with my husband while I take care of the youngest one. He has taught them the Lord's Prayer, and other prayers. He has taught them to pray for others, and be grateful for what he has given us during the day, and to value the things we have. The most important thing is that they have God in their heart, in their mind. If they have God, they will be able to do everything else.

Being grateful. Many participants identified gratefulness as a core value, particularly with regards to feeling and expressing gratitude towards God. The following participant expressed her gratitude for all the good in her life:

> **(M2G2):** God has blessed me in my life as a woman. He has treated me kindly. I haven't gone through so many negative experiences… He has helped me more than anything in my work, in my children's education, in having to work only half time and devote to them the other half of my time. That has helped me so much because I haven't had to accept full time jobs, which would have forced me to leave my children alone at home. Blessed be God, with his help I have been able to know how to raise my children and lead them through a good path.

"Con la ayuda de Dios" (With God's help). Several women identified God as a unique source of strength in the face of adversity. One mother reflected:

> **(M6G1):** God is the only one who loves us. We do not have to depend on anybody but God. He is the only one. He is the one that gives us the peace we need. He gives us everything. For me is like, if God is giving me the chance, he can give to everybody the chance to succeed, to move forward. He is holding our hand. He has chosen us because we are all his children. He doesn't care about religions. He is the one that suffers because of our needs. If not, he wouldn't give us the opportunity or the privilege to wake up alive. For me, God is first. He is the one who has given me the opportunity to live all these years.

In addition to embracing a strong sense of spirituality, women uniformly emphasized the importance of work ethics, as one mother said:

> **(M3G5):** I don't feel offended to work on cleaning other people's homes. There are people who don't like domestic work. They don't think it's right, but I do. A job is a job, whatever it is. Every job is decent, even if you are cleaning other people's homes, because you are earning your salary in an honest way.

Solidarity: Helping others. A critical cultural value reported by women referred to a strong sense of solidarity embraced by Guatemalans, especially women. Participants focused on describing this value as how they embrace it, as the following mothers stated:

> **(M4G2):** I feel my value as a woman when I behave positively. I feel good helping people, doing favors to them. I give and then the person receives it from their heart too, without any interest. I feel that my behavior is good. I don't care what others say. I feel good about what I am doing for the person, and when I speak the truth. This is what makes me feel good, doing good to other people.

> **(M5G2):** I try to help and if I can't, I try to get another person who has the possibility to help this other person. And for a person who feels confused, I talk to them so that the person can sort out things in their life. There are many people who need to talk with somebody and cannot find somebody to trust. So I try to compensate that by calming a little bit that person's sorrow.

> **(M6G2):** We are all women, we all have different experiences but we have to value ourselves as women. We are never happy for the other person's problem, but we always share our experience and help each other as women and mothers that we are.

Findings of Research Question B: Common Parenting Experiences and Challenges

The second research question focused on the participants' most relevant childrearing practices. This topic was explored by giving attention to the ways in which the mothers' parenting practices are informed by cultural, religious and spiritual values, as well as their context. For the purposes of this research, parenting practices refer to specific behaviors, attitudes, beliefs, and moral standards reported by participants in their role as mothers. Furthermore, women also addressed the expectations and hopes they have for their children. Lastly, they reflected on the role that they consider their male partners should have as fathers and spouses.

Ser Madre (Being a Mother)

Participants' maternal identity is deeply ingrained in their self-concept as women. In fact, the participants' narratives integrated their life experiences as mothers and women, rather than separating these two domains of experience.

Microsystem Risk Factors

Mothers reported disadvantageous experiences that negatively affected their parental role, particularly as they refer to the personal challenges associated with motherhood.

Individual-level Risk Factors

The majority of women reflected about the suffering associated with being a mother, particularly as it refers to the harsh contextual adversity that they experience at multiple levels. A participant elaborated on these issues:

> **(M4G5):** A mother suffers. She stars suffering from the moment your period stops… with pains, nausea, and sickness when pregnancy starts. From that moment on, as a woman, one starts suffering for your children. You give birth to your children, either cesarean or natural birth is very hard for you. You end in pain, exhausted.

Another mother referred to other sacrifices and suffering she has endured as a mother:

> **(M4G3):** One day my son said, "I don't want to go to school." Three years paying more than Q1,000 each month at a private school, all gone to waste. Breaking my soul in order to help him get ahead. The first day at home my son laid on the couch and watched TV. The second day at home I said, "I bought the newspaper (the job section). We need to get your work papers and background check." "Are you going to make me work?" [Son asked] "Well, yes! I won't live forever. You will get married and I'm not going to support your family. Right now you can hate me, and curse all you want. Tomorrow you'll thank me." The first day of his job he left early in the morning. I was left there crying because I wanted him to study instead. I prayed to God to take care of my son. He learned to work. I cried and said to myself, "I must be strong. He has to work because it's the best for him. He has to learn to be a good man." So in order for my son to be who he is today, I cried blood tears, I experienced hunger, cold, and you have no idea how much I cried. But if I had not done that, today he would be a gang member, a slacker, a drunk, or a thief.

Family-level Risk Factors

Destructive family legacies. Mothers described in depth damaging legacies from their families of origin or their partners' families. The following mother stated:

> **(M7G4):** My mother-in-law discriminated against my daughter. She said to me, "Don't be such a lazy woman. Here, I'll give you money so you can feed that girl. Look at that child, her feet are crippled. She's dumb." She used to compare my daughter, who has brown skin with her grandson who has light skin, "On top of being small, malnourished, she is black! Aren't you ashamed?" But I it's not like that, if my daughter is small, I see her pretty all the same!

A participant reflected on the challenges she experiences with her husband in the realm of their parenting practices:

> **(M6G1):** My husband was raised very *machista*. His father used to tell him, "Son, don't get yourself inside the kitchen because you are a man. Why did you get a women for?" He said this to him in my face.

Participants also reflected about family-of-origin and gender role expectations that influence parenting, as one participant said:

> **(M3G4):** The upbringing at home has a lot of influence… There are moms that teach their male children to love their wives. But there are moms that only want their children's love for themselves and not to share it with others. The way a boy is raised at home, that's the way he'll treat his wife. He grows up with that mentality.

Stressful parent-child relationships. Mothers shared aspects related to the challenging nature of their relationship with their children, particularly as it refers to difficult interactions. One mother reflected:

> **(M6G1):** It is hard having to work because children, later in life, they sometimes throw it in your face, "It's because you went out working!" They tell you this, and you go like, "It was not my fault because I gave them everything they needed." Sometimes you would like to avoid having to be away from them, but you are forced to do it in order to [financially] support them.

Attempting to implement structure and discipline was also identified as an intense challenge, particularly if close relatives were unsupportive. One mother affirmed:

> **(M1G4):** My husband tells me, "As a male, one has to help wash dishes and mop the floor." We have taught all these to our children. My son is 16 years old. But because of our rules and expectations, he felt too much pressure. My own parents said, "He doesn't have to do that. He's a boy." So he decided to go and live with my parents. He says, "I'm better off with my grandma. They give me everything and I don't have to do anything. I was fed up with the treatment you gave me." But he needs to learn to defend himself. It hurts me so much. We miss him so much.

Parenting affected by couple challenges. The majority of women expressed not feeling appreciated as mothers by their partners. In addition, many mothers expressed feeling undermined by them, as one mother (M4G5) said, "Sometimes husbands don't give you your

value as a mother. That has happened to me, but I ask God to give me a lot of strength to be able to move forward."

Co-parenting is also affected by challenges in the couple relation as one mother expressed:

> **(M3G1):** As a woman, we do not know how to tell our partners what we are feeling. One tells them, but they… it enters through one of their ears and it exits through the other. It would be good for a person [facilitator] to come and say, "What do you all feel? Now, tell them how do you feel." So that partners can see how much one truly suffers in silence. You keep it inside and you only share it in women's groups or when there's someone to help you dig deep on everything you feel. It's good for them to hear so they can see all the hurt they are causing us.

Women also discussed the intersections of gender and parenting. This mother stated:

> **(M5G3):** Children obey their father more than us. Even tough my boy is little; when I reprimand him he doesn't comply. Then he goes to his father, like saying, "Now my father is here. You cannot do anything to me now." He pays more attention to him than he does to me. He says, "You are grumpy, but I love you… My dad doesn't say anything to me."

Following the same order of ideas, one participant expressed:

> **(M2G3):** Because of the fact that you are a woman, boys look at you as if they were saying, "I can control you. Because you are a woman I can raise my voice." On the other hand, with their dad, they are dealing with the same sex, so they tend to respect them more.

Mothers shared that when male partners abandon their family and refuse to provide child support, women are under great pressure to provide for their children:

> **(M6G1):** Sometimes men look for another woman and leave. Then, the responsibility is greater for you as a woman, because the first thing they say is that one is lazy, and we abandon and neglect our children. But one neglects them due to the need to go to work. If you don't bring any income, you don't have anything to eat, and that's what makes me upset. I don't like it when he says that I neglect the girls. One has to neglect them, but it's not a total neglect, since you pay for somebody to look after them. One has to earn a living, because once men leave you, they will not give you any child support. And if they do, they do it only occasionally. But children don't eat occasionally either. They eat everyday, and they get sick. As a woman, one has to wake up very early, and stay up very late for the children. So I think that women are mother and father for the children.

Mothers also reflected on how their parenting was negatively impacted by the abuse they experienced from their partners, as one participant described:

> **(M6G4):** The father of my children left. He didn't like me getting pregnant again. He said, "You figure it out. I won't support you. I can't help you. Don't count on me. I don't want this anymore, sorry." He picked up his stuff and left.

Mesosystem Risk Factors

Mothers identified several challenges resulting from the interactions among microsystems. For example, women talked about negative experiences resulting from judgment from community members which constitutes an example of the strong pressure to conform to societal expectations.

Criticisms and judgment from community members. Participants reflected about the challenges of living in a small community, as they can be more exposed to the critical eyes of their neighbors and community members. A common phrase to describe this experience is "*pueblo chico, infierno grande*" (small town, big hell). Experiences of oppression reported by women ranged from intrusive comments about their personal behaviors to judgment regarding their personal backgrounds. This was particularly true for women who were single mothers, as one mother affirmed:

> **(M2G3):** In a community such as this, it is very hard being a woman. There are very good things if you are involved in religion. My personal experience has been very hard, to the point of leaving me speechless. I think it is because of the life that I have chosen to live. People would step away from the sidewalk if I was walking towards them, and walked across the street to the other sidewalk to avoid me. As a woman my huge sin was to fall in love again and 14 years after being alone as a single mom, to have another baby. To me, this community is very harsh. You are judged by your mistakes and they throw the first rock at you and never, never will they recognize if you did something good. It's very personal. This community has its harsh side… its cruel side. You are judged, labeled, and condemned without being asked if at any given time you need help. This neighborhood has its cruel side for you as a woman.

One mother described the challenges associated with judgmental attitudes people have about mothers with multiple children living in poverty:

> **(M1G2):** As a family it affects us that people are talking about us, "Look how so-and-so has so many children. She must keep her house all dirty." I feel at peace with myself because I always keep my house clean. But they think it's dirty because I have many children. Those rumors always affect you.

A woman further elaborated on criticisms received from community members:

> **(M4G2):** It affects me when I hear somebody saying bad things that aren't true. What I do is that I turn around and go home. I pay no attention to them. Why would I discuss this with them? After all, what they are saying isn't true. I don't have to get upset if I know how things really are, if I feel at peace with myself. You have to find a way to distance yourself from those people. It's better to be by yourself so nothing will affect you, because it's upsetting to be criticized like that.

Participants also described oppressive experiences resulting from pressure to conform to traditional mainstream patriarchal values that are pervasive in the Guatemalan society. One participant reflected on this issue:

> **(M4G3):** You always come across male friends that make *machista* comments. If your husband's friends are *machistas* when they hang out together they start picking up on things. Then, husbands try to treat you badly to see how you will react. If you let them treat you badly or hit you once, they are always going to do it. You know that you're not going to let them abuse you, but you know that you cannot fight against a man. Because you are woman, God made us feminine.

Along the lines of negative peer influence, mothers expressed their concerns for the wellbeing of their children when they interact with peers engaged in antisocial or risky behaviors. Two mothers reflected on this issue:

> **(M7G5):** There are a lot of parents that allow children to go out and play in the street where they get together with who knows what type of kids. That is when children start learning what the others do. I think we need to fight for our children, to teach them what's best so that they can be good children.

> **(M6G1):** When fathers separate from their wives, mothers have to go out and work and the majority of the time they are not with their children. Then children start to leave the house and meet friends that want them to hang out in the streets with them. And because you are working, you don't notice this. That is a problem that happens when couples separate. Children look for refuge and they look for somebody to love them. As a mother, you are not present because of work, and the father is somewhere else getting drunk with another woman or whatever. As a woman you always have to work, and then children start taking the wrong path with other peers and you don't realize this. When you become aware of this, they are already into a lot of trouble. What can you do?

Challenges resulting from working outside the home. Mothers commonly reported feeling exhausted due to the double working shifts that characterize their lives. One mother reflected on these issues:

> **(M6G5):** One reason for which I stopped working was for my daughters. I would come home very tired, at times to argue with my husband. At times I didn't feel like doing house chores and everything was a mess and I had to pick up the house, and my girls had lots of homework because for some reason, they didn't finish it. And I had to study too. When was I going to do all that? So I stopped working.

Mothers were also concerned about children being unsupervised, as one mother reflected about children at risk for child abuse:

> **(M6G4):** You must be careful not to leave your children go out by themselves. Where I live, I never let them go out, even worse when there are men around them. I have a daughter. Sometimes I take her to work with me, even though it is not allowed. I don't want my daughter to be by herself. I'm worried sick. Daughters need to be protected a lot. You hear a lot of things that happen to women. You are afraid of leaving little women by themselves… Even boys! There are people that don't even respect male children!

Time-consuming work schedules. The vast majority of mothers reported having to earn an income in order to adequately cover essential family needs. However, they also expressed that their jobs were characterized by strenuous working conditions and schedules that prevent them from spending time with children. One mother described her experience:

> **(M2G2):** My oldest child is my challenge because he is aware and he tells me, "Mommy, you did this wrong. Mommy, you're not with me." I tell him, "I'm not with you, that's true, but it is because my work doesn't allow me to…wherever I go I have you in my mind… I go out everyday and make an effort to give the best of me so that you can have the things you have… So, notice that… Even though I don't have a lot of time to spend with you, I am giving you the best of me."

Low-paying jobs. Mothers with little or no formal education reported earning low or minimum wage salaries, as one woman expressed:

> **(M5G3):** To get my children through school, I had to wash and iron other people's clothes, sold gas cylinders, and cleaned houses… And there they are. They graduated from school. People ask, "Why haven't you built your home?" Of course I would love to, but if I pay for my children's education I cannot build a home. I wouldn't be able to devote my time to work for them…. I have to choose between one thing and the other.

My little home is about to fall apart. I had to tie some ropes around the metal sheets[7] because there were strong winds that blew out the metal sheets. But I know perfectly that all my sacrifices are worthwhile. My greatest satisfaction is when my own children express their appreciation.

Exosystem Risk Factors

Mothers reported risk factors that negatively impact their parenting role, which primarily refer to community challenges at various levels.

Community risks for children. Participants expressed multiple concerns for the existing risks at communities and how they affect their children and their parenting efforts. This issue was particularly challenging for women as they do not have a direct way of controlling the violence and insecurity which represent a threat to their children, as one woman affirmed:

> **(M5G5):** Community violence and delinquency are very concerning. I am truly fearful. I don't like going out with my daughters. People tell me, "Hold God's hand. If God is with you, who will go against you?" I have faith in God, but I am also very afraid for the evil in humanity. Children are being taken away from mothers' arms. I don't like to go to downtown by myself with my two little girls. The evil; the violence that exists is unbelievable. Just for a little money they are capable of beating you up. And if you don't have any money they hit you. Drug addicts on the streets ask you for money to sustain their addiction, the same for drunks. I am equally fearful of both… When I used to live on the other side of the community, I used to use the overpass where many assaults have occurred. My husband tells me, "Don't go by there." But because I'm always running late I go through there, as fast as I can. But then I started thinking about my daughters… I have to be careful. Now I take the longest path to go home. That's how we live. You have faith in God, but in a way we live in fear, even inside our own homes.

Mothers also described having to be extremely strict in order to protect their children from community dangers. A single mom reflected on this issue:

> **(M4G3):** My priority is being with my daughter. I always ask her, "Where are you?" I knew whom she was with. I used to say, "If you are not here in five minutes I will go to get you." "Mom, that's embarrassing, you are going to make a scene." "I don't care about embarrassment." And I said, "Either you come out or I go in." And there she came

[7] Many women live with their families in extremely precarious housing conditions. This mother lives in a house made of zinc metal sheets, closely resembling a rustic shed. Many families live in rough sheds with dirt floors and no running water or electricity.

> out. Another time my 15 year-old came home drunk. As he came inside I said to him, "You are going to respect this house. I have problems but I am not drinking." I hit him with a belt three, four good blows. "If you want to live here with me don't you ever do that again." It was very hard for me to raise them by myself. I don't know how I did it. My children are not perfect, but at least he is not a gang member or a drunk. I wanted to have a good and healthy boy, a good future father.

Finally, mothers talked about how they can be forced by gangs to pay extortion fees known as "war taxes" in exchange for not being attacked. A mother described her ordeal, which ended when the gang members who were harassing her were killed:

> **(M6G3)**: The situation here in our community is worse with the gangs. I had to pay extortion money on a monthly basis so that they wouldn't harass my daughter and son. My son used to get mugged often and then we began to receive threats. You do everything for your children. For almost two years I did a monthly payment so the gangs wouldn't harass my adolescent children. Whenever my son was late, I got worried sick. There was a time I couldn't even go out because they were tormenting me so much. Gang members are happy because you support them financially, out of fear that they would rape my daughter and son. I used to pay them, and the money was not enough for us at home to buy food.

Discrimination and abuse from institutions. Mothers talked about experiencing discrimination and abuse from various service providers and institutions. A mother described how she was criticized and blamed because her daughter looked too skinny and appeared to be experiencing malnutrition:

> **(M4G3):** I was discriminated against because my daughter is very thin. People always said to me, "Your daughter is like bones. Your daughter is too thin." That affected me a lot. A pediatrician reported me because he said my daughter was experiencing malnutrition and that he was going to take her away from me. I felt so bad as a mother. I did everything possible to get her to gain weight. That doctor humiliated me so much. When I told my husband he started mistreating me too, "You are a lazy woman, a disgrace. Even this you cannot do right." But blessed be God, he sent me another pediatrician who told me, "Your daughter is healthy. The tests we ran were OK. You daughter has a fine complexion, that's all."

Women also discussed the impotence experienced by realizing that women's human rights are not protected or reinforced, and that institutions often times side with male perpetrators of abuse, as one participant affirmed:

(M1G4): Nowadays you see this happening a lot… In my own personal case, I have a family problem right now and I see that the human rights, as they say, give the reason to the men and they leave women out there standing, like you are worth nothing but a zero. We don't feel respected as women or mothers.

Macrosystem Risk Factors

Mothers identified prominent risk factors at the macro-level, such as perceived loss of protective cultural values, as well as the negative impact of patriarchy on institutions and social expectations.

Perceived loss of traditional cultural values. Women reported that traditional cultural values once practiced by their parents do not have such a strong influence in today's society. They attribute this loss of values to several social problems, such as youth joining gangs, history of war and corruption, and delinquency. A mother reflected on the role that respect and hierarchy had in her upbringing:

(M4G2): The way we were raised is the way we behave today. So, we must talk with our children about our experiences growing up. Nowadays you don't see this anymore. When people would come and visit your parents, just with one look, you knew, as a child, that you weren't supposed to be among adults. Today children just mingle in adult conversations. It wasn't like that before. You used to respect and greet the adults, and lower your voice. We have lost those values. I say to my children, "Look, children, I think that gangs and all that has emerged from losing the values." Parents don't teach their children adequately. And also when there are disintegrated homes, children look for support in other youth, in the gangs.

One mother talked about the strict discipline she experienced in her family:

(M2G4): It depends on how and in which community you are raised. My experience as a child was hard. My grandmother raised me in a traditional way. No talking back because she would smack my face. No playing out in the street. My husband was practically my first boyfriend. That pushed me to marry him. There was no freedom. I was not raised with the freedom youth now have, that they can talk with one another. If I were to talk to a boy my grandmother would pull my hair or shame me in front of people. That is why I was not free to talk to boys or even girls. From school to home and from home to school, that was all. I think that is why Guatemalan youth has gone off the rails, because there's too much freedom. I mean there's either too little or too much freedom. It all depends on how you are raised at home.

Patriarchal cultural values. The patriarchal belief system that operates in the context of Guatemala has intense consequences for women. Women are devalued and remain vulnerable because of their gender. They are exposed to a wide range of abuses. A mother reflected on the pervasive discrimination against women:

> **(M4G3):** Women are always discriminated against. Sometimes you don't understand why. I had a girl, and then my second baby was a girl too. Sometimes people tell you, "You had another girl" (*with a derogatory tone of voice*). That makes you feel bad because God sends children, and only God knows why he made us women.

Participants also discussed how in Guatemalan society, women are criticized and chastised by other women when they move away from traditional gender roles. One mother affirmed:

> **(M6G2):** There are people that confuse you or want to humiliate you when you, as a woman, work side by side with your husband. Women themselves are the ones who challenge us, "Why do you work? You got married so that you can be financially supported. You have to receive money. You don't have to make money." That's a type of discrimination for women that gets women's self-esteem down because people are saying that they don't value what you do. I feel down because I am questioning myself and wondering whether what I do is right or wrong. But I do it for my children. What I earn is not a lot, but is for those extra expenses children ask for, their snacks. I'm not going to take our living expenses money for that. If I work is to provide for my children's wellbeing, for my home.

Microsystem Protective Factors

Participants identified important micro-level protective factors such as motherhood values and beliefs, as well as strong expectations for children.

Individual-level protective factors. Participants identified specific examples of protective factors that they have developed in the face of adversity, which center on values and beliefs associated with motherhood and clear life expectations for their children.

Motherhood values and beliefs. Participants talked about motherhood values and beliefs, as well as how these help them accomplish their parenting roles. The vast majority of participants reflected on these as sources of motivation, maternal pride, inspiration, fulfillment, and strength. One mother reflected on these issues:

(M2G2): You feel such immense love for your children that you want them to have the best even if you're not able to have it. It's a satisfaction to be able to give money to your home, because I know my children are living a better life.

The following participant shared that her children are a blessing in her life and elaborated on her sense of pride for her child's educational accomplishments:

(M3G2): To be a mother is something wonderful that cannot be explained, it's an immense love, knowing that those human beings you are raising are fruits of love. They are also fruits from the love that God feels for us because God gives you blessings through your children. My oldest son is my pride because since he joined Futuro Vivo he has given me no problems. He's been one of the most well behaved children in the classroom, and that is a source of pride for me as a mother.

Children are a profound inspiration for women to live, move forward, and overcome adversity. For example, mothers reported how they tolerate their partners' abusive behaviors "for the sake of the children." They also reported sacrificing quality time with children in order to work and provide for them. Several participants reflected on these experiences of self-sacrifice:

(M3G5): There are so many things you have to stand as a woman, things you have to keep inside. You hold yourself back, for your children. As a woman you have to fight no matter what, and be grateful to God for having two daughters.

The following participant further reflected about her dedication and commitment to meet her children's needs at the expense of her own needs:

(M6G1): I tell my children, "My pride, my reason to live are you." Despite the difficult things that may come I tell them, "I'm going to be with you always." As a mother, children come first for you. They are my satisfaction. If they see me all in disarray… it's so that they can do well. I abstain from buying something for me so that they can have it. For me that is more than enough [to be fulfilled].

Participants also reflected on the sense of fulfillment associated with motherhood, as this mother affirmed:

(M4G1): Children are the ones who with one touch, or smile, or hug, or kiss that they give you, they make you feel that it is more than enough to fulfill what you feel inside. It doesn't matter what problems you may have or challenges you have to face.

Mothers shared common perspectives about their perceived meaning of becoming a mother, as one woman affirmed (M6G5), "The experience of being a mother is beautiful, from the moment of giving birth. After the pain you feel, at the moment they are born the pain disappears. You only see your baby. It's truly magical."

Participants frequently reflected about the dual meaning of being a woman and a mother, as the following mother stated:

> **(M7G5):** Being a woman means making sure your children get ahead. I work as a live-in maid, with my son. I have to fulfill my work responsibilities before being able to take my son to school here. This is what I think is most important-- to teach your children as they grow up. There are a lot of parents that don't teach their children how to work.

Mothers' expectations and hopes for their children. Women strongly expressed their expectations about reaching "a better quality of life" for their children, mainly by educational achievements. They also wished for their children to reach high goals in life and to be guided by religious and moral values. The next participants provided reflections on these issues:

> **(M4G2):** I wish for my son to graduate from school and succeed in life. I want my children to have whatever I couldn't have because of poverty. I want them to be professionals. Since they were young, I have taken them to church… I want them to be able to confess, to have fear of God, and respect towards people, that everybody has the same value, that we all have a purpose in life, and that God loves us just the way we are. I have taught my children all this.

> **(M6G2):** You don't want your children to suffer nor to experience what you couldn't have. I worked since I was eleven years old. I studied elementary school, but first I would prepare the tortilla dough, then, make tortillas, then study, and then back to do the same again. I got my high school diploma working and all. Whatever little thing I was able to attain, I want for my children to get further ahead than I have.

Family-level Protective Factors

Mothers reported salient protective factors associated with their families such as positive legacies and multiple expressions of family support.

Nurturing family legacies. Participants reported the relevant influence that having nurturing and responsible parents has had on their own parenting, as one mother said:

> **(M7G5):** We were left alone with my mom, all six children. It was hard. What I liked the most about being a woman is that my mother taught me how to work. When my sisters and I were little my mother said to me, "Look, *mi'ja*[8], now I have to go out and work." She was a homemaker. But then she started working as a domestic worker during the day. She left all my siblings under my care. She would figure out which house chores I wouldn't be able to do, and she would do them before leaving for work. "Now you have to help take care of your siblings because I am earning the income. That way you will start learning how to do housework." That's being a mother, fight and work, even if we find it hard, but like my mom says, "Even if we don't eat meat every day, even if it is just a *tortilla* with salt on it, but earned in an honest way."

Participants described their own mothers as strong role models, especially when fathers were uninvolved or absent. One mother offered this testimony:

> **(G2M4):** I thank God very much because my mother always took care of us. I am very grateful to her. Even though she was always working, she always looked after us. It wasn't like she abandoned her children without food and all. She was always concerned about feeding us. I'm thankful to God for that and also because he has given me the great responsibility of having so many daughters and to help them prosper in good life paths. I only ask God to give me strength and wisdom so that we can be good people, and for my children to not be like me, but better.

Transforming detrimental legacies into positive ones. Despite life histories disrupted by trauma or lack of positive parenting methods from their own parents, mothers reported being able to provide healthier parenting experiences for their own children. Two mothers reflected:

> **(M5G1):** My parents did not care about my siblings or me. So, for me, what encouraged me to move forward were my children. With God's help I will continue until God says it's my time to leave this earth… My children encourage me to move forward. I get amazed and say, "What God does is beautiful… I have been able to raise my children all by myself." All four children, thank God, I have them going to school. What my parents didn't do for me, I was able to do for my children. Thanks to God, I have my children succeeding.

> **(M4G1):** My mother mistreated me. But not because she mistreated me I am going to mistreat my daughters. Right now I cannot tell my daughter, "I love you", hug and kiss her, because I never received that. My father was far away, my mother never… she was always hitting me with a belt. But I say, "My daughters are not to blame for the way I was raised." So I have to break that [pattern] and give my daughters love.

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[8] '*Mi'ja*': contraction for "*mi hija*" [pronounced: mee-ha]: "my daughter".

Support from family members. Participants discussed the importance of receiving support from family, particularly as it refers to raising their children. Two mothers shared their testimony:

> **(M4G3):** My child was starting to take wrong paths. I used to get on my knees and pray, "God help me because I don't want my son to get lost." I asked my sisters for their help, "Help him. Please, advice this boy because I don't want him to get lost. I want to recover my son." My son would go visit my sisters and they took this opportunity to advice him. He was taking drugs and hanging out with the wrong crowd. But with the help, advice, and God's help, now he is one of the most respectful boys I have. We were able to move ahead with my son, thank God.

> **(M4G1):** Thank God for grandparents. They sometimes give you good advice. They say, "No, my daughter, don't do that, do this…" Even if you have nothing to eat, or dress to wear, the advice is always there. You can take that advice with you and it's good. Then you come to realize that those experiences, they are in part good because they help you grow as a mother, and not give them a bad example to your children.

A mother provided another example of the critical help that represents family support:

> **(M4G1):** I am living with my cousin and her family. It has been five months since my husband left my daughters and me. Four months passed before I was able to find a job. It has been very hard. My cousin has taken care of us during all this time. I must give her back all that she has given us. I cannot live off of her like that, for free.

Supportive co-parenting relationships. Mothers highlighted the importance of fathers having an active role in childrearing, as two mothers stated:

> **(M5G2):** Sometimes I correct my child and he acts as if he's not listening, maybe because of the way I talk to him he doesn't pay attention. Then my husband comes and tells him, "Look, your mother is saying that she asked you to do this and you didn't do it. Why?" He has more authority as a father in the way he talks to children. As men, they have experience, and because they are men, children they listen. My husband shares about his experiences. The communication between father and son is more reliable. There is more unity between father and son to talk about topics like alcohol, drugs, and all that. A father's authority is more dominant over his children.

> **(M3G1):** My husband told me that a psychologist came to the [FV] school and called their attention about being more involved. I said, "Yes, it's true because you men leave everything to us mothers." Then he goes, "But when am I going to dedicate time if I am never here at home from Monday to Saturday?" "What about Sundays?" I told him. "Well, yes! It has to be on Sundays." You have to find a solution. "On Sundays I go out and work on my sales and you supervise their homework." That is the agreement we have as parents.

Mother-Child Protective Factors

Teaching children cultural values. Mothers reflected on key cultural values that inform their family life. They also stressed the importance of teaching children these values. Examples of these are family unity, spirituality, equality, respect, self-discipline, resilience, and commitment towards moral values. For example, a single mother talked about the importance of protecting and dedicating time to the children and practicing family unity:

> **(M6G3):** Unity in my family is very important. We have lunch together during the weekends and dinner everyday. I know a family who tells me, "You must not talk at the table. We all eat quietly." I tell them, "I don't know if this means I have bad manners, but dinnertime is when we all talk about everything." [Talking during family dinners] has been very helpful for me, we share together and talk. I know about another family who eats watching TV in a different room, and then the mother is eating all by herself.

Two mothers elaborated on the importance of religion and spirituality:

> **(M6G5):** Maybe we weren't taught this, but thank to God we have the knowledge of him. We have taken his hand so that we can raise our children and give them the best we can, maybe not material, but at least for them to have a good, noble heart, and respect for themselves and for others.

> **(M4G4):** The first value I am teaching my son is to know God. I take him to Bible school every Friday. I feel that's the principal value. If God is not present in your home, then, honestly, you cannot attain anything in life.

Participants also reflected about the importance of raising boys according to principles of gender-equality, as one mother expressed:

> **(M4G2):** At home I am the only woman, so everything falls back on me. I assign each of my sons their housework. They know how to cook. When I get out of work late, each of them prepares their own dinner. I have taught them that not because they are men they aren't going to do anything at home. I tell them, "In the future you will marry, and if your wife happens to be lazy, then you'll already know how to defend yourselves in terms of domestic chores." I've taught my children that machismo is a thing from the past. People say men shouldn't do this or that. But men are capable of working at restaurants and laundry places. They have to learn how to survive in life.

Promoting the value of respect was highly relevant among women, as the two following participants affirmed:

(M4G1): I teach my daughter, "Whenever we leave home, everyday and we pass by senior men or women or children you have to be respectful and say good morning. And if the person doesn't reply, it doesn't matter because God is watching, so you have to show respect and greet them."

(M7G3): Respect, towards their friends and peers, is a very important value to teach. I tell my daughter, "Don't talk about So-and-So because you are a woman and I am a woman. Someday that might happen to us." We need to learn not to judge others because that is very hard. They must learn not to make fun of others.

Mothers also shared how they encourage their children to embrace resilience and self-discipline, as one participant affirmed:

(M6G1): I have worked hard with my five children and I have told them that they can do it. When they say, "I can't." I tell them, "No. That's not for you. God gave intelligence to us all. All we need to do is to put it into practice." That has been very helpful because my oldest one is already an accountant. I have always supported her and told her, "You can do it! Demonstrate you can! You can do it if you make an effort." She tells me, "Yes mom, I will be able to do it!"

Developing nurturing relationships with children. Mothers described the importance of fostering nurturing relationships with their children, by supporting and loving their young ones, and feeling supported and emotionally close to their older children. One mother stated how critical was her sons' support after the murder of her only daughter:

(M4G5): Now I have communication with my sons at home, we all three get along very well due to everything that has happened. They tell me, "Mom, lets continue together to move forward. Mom, we are going to support you in everything. We have no idea how much you're suffering because she was your only daughter. If you suffer, we are suffering as well."

A mother also described an example of positive mother-child relationship:

(M6G3): My children got married and left home, but here I am still calling them, "How are you? When am I going to see you? Are you OK?" I call them by phone. My daughter got married too and she has her life, but we are always united.

Mothers discussed how a nurturing relationship is reflected through close monitoring and supervision, as one participant affirmed, (M3G1), "We have to set boundaries. As a parent you

have to be there beside the river (your child), if you let the water to run outside its course, it is going to overflow."

Women further highlighted the importance of developing a strong emotional attachment to their children, as one participant said:

> **(M6G1):** You have to be involved with your children. If you want them to love you back, you have to love them as well. Maybe you don't demonstrate it openly, but at least from time to time you say to them, "I love you" so that your children don't mistreat you. What do you expect from your children if you treat them badly?

Couple-level Protective Factors

Positive co-parenting relationship. A few women in this study reported a positive couple relationship. These mothers highlighted the importance of fathers being involved with their children and having a healthy co-parenting relationship, as one participant said:

> **(M6G5):** My children see the communication and love that I have with my husband. Thank God we love each other, even more than before getting married. As a couple we demonstrate our affection to each other and we also show it to our children. So, they see the example we set for them, they will become good and better people, better children who will value their parents.

A participant also reflected on the critical importance of father involvement, even in the absence of the biological mother:

> **(M6G3):** I have the example of a father who is taking care of his three children by himself. He is a very responsible father. As a woman, I admire him because you don't see that quite often. He is struggling so that his children can go to college. Their mother went away. As a mother, I wouldn't be able to do that to them.

Mesosystem Protective Factors

Women identified protective factors associated with their interactions with multiple immediate systems. Examples of these include receiving support from other mothers, employers and co-workers, and members from religious groups.

Support from social networks. Women reflected about the importance of having supportive relationships with other mothers in their communities. This support is particularly

essential with regards to raising their children and facing various life challenges. One mother described the social support she received when her daughter experienced discrimination due to her physical appearance:

> **(M4G4):** I used to suffer a lot because my daughter was being discriminated against. There were women who would tell me, "If she has flat feet, that can be fixed. You don't have to get worried sick like that"… Or women in Futuro Vivo would tell me, "Your daughter, she's just thin. Mine is like that too." Women would cheer me up. They helped me move forward. My family gave me words of encouragement too.

Expressed support from religious organizations was consistently reported by participants, as one mother affirmed:

> **(M6G1):** My husband told me, "I need your help. I need to receive help. I do not want to carry on with this addiction. Look at my children, they are growing up and I don't want to give them that bad example. We talked about it and we decided to attend to a Christian church. We persevere there. We commended ourselves to God.

In a context where resources are dire and institutional support is unavailable, the community members' ability to respond to the material needs of mothers and their families becomes essential. One mother stated:

> **(M4G2):** When I gave birth to my child, my husband got out of jail… We had nothing and we were barely starting our life together… still, "God squeezes but he does not choke." When I returned from the hospital I saw bags of clothes for the baby. It was second-hand and all, but there they were.

Community support in emergency situations was strongly identified as critical by mothers. One participant (M6G1) affirmed, "If your children have a fever, you have to buy medicine, you have to look for it, and you have to borrow money... And sometimes people will lend you money."

Working mothers and financial independence. Despite strenuous challenges, mothers who had a job appeared within the group to be more empowered. This was a reflection of their ability to provide for their children and have some degree of financial independence. The two following narratives exemplify this issue:

(M4G2): I say to my husband, "From now on, I will have the goal of fighting to get my children ahead. The day that you are not here anymore, with or without you, I will move forward with my children. I have somebody to live for." That's what motivates me everyday more, to live for them, to bring home the bread for them. I feel happy to see my children today eating a little piece of bread. Or the day that they tell me, "Mommy, we want to eat chicken" and being able to provide it for them. That is my happiness, my wish, is to have my children well.

(M4G1): First of all, husbands never give you enough money for living expenses. I wasn't taught by my parents to sit down and wait. Ever since I was with him [husband], all my life I have worked. But because you earn very little as a woman and you have to pay for childcare, you end up with nothing. So, you know how I figure it out? I decided to have my own business selling tortillas.

Supportive employers. Mothers reflected on the critical importance of having a supportive employer, as one woman (M4G1) explained, "I thank my female employer because she was the one who said to me, 'Let's go ahead and register the girl for school. I want for her to get an education.' And thank God, Miss Z. told me, "Yes, the girl has been accepted at the Futuro Vivo school." Blessed be God!

Some women reported that the safety provided by their employers in terms of living arrangements was central to their decision-making process, as one mother discussed:

(M6G4): I have been working there for years now. I raised my employer's children. I am happy with my employer. She has given me a place to live there with them, so that I can protect my children. My employer says she doesn't want my children to live in a little room over in zone 12, where I used to live. She said, "I will give you a room here and you bring your children with you. I don't want anything bad happening to them because that's a very dangerous place there." You can register your daughter so that she can receive education and your baby boy can stay here. I know you don't touch anything (steal), so I will give you a job here with me.

Religious community. Organized religion and religious institutions were identified by many mothers as critical sources of support, as one woman stated:

(M5G3): I have dealt with many serious difficulties when children getting sick and you are by yourself as a single mother and without a dime and say, "What do I do now?" But there are always people who extend you a helping hand. I know very good people, but not in my community. In my church group, they've always given me a helping hand. They've always supported me. They always tell me, "We'll be waiting for you, here we have a place for you."

Mothers also talked about the importance of religious communities as supportive and positive influence on childrearing, as one participant said:

> **(M3G5):** The most important value is having God at the center of your home, at the center of one's heart, and to teach your children to feel the same. My husband and I, we have been part of a community for seven years. My children go with us to spiritual retreats and weekly religious meetings. Sometimes we arrive late to the meetings because we have three small children we need to get ready. But my children already know and they ask, "Mommy, aren't we going to go the meeting today? We have meeting today." Here we attend married couples with children from the community. There are a total of 12 children. There are more children than adults present. Children learn to pray for others and to be grateful. If children don't have God in their hearts they will not learn the true value of things.

Exosystem Protective Factors

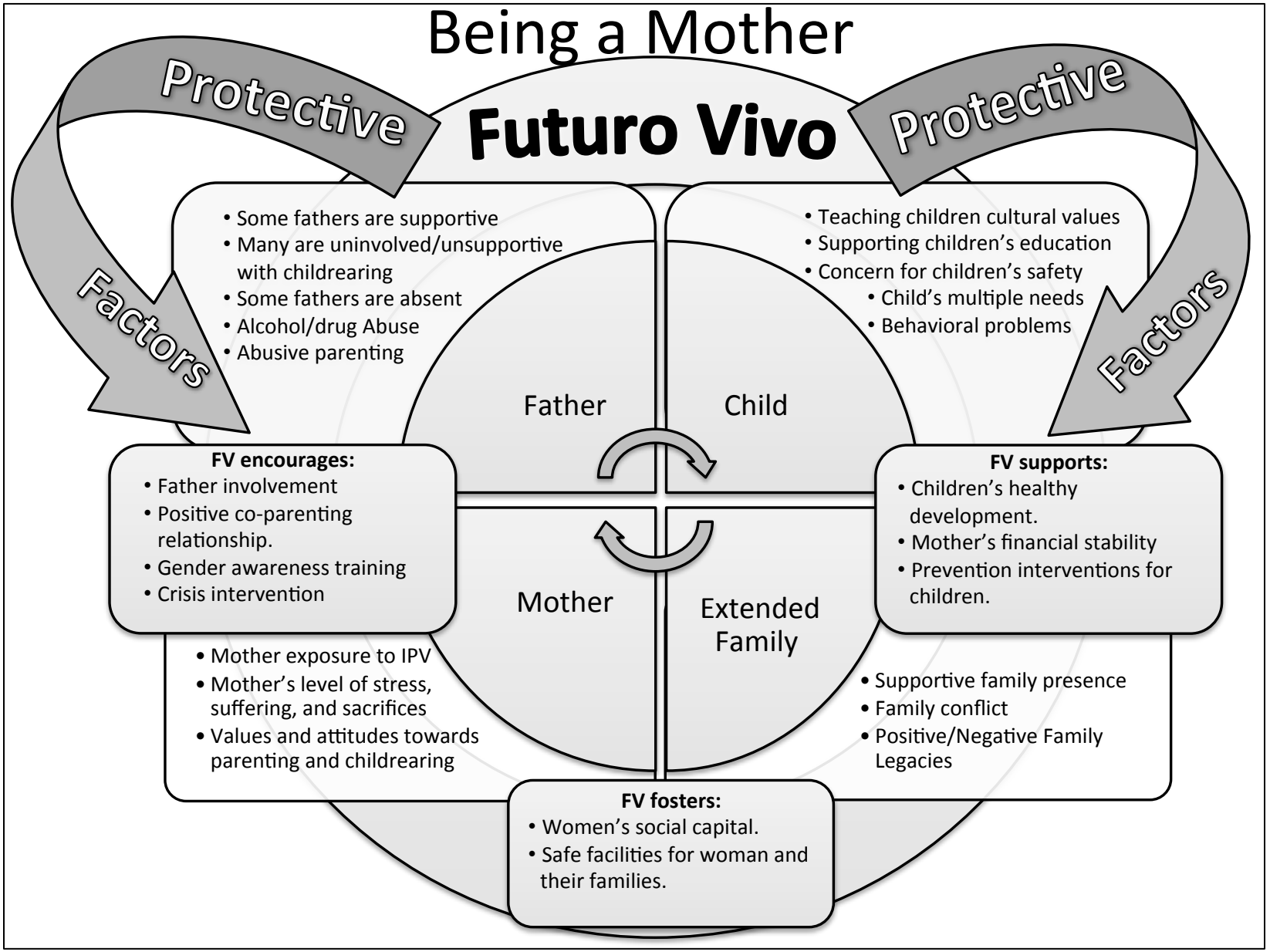
Futuro Vivo (FV). This institution stands out as the most important protective factor for vulnerable mothers and their families. Specifically, women highlighted how FV represents a much needed community program as it provides key services and emotional support to families in need. Women also stated that youth involved in FV programs are protected from engaging in risky behaviors. Figure 4.2 captures the interaction of FV's protective factors with participants.

The words from one mother accurately describes a common sentiment among research participants:

> **(M3G4):** I have problems with my siblings and my mother. Sometimes when I come to Futuro Vivo to do my shift, I end up staying beyond the hour because I tell Miss Z., "Notice the peace one breathes in here." I wish I did not have to leave… My daughters, when they come here to study, they tell me, "Mom, we don't want to leave from school." When they can't come to school they are in a bad mood, "Mom, we don't like the way we are treated at home. We like it better at Futuro Vivo because we feel better there." As I tell Miss Z., when you go to the school door and you see the religious sisters, they have a smile on their faces, despite the tons of problems they might have. That is what motivates me to continue to move forward.

The testimony from this mother further confirms a shared perception regarding the critical role that FV has in their lives:

Figure 4.2. Being a Mother and the interaction with the Community Program Futuro Vivo.



(M6G1): The religious sisters from Futuro Vivo have helped us a lot because they have a psychologist at the school for mothers and fathers. It helped my family and me a lot. I have being here for 13 years and I have received the talks from psychologist and I think that has helped me a lot. It has helped us to endure life challenges up until now because it has helped us to raise our self-esteem.

In addition to spiritual and emotional support, FV has been a source of material support for women and their families, as one mother stated:

(G2M1): My daughter was very ill at the hospital. Then, a little after, she was murdered. It was something terrible. I had to take care of her two-year-old little daughter. I am thankful for Futuro Vivo… they have helped me so much. I won't get tired of being grateful. First, being grateful to God and the religious sisters. They helped me to buy the very expensive medication that my daughter needed. God has given me the strength to continue moving forward and taking care of my grandchild. After my daughter died, my other daughter's husband died. It is such an intense experience. My children have suffered so much, all my granddaughters… but God is so kind, he has not abandoned me.

Three women further emphasized the critical support provided by FV, which goes beyond regular school education:

(M4G1): I say to my daughter, "See, my darling, be grateful to God because you are at this Futuro Vivo school. Here you receive, you learn everything. Because at other schools I've seen that is not like that. It is a blessing that you are here with the nuns. So you must be grateful." See, the school my boy is attending is not the same as here in Futuro Vivo.

(M7G1): We are single mothers. What helps us the most is that here at Futuro Vivo children get their breakfast and lunch. This means we save money from our income because we only have to feed them dinner. When children are on vacation or they don't go to school, for any reason, it becomes very hard for us to feed them.

(M1G4): Here at Futuro Vivo the tasks are not only for mothers, is for the fathers too. It's hard because some children are pulled out from the school because fathers don't want to work in tasks that the school requires them to do. In reality, the work we do here as parents, doesn't compensate for all the benefits Futuro Vivo provides for children. I don't think that me cooking or cleaning really pays for the education my children receive at Futuro Vivo. Even the quality of the education, at a private school, is not the same. At a private school, they only care about the material stuff, about you paying for tuition. And if your child fails a class they say, "Well, you have to pay this much so we can let your child re-take the test." Where as here, is not like that. Miss Z. truly sees the depth of the problem that might be affecting children.

Participants further expanded on how FV has become a critical protective factor in the lives of children and youth in the community:

> **(M4G4):** Futuro Vivo provides lots of positive distractions for youth. They are involved in music [chorus] and they have other activities. They do this to avoid youth from being on the street corners. There are very few children and youth attending Futuro Vivo who are just roaming around, hanging out on the street corners, smoking, drinking or girls hanging out with boys. Ladies make positive comments about Futuro Vivo… that the children's orchestra made an excellent performance, that they take classes…

> **(M4G3):** Something very nice about the Futuro Vivo schools is that it is not just a normal school, Futuro Vivo is like a family. Here everybody supports each other. Is that unity that makes you say, "I am not alone."

Finally, women talked about how FV promotes family unity and father involvement. One mother described how paternal involvement is positively influenced by FV:

> **(M1G4):** Thank God, Futuro Vivo religious sisters have been like an engine that moves families. I am in awe when I see fathers and mothers working together, how nice it's to witness this and for a child it's so motivational to see their mom and dad like this. Because you as a mother, all by yourself, it's not possible. Children need their father. That is what Miss Z. has taught us. If the father is present, he has to give everything for their children, side-by-side with us, as mothers.

Macrosystem Protective Factors

Motherhood cultural values and spiritual beliefs. With regards to macro-level factors, mothers identified supportive socio-cultural belief systems that influence their parenting practices. For example, the following mothers stated:

> **(M4G5):** My daughters need to appreciate what they have. That's because... we give them sometimes more than we should, within our possibilities, right? Then, there are a lot of children that don't have anything. And when I tell them, they understand it at that moment, but later they forget and then they become selfish with each other and I want them to be, as I was saying, better people… more humble and considerate towards others.

> **(M2G5):** I want my children to conduct themselves in a right way through life, so they may receive even more blessings from God. I want them to receive more blessings than the many we have already received. I want them to look at people and not discriminate against them. I want them to learn to value people, people who are missing body limbs but continue to work hard. I want them to learn to value what they have.

Participants also talked about the importance of promoting gender-equality values and respect in committed relationships, as one mother said:

> **(M1G4):** As a mother you want what's best for your daughters as young women. When men hit you and you say, "Well… that was the way I was raised." No it's not like that. I tell my little girl: "Look, whenever you are looking for a committed couple relationship it has to be on equal parts. It's not for you to become a maid. You must not be, as the saying goes, 'Being a lamp on the street and darkness at home.' Because, maybe I present myself outside well groomed, with make-up on, but when somebody comes to my home they find all the clothes in disarray and dirty dishes. I tell her, "Look, is not that you let yourself be oppressed by a man. But when you have a commitment you have to respect it."

Mothers also discussed about the importance of promoting gender equality with their sons, as one mother shared:

> **(M1G4):** I tell to my son, "In the future, when you are in a committed relationship, you have to value the person who is choosing to be with you, because it's about mutual help. It's not about, 'I got myself a house maid.' You found somebody to accompany you through tough times and good times."

Findings of Research Question C: Common and Most Pressing Parenting Needs

Women provided specific reflections about their most pressing parenting needs, particularly as they apply to the context of Guatemala. For clarity purposes, parenting needs refer to material and social resources, skills, knowledge, and conditions, identified by participants as necessary to perform their role as mothers. See table 4.1 for a condensed list of these needs.

Individual-level Needs

Stress management skills. Participants provided detailed accounts of the deleterious effects of cumulative stress on their parenting practices. Mothers expressed sometimes having a limited ability to manage stress. Also, most mothers reported feeling guilty about their reactive responses towards their children when experiencing high levels of stress, which commonly consisted of very limited patience, tension, intense frustration, and punitive parenting practices. Mothers felt particularly concerned about how the stress affected their interactions with their children, as the three following participants affirmed:

Table 4.3. Parenting needs reported by women, organized according each ecodevelopmental level.

Ecodevelopmental Levels	Parenting Needs
(a) Individual	• Learning healthy coping skills for stress (emotional regulation). • Enhancing parenting skills (discipline, monitoring, communication). • Empower mothers to defend themselves from IPV (gender awareness). • Addressing cumulative trauma injuries.
(b) Microsystem	• Developing positive co-parenting skills. • Learning to deal with extended and nuclear family conflict. • Protecting children from IPV. • Preventing children to be impacted by negative peer influence. • Treating and preventing IPV and alcohol use. • Family-level interventions involving parents and children.
(c) Mesosystem	• Helping mothers connect with other beneficial microsystems or resources (e.g., parenting intervention, community programs, advocate services). • Implementing effective supervision (protecting against community violence/gangs). • Empowering mothers to get involved in children's school.
(d) Exosystem	• Employment or job training opportunities for mothers. • Access to basic resources (e.g., water, electricity) • Access to adult education classes (literacy). • Gender awareness programs for men. • Mental health prevention programs for youth.
(e) Macrosystem	• Helping mother reframe negative parenting beliefs. • Helping/supporting mothers' capacity to challenge oppressive beliefs about gender and power. • Challenging negative cultural and religious beliefs as potential risk factors for parenting (e.g., culture of silence).

(M5G2): There is too much stress or tension for us as mothers. When we face a complaint one responds (reprimanding), "You didn't have to do that! That's why I want you to do this!" My children questioned me, "Mom, you get mad too often and you tell us harsh things." But this is because of the stress I have in the day. I don't want to offend them because they are my children, my blood, I don't want to say anything that will hurt them. They have their feelings. They feel bad when you say something rude. They feel that one doesn't love them anymore. After I scold them I say, "Why did I say this to my child? Why did I talk that way?"

(M1G4): Maybe I have been too harsh, my husband said, when I am teaching my children the lesson of valuing things. My daughter is in the 6th grade and sometimes she asks me to help her with her homework. I say, "Look, do it this way." She goes, "No, I don't want to do it that way because that's not the way the teacher told me to do it." Then she goes and tries to do it her own way, and when she finds it difficult, she comes back and says, "Mom, how was it that you told me to do it?" Then I become angry and I tell her, "Now, you go and figure out by yourself." Then, my husband tells me, "Why are you treating her that way? She is asking you to help her." "But I already offered my help from the beginning and she didn't wanted it," I say.

(M5G2): There are times in which one, as a mother, you have many thoughts in your head during the whole day. Then, you wish to call the attention of your child. But because of so much going on your head, when you correct your child you lack the appropriate words to tell him, "Look, my child, look my darling, this is done this way." But there is too much stress or tension that you have as a mom, that when the time comes when you receive a complaint, you say (*angered tone*), "You didn't had any business doing that! That is why I want you to do this!"

Need to learn non-punitive parenting skills. Mothers reported the common use of physical punishment and strict methods to discipline their children. However, they also expressed an intense uneasiness about the use of these parenting skills as well as frustration for not knowing alternative non-punitive parenting skills. Three mothers reflected about this struggle:

(M3G1): You have to be there to supervise your children, but not by screaming at them. I am not a saint. I have a very bad temper. Thank God I have been able to fix it. Gradually, I am learning all the positive things. I used to yell to my children too much. Sometimes I still do. But with yelling you cannot resolve anything.

(M2G3): An important topic would be to learn how to raise our children. My four-year-old misbehaved at school. I said, "You have to behave yourself." She said, "I don't want to." I said, "Do you want me to spank you?" Then I smack her bottom and she started crying. I said, "Will you do it again?" She said, No, mommy, I won't." However, I would like to learn more about how to raise children, so that when I give her a command she responds the very first time, not until the third time.

(M5G3): My daughter obeys her father. In contrast, with me, I don't know, sometimes I lose my patience. I wish there was a school for parents that taught you how to control your anger that you sometimes feel. Sometimes I feel like crying and I tell my daughter, "Don't get me angry because I don't like hitting you. I don't like it. It hurts me when I hit you and you cry."

Need to improve communication skills. A common need expressed by participants referred to their desire to improve their communication skills, which they consider to be closely linked to their capacity to regulate emotions. Three mothers reflected on this issue:

(M4G2): I would like to learn how to guide my children, how to talk to them. Because we work so much and we have so many problems, we cannot find the right occasion to talk to our children. You cannot find enough words to tell them, "Look, my son, this is like that" or "This is the way you have to do it." What would help me is learning how to raise my children, how to talk to them so that they understand the message I'm trying to give them, or how to get them to stay calm when I talk to them… I also need to learn to keep transmitting the good to them, despite the many struggles that I face.

(M4G3): I would appreciate learning a method of communication with children, so that we can communicate with them at different stages of life. Communication has to do with building trust and later on being able to help them as parents.

(M10G2): Having communication and learning how to talk to your children in a nice way is very important. We must maintain the communication with our children. Communication is the most important factor.

Couple-level Needs

Need for building a supportive co-parenting relationship. In terms of co-parenting relationships, mothers not only expressed the need for their partners to be more involved as fathers, but also the high need for couples to be a united parental front. Two mothers reflected:

(M5G2): One time, my husband and I contradicted one another. We both took away each other's authority. Then the children didn't know who to obey, him or me. On one occasion I told him, "Look, just don't interfere. Let me do it." Then I told my husband, "If there was a school for parents I would go, because I still have a lot to learn as a mother on how to raise my children." When you are experiencing so much stress, I wish there was a paper telling you, "When your child behaves this way, say this." Or have a person telling you, "Look, when your children are behaving this way, say this, and you, dad, is better for you to stop there. He has the authority, but is better for you, dad, to wait for your turn…" Many times what happens is that the child, father, and mother clash with one another. They get stuck in the same place. Nobody understands anything. Nobody is able to make sense. Then, children ask, "Who do I obey, mom or dad?"

> **(M1G4):** We need help with fathers getting a little more involved, because they believe that the task is only for us, mothers. The fact that I don't work outside the home does not mean that it's only my responsibility. My little girl, she needs her father. When she sees him, she wants to do her homework with him. Then he says, "I'm tired. I don't want to do it." I tell my husband, "You know? She works faster when she does it with you. You have a different point of view." Children need their fathers to be more involved. Children need both parents; both father and mother are indispensable for a child.

When discussing the need for supportive co-parenting relationships, women described that parenting programs targeting fathers and mothers would be very beneficial, as one mother stated:

> **(G1M5):** We need parenting talks for all adults… Because if only mothers receive these talks, then fathers will be left out, right? So, it is important to have men and women present, one with the other. Because whatever he feels, we feel as well. Then, it's good to hear what is it that they are feeling, and having them listen to what we feel as well.

Need to address intimate partner violence (IPV). The majority of women shared their concern about children being exposed to IPV and the need for safety and protection, as one mother affirmed:

> **(M3G1):** It's difficult. It's true that children get traumatized. One day there was a problem with my cousin's husband who was drunk. I told him, "Notice that you are giving your children a bad example. Again and again you are traumatizing them. They think you are going to kill their mom. That's not OK." He didn't answer, but at least he didn't hit me either. I tried to separate the problem between them in front of their children. But the trauma is for the children. They scream desperately because they don't want to see that abuse… That hurts… What's happening to my cousin hurts me. Children are not at fault for everything that they are witnessing.

The need to address IPV issues was widespread among participants. The following narrative is an example of the intense problems associated with IPV, frequently reported by women in the group:

> **(M6G1):** One time my husband wanted to hit me. I don't know how I got the courage. I grabbed a knife and said, "If you lay a hand on me that will be the last thing you do." One of my daughters was screaming, "My mom is going to kill my dad!" My own mother said to my child, "Leave them alone. Let them fight" and she took my daughters away. He didn't lay a hand on me. As a woman you have to defend yourself.

Need to engage fathers. Mothers expressed their frustration with fathers being emotionally distant and uninvolved with their children. This absence also brings a burden to

mothers who need to compensate for this loss, as one mother (M3G5) affirmed, "Sometimes husbands prefer to hang out with their friends instead of playing with their children."

Three mothers provided detailed reflections, describing the passivity of fathers with regard to childrearing activities:

> **(M3G1)**: It is always going to be us, the women, the ones who have to look after children, making sure everything is clean, making sure that children take everything they need, looking after everything because the men never worry about it. The weight from the household is over me: supervising their homework, preparing school uniforms… everything. And husbands are only expecting that children have passing grades. I feel that if children are able to get ahead, it's because mothers are looking after them.
>
> **(M2G1):** I wish my husband were present and could talk to the children. What hurts me the most is that he doesn't share time with them. I wish for him to say, "We are going to sit down at the table today"' at least one day. Give them five minutes at least to talk to them about the good and the bad, everything. What are the good things they have learned? But him… the bad! He comes home drunk… I do it all by myself. It shouldn't be like that. He should be a father. He doesn't care. I tell him, "How do you want for your children to respect you if you don't inspire any respect?" Whenever he becomes aware of this, it's going to be way too late.
>
> **(M6G1):** Fathers should support their wives and children, help with their school homework. The mother kills herself doing housework and preparing meals. They just come home and kick their shoes off, have dinner and go to sleep. It's not fair. They never have time, or cannot do it, or don't want to do it. Somebody needs to talk to them at a meeting. They don't get it. But you must insist. We need to find a solution. They need to dedicate time to their children. Turn the TV off and sit down with them and ask them how was their day. I tell my husband, "They are crazy for you and you don't give them anything." Even if you give them money, food, whatever… you are not giving what they need the most, your love, talking to them so that they feel they are important for him.

Family-level Needs

Identifying and overcoming hurtful parenting legacies. Participants addressed the importance on issues related to their childhood experiences, and the way in which their parents' legacies influence how they raise their children. Mothers frequently used phrases such as "I do not want to be like my parents" when reflecting on the hurtful memories they have from their childhood. Participants also affirmed their desire to break hurtful parenting patterns. One mother offered her personal account:

(M4G5): I tend to yell. I don't know if it is because my own mother got me used to her speaking very loudly. She used to yell at us. That is something I wish to avoid, but many times I am not aware of it. Sometimes I do notice that I am yelling and that I am about to spank them. But many times I don't notice that I yell at them. That's another reason why I fight with my husband. He says, "Don't yell at me." I respond (*yelling*), "I'm not yelling at you." So maybe I am, but I am unaware of it.

Many mothers also reported suffering parental abuse, neglect, and parentification as children. One participant shared her story:

(M4G1): When I was eight years old I had my two younger brothers under my care. My mother left and moved to the city and she would return whenever she felt like it. I didn't even know where she was. My father was going out with different women and he would take them home. Then, he left and I had nothing, nothing to feed my brothers with, not even a tortilla. If I didn't go out and work my brothers didn't eat. I was mom and father for my brothers.

Need for family-based parenting interventions. Participants expressed a high need for a parenting interventions aimed at addressing the challenges they face when trying to control and protect their children. Two mothers stated their perceptions about this issue:

(M1G2): There is so much evil nowadays that out of fear you tell your children, "Go ahead and go out but I want you back at a certain time. I don't want you to hang out with So-and-so." Children say, "Here you go again with that." As a parent, you tell them that but they don't believe you. As parents we want the best for our children, and for them not to hang out with the wrong crowd. We need a meeting for parents and one for adolescents so that everybody is on the same page and we can go through the process together. Then, you as a parent you can say, "Remember what they told us during that talk? See, you have to be cautious." Because there comes the time in which your children get bored with you. "My mom tells me the same thing over and over." So it's important for all the family to be involved in the subject, as a parent with your child, or with your partner.

(M5G2): We need somebody to give us several sessions and a follow up. Parenting classes for both, fathers and mothers. They need to call the attention of both. I told my husband, "It would be nice if we both of us receive the information." That way neither of us can say, "She or he is exaggerating things." During these sessions, fathers are addressed with a firm tone, while we are addressed in a more gentle way, because we are women. But then, men don't share what they discussed in sessions with us because they might say, "Due to the fact that we are men, we are chastised." So it's not as helpful as addressing the couple together, in an assertive way, so that we both can understand our parental roles. That way neither him nor I are blamed, but we both understand as adults what needs to be done.

Mothers reflected on the need for parenting interventions targeting concerns associated with parenting children at every stage of development. Two mothers affirmed:

> **(M6G2):** I tell my husband, when we have a confrontation with our children and I have to call their attention, it is a very different type of parenting style for when they are 19, 15, or 6 years old. At times I say to myself, "What I am doing? How I am supposed to act so that my 6 year old, my 15, and 19 year old can understand?" If there were a school for parents I would go because I have so much to learn still.

> **(M7G3):** We need a system of communication, so that we can communicate with children at each of their growth stages. They go through a young age, then adolescence, and then they start maturing. It would be helpful to learn to communicate in their own language so that they trust us and we can help them. We need communication so that we can understand each other. We all go through the same parenting experiences but in different time periods. In my days, things were not as dangerous as they are now. My children say to me, "You don't want me to go to the party. I'm not doing anything wrong." I say back to them, "You aren't but other people might, and some pay for others."

In addition to adapting to children at different stages of development, mothers also talked about the great need to learn how to manage conflict with their children. Particularly as they grow older and move into adolescence. One mother shared:

> **(M6G5):** When my youngest daughter was born, my oldest girl was one year old. As the months went by, she became self-sufficient. She would change her own clothes and eat by herself. I would bathe her and she would get dressed, while I was changing the baby. So she grew up like that, and now she does what she feels like, and she is only 6 years old. What am I going to do? I see my 17 year-old sister who is so difficult. I don't want my daughter to be like that. What can I do? I feel frustrated. I have started fighting with her and it is hard.

In fact, parenting adolescents was a particularly challenging need addressed by the majority of participants, as one mother said:

> **(M6G2):** When my children misbehave and I call their attention I say, "Look children, please obey me. I'm here with you. Please be responsive. Look, I'm concerned about you and you're not doing your part." Sometimes my oldest son contradicts me and tells me, "When I was little it was one thing, but now that I'm older it's a different thing." Then, you as a mom have to correct them, but with all that children get to hear on the streets, from their friends, they confuse them all.

One mother further elaborated on these challenges:

(M5G1): First is communication and respect. To love one another because there are 150children who don't love you as a parent. When you have problems they hate you. It hasn't happened to me, but that's what I've seen. So they need to learn to love one another because if they fight at home they will do it out on the street. They need to know what it is to love or treat right another person… to be more united to their partners, and not to abuse you.

Need for youth-oriented programs. Mothers expressed their strong interest in their children receiving programs addressing mental health, teen pregnancy, and social skills. They consider that a focus on youth is truly needed, as three mothers stated:

(M5G1): I would like for my daughters to attend a group for teens, because my children are dealing with all this activity, the commitments, the texting, and they don't obey their mom. Daughters that have boyfriends don't listen to their mothers. So a group for teens would be good. Having a boyfriend is OK, but a mother has to know about it. Sometimes moms prohibit and that doesn't work. They end up pregnant because mothers prohibit too much. That's why they want to do what they feel like. If they want to hear music, they should, if they want their friends to come home, you cannot say no as a mom. It is good for daughters to communicate with us as mothers.

(M3G4): My son received a talk about alcohol and drugs and it was very helpful. He learned about the effects and diseases that drugs produce. He tells me, "Mom, I don't want to reach that point." These are topics that are missing from schools, where they only address topics of sexual relations and pregnancy. And no matter how much they tell youth about it, that's the first thing they do. Sometimes other topics are neglected in order to address sex education, and girls still get pregnant. So, I think that youth need to know about drugs and negative peer influence.

(M2G2): We need prevention programs for our children, so that they avoid having drug and alcohol problems because seeing a child go through that is sad. It would be very good if there would be meetings for adolescent boys and their fathers, so they can raise their awareness about the consequences that abuse can bring.

Need to learn how to tutor their children. Several mothers reported having trouble being able to help their children with schoolwork. This was a particularly distressing topic for mothers as they are strongly committed to instilling in their children the value of pursuing an education as a source of financial security in their futures. Three mothers provided detailed narratives about this issue:

(M2G1): I don't know how to read, but I fight for my children. I tell my oldest daughter, "Fight hard, my daughter. I don't want you to be like I was." I didn't take advantage of

getting an education because I didn't want to, because my mother gave me the opportunity to study and I didn't take advantage of it. So, I don't want that for my children.

(M6G5): Sometimes is frustrating wanting to help my children with schoolwork and not being able to do so. For example, with my oldest daughter, she is in the seventh grade. I wish I could help her in everything she struggles with, so that she can do it well.

(M3G2): My mother never denied us access to an education, but she could not afford it either. We lived our lives as God wished… We became adult women, we had our children and now I think to myself about what I didn't have at the time, and that I wished for so much… I don't want my children to miss out on that. I want them to have everything, and that is why I make an effort every day and I go to work, I come here to Futuro Vivo to do shifts, and everything for them. So that tomorrow my children can be somebody, they will be my pride, they will be somebody that I can say, "Well, my effort was really worth it." I don't want them to be like me. I want my children to be better than me. Because with all my mistakes and everything that one makes as a human being… well, I want the best for my children… That is why we are here now.

CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION

The primary goal of this investigation was to reach an initial understanding of the life experiences of a group of Guatemalan female participants, both as women and mothers within the contexts of their culture and country. In addition to exploring their most relevant life experiences, common challenges and needs associated with these roles were investigated. As illustrated in chapter four, participants repeatedly referred to the meaning of being a woman and a mother as closely interrelated. Thus, and due to the significant overlap in the data, this chapter presents an integrative interpretation of findings according to the various levels of the ecodevelopmental framework (Bronfenbrenner, 1977; Bronfenbrenner, 1986). The analyses of data in the sections below connect current findings with relevant literature related to risk and protective factors as relevant to the participants' accounts as women and mothers.

Being a Woman and Being a Mother in the Guatemalan Context

Microsystem

Individual-level risk factors. Results confirmed the common existence of histories of cumulative trauma and intense life struggles, as reported by Guatemalan women from a marginalized and disadvantaged group. Participants' detailed narratives of adversity demonstrated a chronological occurrence of adverse events in their lives. Specifically, several participants reported growing up poor, experiencing an abusive and neglectful upbringing, being victims of intimate partner violence (IPV) as children and/or partners, suffering human rights violations (e.g., political repression), experiencing loss and grief, and being constantly exposed to community violence. Menjívar (2008) has documented the deleterious effects that direct exposure to cumulative trauma under conditions of structural violence has on individuals. These events set the conditions for women in this study to be particularly vulnerable to marginalization,

socio-economic inequality, limited access to resources and material goods, social conflict and community violence, and a permanent sense of insecurity in multiple areas of their lives.

The data clearly showed women's exposure to exceptionally adverse upbringings and living conditions, with strong indicators of cumulative trauma and mental health problems such as intense depression and anxiety. Scholars grounded in the Latin American context such as Martín-Baró (1994), have stressed the need to interpret trauma symptomatology beyond traditional individualistic frameworks. That is, the nature of trauma and adversity reported by mothers in this study must be understood within the context of oppression and terror that has characterized the post-war era in Guatemala.

In addition to the multiple ways that this adversity has impacted their lives as women, participants reported how the detrimental effects of contextual challenges extend to their identities as mothers (Bert, Guner, & Lanzi, 2009). In fact, the interrelationship of various forms of adversity was confirmed by Speizer and colleagues (2008), who documented in a sample of Guatemalan parents, how histories of abuse and trauma as children led women to more frequent use of physical punishment towards their children. Participants in this study confirmed the occurrence of this cycle of violence, as they offered clear narratives describing how the harsh upbringing that they experienced led them to engage in more punitive parenting practices (McMillan, 2007). This finding has been confirmed by studies indicating the widespread practices of punitive and corporal punishment practices in Guatemalan society (McMillan & Burton, 2009).

Protective factors. Despite the clear adversity experienced in multiple ways by women in this study, participants clearly described their strong desire and commitment to change the legacies of abuse that they experienced. For example, several participants reported benefiting from workshops and talks organized by Futuro Vivo (FV), with a focus on promoting positive

childrearing, gender-awareness, and school performance for their children. In addition, mothers highlighted the usefulness of mental health interventions offered by FV. These interventions, according to participants, have provided them with coping mechanisms and reinforced protective factors such as helping them increase their self-esteem and self-awareness, as well as encouraging father involvement in the absence of IPV.

As women described the impact of contextual supports provided by FV, it is clear that they engaged in a process known as *concientization* (Freire, 2000), which consists of developing self awareness about oppressive structures and beliefs, becoming empowered, and embracing social action. Closely related to this process of growth, participants referred to their spiritual beliefs as a guide for effective parenting and inspiration in life in the midst of adversity. Based on these findings, it is evident the critical importance of community-based interventions aimed at empowering individuals and marginalized groups (Maton, 2008), as well as the saliency of reinforcing cultural spiritual beliefs as core components of interventions with vulnerable Latino populations (Bernal & Saenz-Santiago, 2006). Moreover, current findings show the critical role that schools can have for marginalized populations (Fischel, 2006; Neal & Neal, 2012).

Individual expressions of resilience. In this study, women's resilience and sense of empowerment emerged within an integration of cultural values, spiritual, and religious beliefs. These shared beliefs are particularly relevant in contexts of oppression as confirmed by Walsh (2003) and Falicov's (2007) work with disenfranchised populations. Specifically, both authors affirm that these beliefs provide a sense of strength, cultural resistance, meaning, and hope in the midst of hardship and adversity. By considering the adverse context to which women are exposed in Guatemala, embracing these resources should be an essential component of interventions aimed at strengthening individual protective factors.

With regards to their sense of resilience and their identity as women, participants expressed gratitude for being a woman, and some participants even framed their female identity as a blessing. This finding is particularly unique, as women did not minimize the intense adversity, pain, and challenges that represent being a woman in the Guatemalan context. For example, women constantly addressed how challenging is to be a woman in this country, confirming previous research demonstrating the adversity faced by women in Latin America (Aguilar, 2005; Carey & Torres, 2010; Musalo, Pellegrin, & Roberts, 2010). However, women reported relying on spiritual resources to overcome life challenges, particularly as it refers to a sense of a higher purpose in the midst of the adversity that they frequently experience. Furthermore, they refer to their children as the main source of inspiration and catalyst for personal change, strength, and fulfillment.

From a Latin American feminist and strength-base perspectives, current data confirm the critical need to recognize how Guatemalan women integrate their own identities according to cultural traditions and spiritual meaning (Shaney, 2007; Valoy, 2012). At the same time, participants reported their desire to transcend traditional expectations about women in Latin American as they seek freedom and equality, while also remaining connected to tradition. Likewise, they expressed their desire to commit to their couple relationship as characterized by equality, independence, and autonomy. These findings confirm statements made by scholars focused on the Latin American context calling for frameworks supporting the promotion of women's rights within cultural and spiritual paradigms that women identify as meaningful (Castro Dopacio, 2010; Falicov, 2010; González-López, 2005; Hallum, 2003; Ready, 2001).

Furthermore, mothers clearly expressed how their expectations extend to their children as they are committed to helping them achieve a higher quality of life and self-realization. This sentiment was fully captured as women talked about "making sure your children get ahead,"

particularly through educational attainment, as well as encouraging in their children a profound sense of self-worth. These findings concur with McMillan's (2007) reflections about the significance of mothers' efforts and sacrifices for their children within the Latin American context. Specifically, McMillan reported that Guatemalan mothers' experiences of oppression are closely related to a lack of educational opportunities and poverty. These experiences, in turn, strongly inform women's desire and commitment to secure a better life for their children.

Couple-level factors

Risk factors. Participants' narratives confirmed the important influence that their male partners have in their lives, as well as how this influence has a direct impact on their physical and mental health (Carter, 2002). For example, given the pervasive influence of a patriarchal history and socio-cultural structures, a major theme addressed by participants referred to the detrimental effects of negative machismo, particularly as it refers to men engaged in abusive and/or controlling behaviors, women's objectification, and substance abuse. Women in this investigation frequently addressed these challenges in their testimonies, coinciding with Falicov's (2010) observations regarding other Latino groups. Furthermore, women provided detailed narratives of the negative impact of machismo on their physical and mental health (Aguilar, 2005). For example, participants provided detailed accounts of their partners' infidelity, gender imbalance in housework, childrearing responsibilities, irresponsible fatherhood, lack of balance with regards to dynamics of power and control, and various forms of IPV (e.g., financial, emotional, and physical abuse), which in some cases led to fatalities. These findings are highly consistent with multiple reports indicating the pervasive violation of human rights of women in Guatemala, reaching the proportion of femicide based on the magnitude of the problem as well the widespread culture of impunity (Lagarde y de los Ríos, 2006; Suárez & Jordan, 2007).

Women also expressed struggles associated with lack of family involvement and protection in the face of IPV. This finding confirms research indicating the tremendous challenges women face when trapped in family systems that condone abuse and exploitation (Galvani, 2006). These realities become particularly detrimental if women assume a caregiver role with abusers, which goes in line with the description of *marianismo* as a cultural mandate for women to be self-sacrificing for their families and male partners, even if these are abusive (Arredondo, 2002). These conditions are further exacerbated by oppressive historical factors such as mass violence, terror, militarization, discrimination, lack of opportunities, and intense poverty (MacKenney, 2004).

Following this order of ideas, Menjívar (2008) has identified the normalization of every-day violence against women as a common phenomenon in Latin America. However, it is critical to remain mindful that women's position of tolerance towards male dominance and abuse is grounded on the need to preserve their lives, achieve financial security for their children and themselves, and secure their children's overall wellbeing (Gomes, 2013; Kulkarni, Racine, & Ramos, 2012). This interpretation of the adaptive function of marianismo as a self-preservation mechanism, challenges deficit-based orientations that views women as weak, passive, and defenseless (González-López, 2005; Hernández, 2005; Moreno, 2007).

Protective factors. Remarkably, and contrasting with research showing a passive-protective response of Ladina women in the face of male dominance (Menjívar, 2008), at least 10 participants openly challenged oppressive *machista* messages and practices. Challenging the traditional stereotype of passiveness associated with marianismo, women reported various coping mechanisms for dealing with machista partners. For example, participants stated the need to set boundaries with men by not tolerating any type of abuse, resisting their attempts for control, being resourceful about attaining financial independence, and even threatening to leave the relationship

and the children as ways to pressure men to modify their abusive and controlling behaviors. These behaviors are consistent with how women in unequal power relations resist male power and oppression (Collis, 1999). However, as the Guatemalan scholar Aguilar (2005) affirmed, even though their resilient capacity is evident, women's ability to change the status quo in relationships continues to be restricted by social, financial, and cultural structures of patriarchal societies.

Another expression of protective factors referred to supportive partners, reported by few participants. This support was described in the form of partners helping with house chores and preparing meals, being involved in childrearing, expressing appreciation for women, attending church together as a couple/family, being dependable household providers, avoiding drinking alcohol, and being non-violent. These descriptions challenge the traditional views of negative machismo (Falicov, 2010), and fall in line with the evolving literature on positive machismo calling for the need to investigate how Latino men develop a sense of masculinity by being compassionate partners and committed to equity in family life (Cruz, King, Leu, Cauce, Widaman & Conger, 2011; Perilla, Bakerman, & Norris, 1994). Current findings also call into question the monolithic views of traditional Latino gender roles and couple dynamics. In this sample, variability was found in the spectrum of gender roles, according to the values of marianismo and machismo. Some participants reported abiding more closely to traditional values dictating female passiveness towards male dominance. On the other side of the spectrum, women reported feeling empowered to defend themselves in abusive situations, upholding their rights and values as women, and demanding a more equal stance in gender relations (Parra-Cardona, et al., 2008).

Family-level Factors. Women in this study described the central influence that members from their nuclear and extended family systems have in their lives as women and mothers. This finding confirms the relevance of family in the life of Guatemalan women and mothers (McIlwaine & Moser, 2003; Myers, 2004), and corroborates research focused on the cultural

value of *familismo* in the Latino culture (Arredondo, 2009). Specifically, scholars have affirmed that familismo (i.e., strong orientation towards family) is among the most prominent cultural values among Latinos based on the strong interdependence that nuclear and extended families have. Furthermore, the impact of transgenerational family messages and legacies is particularly strong in Latino families and include prescriptions about expected roles for women and mothers. With regards to current findings, some familial messages reported by women were oppressive (e.g., expectation to be a submissive woman) whereas others were liberating (e.g., family as source of inspiration to fight adversity).

Risk Factors. Examples of disempowering family dynamics that represented a risk factor for participants included family members being judgmental about mothers' childrearing practices, gender-oppressive mandates and expectations, intra-familial discrimination, lack of support, or conflictive interactions. All these issues represented considerable stressors in the lives of participants and had a detrimental impact on their quality of life.

Attention to these findings is highly relevant, as research has confirmed (SmithBattle, 2006), the significant negative impact that harmful family legacies can have, particularly as it refers to obstructing the capacity of parents to fully embrace their identities as caregivers. These findings also concur with research demonstrating that unsupportive family legacies can lead to perpetuation of neglect and abuse in new generations, punitive and harsh parenting, and emotional aggression (Cohen, Hien, & Batchelder, 2008). For some women in this study, their resilient capacity and sense of awareness have had such positive influence on them that they were able to develop positive parenting skills regardless of the negative legacies inherited from their parents. These data confirm the relevance of exploring personal histories, particularly because intergenerational issues become risk or protective factors over time (Carolan, Burns-Jager, Bozek, & Escobar-Chew, 2010).

Protective factors. As Triandis (1997) has affirmed, the significance that family relations have for Guatemalans resonates with the interconnectedness that characterizes collectivistic cultures. For women in this study, whereas there were examples of oppressive family dynamics, there were also several testimonies of family unity and solidarity. Participants offered detailed narratives of family support, which is essential for their parenting efforts, particularly for single mothers working outside the home. These data confirm the value of family-centered approaches when working with multi-stressed and underprivileged groups (Walsh, 2006).

In addition, data clearly showed the critical role that participants' mothers have in their lives. According to several women, their mothers were clear role models that taught them the value of hard work and discipline. At the same time, they provided them with essential life skills, material and financial resources, and unconditional emotional nurturance and support. These data also indicate the importance of female bonding in Guatemalan families as well as the need to further investigate the multiple expressions of this emotional attachment. Current findings also call for the examination of the ways in which women have found to preserve this bonding experience regardless of their immersion in patriarchal family structures and societies (Baumann, Kuhlberg, & Zayas, 2010; De La Rosa, Dillon, Rojas, Schwartz, & Duan, 2010; Romo, Bravo, Cruz, Ríos, & Kouyoumdjian, 2010).

Mesosystem

Risk factors. Participants reported multiple challenges as women and mothers in their interaction with other systems that have an impact on their everyday lives. For example, in environments characterized by scarce basic resources and services (e.g., water, public services), women reported that relocations to new neighborhoods were perceived as a threat and burden by established residents. Such animosity and adverse social environment has been previously documented and identified as long-term effects following years of trauma and violence due to the

Guatemalan civil war (Clouser, 2009). Furthermore, traditional beliefs and cultural expectations regarding women's gender roles placed several participants at a place of clear disadvantaged in their communities, which led them to experience pressure to conform, isolation, and rejection. For example, the pressure to conform to traditional gender roles was identified as a struggle by participants wanting to have egalitarian relationships with their male partners ("You always come across male friends that make machista comments"). According to women, resisting the pressure to conform had deleterious effects on their mental health ("I went away crying because people were mean. It was terrible"), as well as their ability to obtain resources to support their parenting needs (e.g., people refusing to provide childcare support). These findings confirm the pervasive negative impact of oppressive social networks that contradict Latino cultural values emphasizing the values of community (i.e., colectivismo) and meaningful interpersonal relationships (i.e., personalismo) (Parra-Cardona, Escobar-Chew, Holtrop et al., 2013). Furthermore, women reported how these adverse social contexts have prevented them from accessing the resources they need for themselves and their families, and the type of relationships they would like to foster within their family systems (Diener, Casady, & Wright, 2003).

With regards to challenges in work settings and work-related networks, women reported being exposed to abusive, discriminatory, and exploitative environments. Women who work as residential domestic workers (commonly identified in Guatemala as *live-in maids*) are the most vulnerable, overworked, underpaid, and exploited workers (Valladares, 2009). Several participants in this category reported multiple negative experiences associated with these issues. Moreover, women's limited educational background also restricted the range of employment options, making them more vulnerable towards abusive conditions, and less able to provide for their family's needs. These findings are consistent with Gomes' (2013) conclusions related to the fact that disadvantaged women are particularly vulnerable to exploitation due to the intersections

of gender, race, and social inequalities. Thus, current findings confirm that being a woman, poor, and member of an ethnic minority group place women at high risk for discrimination and exploitation. An additional challenge that was particularly distressing for participants referred to having to leave their children unsupervised for extended periods of time while they were working outside the home. Women also reported the abuse resulting from double shifts (working outside and at home), without any signs of solidarity or support from their male partners. These data constitute evidence of the adversity experienced by working women, which has particularly exploitative dimensions among Guatemalan women (Hallman et al., 2005).

Protective factors. Participants' testimonies confirmed the value that social networks have in their lives as women and mothers. As expected, the cultural values of *colectivismo* and *personalismo,* which highlight the importance of community life and interpersonal relations, thoroughly informed the life and parenting experiences of participants (Parra-Cardona et al., 2008). These findings are mainly relevant because despite living in a context in which public services are extremely limited and fail to respond to basic population needs, mothers have turned to a variety of social networks that provide critical supports to help them meet their many needs.

Additionally, participants reported that building reliable and mutually supportive relationships with other women in their contexts was particularly empowering and essential to confront the numerous challenges they experience. These positive relationships typically were initially established in interactions with other mothers in school and community activities organized by Futuro Vivo (FV). These data confirm the relevance of establishing meaningful community supports among Latinos (McIlwaine & Moser, 2001). Interestingly, some participants identified their employers among their most meaningful social support networks. Specifically, these participants provided detailed narratives describing how their employers' support was instrumental to help them enroll their children at school, obtain a safe living space as an extension

of their work as domestic workers, and escape abusive relationships with partners. These extraordinary expressions of solidarity by employers constitute clear examples of social practices centered in the values of *personalismo and colectivismo* (Bernal & Saez-Santiago, 2006).

Futuro Vivo as a core community support. Across all focus groups, women strongly identified Futuro Vivo (FV) as a central source of support in their lives. Although study participants identified the FV school as their initial point of contact, the vast majority of women provided detailed examples of how this community organization is essential in their lives as they rely on their medical services, access to prescriptions, food at no cost, psychological services, among other resources. Women particularly valued that FV provides a high quality education and a balanced nutrition to participants' children attending preschool and elementary school.

In addition to immediate services, women identified FV as a substantial source of social capital as they have developed meaningful interpersonal relations with other mothers and FV staff members. These reports confirm research findings highlighting the value of schools and community-based organizations as advocates and promoters of trust with vulnerable and oppressed groups (McIlwaine & Moser, 2001). From a liberation psychology standpoint, these findings denote the need for community-based organizations to facilitate the empowerment of members from underserved communities (McMilllan & Burton, 2009).

Exosystem

Risk factors. A salient theme for women in this study referred to the pervasiveness of community violence, which affects their lives as women and mothers in multiple ways. These findings are identified at the exosystem level because the intensity, level of impact, as well as frequency fluctuates for women in this investigation.

As Godoy (2005) documented previously, women in Central American countries are affected by legacies of civil war, poverty, and limited by cultures of lawfulness; which make them

easy targets for multiple forms of violence and crime such as rape, human trafficking, extortion, and gang violence. These expressions of violence drastically limit the women's sense of safety, freedom of mobility, and social interactions with support networks and family. Women in this study voiced that they live in fear for their own existence, as well as the lives of their loved ones, every single day, even while being at home ("We live day by day asking God for everything to go well, trying to survive"). They also reported having to apply rigorous monitoring and supervision strategies in order to protect their children from external risks (e.g., assaults, exposure to negative peer influence, kidnapping, extortions). These findings confirm previous research describing the high prevalence of multiple expressions of community violence in Guatemala (Manz, 2008).

Other risk factors reported by women refer to their interactions with formal institutions, particularly with regards to discriminatory service practices. As Menjívar (2008) has affirmed, institutional violence consists of oppressive norms and practices that perpetuate structures of power, race, class, and male dominance with disregard for the experiences of vulnerable groups. For example, participants provided specific examples of how health service providers criticize and patronize women ("That doctor humiliated me so much"). Women also reported their lack of trust in governmental institutions, particularly as it refers to law enforcement and justice systems because they are perceived as unhelpful, corrupted, disrespectful, and exploitative towards women ("We don't' feel respected as women or mothers"). These insights parallel research findings describing the ineffectiveness of the Guatemalan judicial system for protecting female citizens and prosecuting crimes against women (Musalo, Pellegrin, & Roberts, 2010).

Participants' reports also confirmed findings by scholars documenting generalized violence against women in Guatemala (Aguilar, 2005; Sanford, 2006; Suárez & Jordan, 2007). These scholars link this situation to the pervasive structures of male dominance in power, which seek to maintain women in subordinate positions. At the same time, the extended history of civil

war has generated institutional and social practices that disregard the human rights of women in Guatemala.

Scholars have documented the structural functions of perpetuating violence against women in the Guatemalan context (Aguilar, 2005; Godoy, 2005; Sanford, 2006). In essence, effectively implementing policies and practices would require multiple efforts at various levels, ranging from intimate partner and community-level violence towards women, including the systematic and massive killing of women and impunity (i.e., femicide). Therefore, actions to eradicate these multiple expressions of violence would require important changes to the status quo of social systems (e.g., family) as well as institutions (Menjívar, 2008; Menjívar & Rodríguez, 2005; Montenegro, 2002; Suárez & Jordan, 2007). For example, despite the brutal assassination and dismemberment of one of the mothers served by FV, participants described the impotence they felt resulting from authorities' lack of action in the case, as well as the victim-blaming attitude from authorities and society ("she put herself in that position of risk").

Protective Factors. As Neal and Neal affirm (2012), local public schools have the potential to offer various advantages to communities. For example, educational institutions can provide access to infrastructure, social assistance, and culturally-focused activities. Beyond the material assets that Futuro Vivo (FV) provides to research participants, they identified FV as offering a critical space for the development of social capital at the community level based on the strong formation of social networks that occurs in this setting.

According to research participants, FV constitutes one of the most important external protective factors in their context. As Miraftab (2001) has reflected on the influence of grassroots networks and initiatives, FV has become a setting in which women have a voice and can become active participants in the process of fostering the well being of their families. Futuro Vivo's positive influence also resonates with Froehle's (1994) considerations about the influence that

grassroots religious organizations have as centers of community life, collective identity, and solidarity. FV also offers women and their families the opportunity to interact with healthier peer groups, under the common goal of community and self-improvement through after-school programs, job skills training, and employment opportunities for parents.

As an educational institution FV goes beyond its central purpose of providing education (as well as healthy nutrition) for children, by helping rebuild social ties and strengthening trust among community members, which as Dosh (2003) has expressed, facilitates community participation and empowerment for social change. In addition, FV offers various critical services, including mental and physical health care, which otherwise would be absent in this community. As a non-governmental organization, FV provides a model for other agencies and institutions seeking to serve vulnerable communities.

Concurring with reports by Caldwell and colleagues (2005), FV has promoted a sense of co-responsibility among community members with regards to the shared creation of program goals and sustainability. Fostering ownership of a program at the community level has been characteristic of community movements informed by liberation theology and ideology (Martín-Baró, 1994). Consequently, committed community members donate their time and skills to FV, and some (mostly mothers) are also employees of small businesses created within the larger community program (e.g., manufacturing and selling chocolate and soy-based products). These mothers receive specialized training, literacy programs, and a supplemental salary to support their families. These actions are critical to economically empower women, which constitutes a critical factor to eradicate gender-based inequalities in Guatemala (Gomes, 2013).

Macrosystem

Risk factors. Participants reported multiple challenges, which they related to the larger historical, socio-political, and economic contexts. For example, mothers identified the loss of

traditional cultural values as a significant precursor for the deterioration of community and family stability and multiple expressions of violence (e.g., IPV, gang-related violence). These observations concur with research findings indicating the damages that war inflicts on the preservation of community and cultural values, as well as social stability (Pine, Costello, & Masten, 2005).

Furthermore, Menjívar and Rodríguez (2005) analyzed how the perpetuation of corruption and impunity in this context trickles down from macro levels. For example, through the manipulation of laws and corruption, protection has been provided to war criminals in Guatemala and other Latin American countries despite the human rights atrocities they have committed. In fact, many of these criminals have remained in position of power in the Guatemalan government and justice system (Foxen, 2010; Hallum-Montes, 2010). These events send a clear disempowering message to victims of IPV and community violence, further reinforcing a culture of fear, silence, and impunity.

With regards to cultural values and traditions negatively impacting women, participants provided abundant data illustrating the effects of socio-political patriarchy. Specifically, participants reported feeling discriminated against and devalued by society, particularly when they ventured to challenge traditional gender roles. Such systemic pressures are predominantly harmful to women in Guatemalan society as individuals committed to defending women's rights, gender equality, and freedom of choice are at high risk for experiencing social isolation, exclusion, and even death (Aguilar, 2005; Carey & Torres, 2010). The resulting culture of silence can be interpreted as a survival mechanism that has characterized other Latin American countries negatively impacted by patriarchal structures of power, racial discrimination, and profound socio-economic inequalities (Clouser, 2009; Martín-Baró, 1991).

Although a minority of women perceived that positive changes are occurring in Guatemala, the dominant perception was one of sadness and acceptance of a reality that seems extremely difficult to change. As the Guatemalan human right activist and Congressional representative, Nineth Montenegro (2002) has observed, "Even though there has been small victories for women's participation in public spaces, they are largely relegated to a reproductive role inside the home." Thus, current findings confirm the position of subordination and vulnerability that women continue to experience in the Guatemalan society (Taylor, Moran-Taylor, Rodman Ruíz, 2006).

The aforementioned challenges identified by women are further exacerbated by the context of poverty and economic inequality in which women live. That is, poverty and oppressive economic structures that significantly limit the access to opportunities for Guatemalan women's economic prosperity (Hoffman & Centeno, 2003). Participants identified these conditions as they reported considerable financial constraints for meeting their most basic needs, experiencing hunger, and lacking basic services and medical attention. These testimonies of adversity go in line with previous analyses of Latin American countries impacted by poverty and inequality (Gomes, 2013). Finally, mothers reported how these macro-level risks factors ultimately impact their lives and parenting practices as they become overwhelmed with multiple needs and limited resources, resulting in lack of emotional regulation and punitive and harsh parenting practices (Olson, Ceballo, & Park, 2002).

Protective Factors. According to Martín-Baró (1994), a liberation psychology approach is useful for the identification of community-level efforts aimed at promoting the wellbeing of oppressed and marginalized communities, particularly if such efforts are embedded within relevant cultural experiences. For example, research participants expressed core Latino cultural values as connected to their parenting practices, which confirms existing research on Latino

cultural protective factors (Fuller & García Coll, 2010). These values included family unity (*familismo*), which has the potential to enhance and support parental supervision, a known protective factor for children and youth (Piko, Fitzpatrick, & Wright, 2005). An additional core value identified by mothers referred to *respeto* (respect), which consists of showing deference in interpersonal relationships. This finding confirms the importance that this value has in the Latino culture (Calzada, Fernández, & Cortés, 2010).

Women also expressed the relevance of raising children according to expectations of gender-equality. Women's reflections about the importance of instilling these values among their children constitute a reaction against the oppressive cultural practices and beliefs of their context, and are also an indication of how relevant they consider is to critically examine power and gender issues with future generations. These findings corroborate research highlighting the importance of promoting critical thinking on gender and power among children and youth (Cowdery & Knudson-Martin, 2005). The importance of fostering this capacity for critical analysis has been highlighted by parenting researchers who emphasize the need to promote parenting practices by carefully considering the political implications of intervention development and adaptation (Dwairy et al., 2010).

The Parenting Needs of Guatemalan Mothers

Participants expressed multiple parenting needs as they referred to diverse areas of their lives. These data will be discussed according to relevant literature in the sections below.

Individual-level Needs

Mothers highlighted the importance of learning healthy coping and stress management skills, particularly because several participants reported being exposed to cumulative trauma throughout their lives. Mothers were particularly worried about how their negative emotions affect the relationship with their children as they provided detailed accounts of their proneness to

use physical punishment and harsh discipline tactics. Thus, they expressed a strong desire to learn non-punitive and effective ways of disciplining their children. Mothers also identified their need to learn effective communication skills, particularly with adolescent children. This issue was particularly salient for mothers as they consider effective communication with adolescent children as an important protective factor to prevent youth involvement with gangs. Furthermore, women expressed a sense of relief for having their voices heard, particularly in terms of their struggles to regulate emotions and harsh parenting practices which, many of them recognized, put their children at risk for parental neglect or abuse. These findings confirm research with low-income and underserved Latino families indicating that despite multiple contextual stressors, parents are strongly committed to preserve the well-being of their children by learning how to manage their stress and how to engage in appropriate child-rearing and parenting practices (Parra-Cardona et al., 2008, 2009).

Family-level Needs

Couple relationship. Participants highlighted the importance of including their male partners in future family-based and parenting interventions. Whereas women expressed doubts about men willing to engage in interventions for couples, they considered that the participation of men in this type of interventions constitutes a potentially useful alternative to promote a unified parental front and more egalitarian couple relationships. These data confirm findings from parenting interventions in which the involvement of fathers has resulted in increased quality of the couple relationship and increased quality of parenting for both parents (DeGarmo & Forgatch, 2012; Lundahl, Kunz, Brownell, Tollefson, & Burke, 2010).

Women also expressed the potential benefit to participate in workshops aimed at helping them to become more assertive in their couple relationship, particularly in terms of expressing their feelings, thoughts and needs. These expectations corroborate the importance of finding

alternatives to promote a sense of agency with mothers exposed to contextual adversity. For example, Heaton and Forste (2008) reported that helping mothers to effectively engage in family decision-making while remaining sensitive to contextual variables (e.g., traditional gender roles expectations), can lead to positive outcomes in children and refinement of communication strategies that reduce women's exposure to IPV.

Parenting and childrearing needs. Mothers recognized the importance of detaching themselves from negative parenting legacies received from their own parents. Participants also expressed their interest in family-based interventions focused on promoting emotional bonds with children, family problem solving, and family harmony and unity. These data confirm the need to integrate exploration of family legacies into family-based and parenting interventions in an effort to help parents transform destructive legacies into nurturing patterns of parent-child interaction (SmithBattle, 2006). Furthermore, current findings confirm the importance of integrating family-oriented Latino cultural values (e.g., familismo, personalismo) into family-based and parenting interventions because these values constitute important protective values for Latino populations in the face of adversity (Bernal & Domenech Rodríguez, 2009).

Family violence and intimate partner violence (IPV). Mothers expressed great concern for children being exposed to family violence and IPV. For participants, this is a considerable source of distress because gender-based violence is condoned by families, communities, and institutions. Furthermore, gender-awareness interventions from FV have also influenced mothers' perception about the negative effects that violence have in children. These findings are particularly relevant as participants also requested with strong interest, family-based and parenting interventions, which may further exacerbate occurrence of IPV. Thus, current findings highlight the need for interventions to be informed according to gender-based frameworks responsive to potential male dominance and controlling behaviors in parenting practices and

family dynamics. The need for this perspective is important, as parenting research with Latino fathers has reported how these dynamics are widespread among Latino families (Cruz et al., 2011).

Father involvement. Mothers expressed concern for fathers' lack of involvement in the lives of their children. These findings confirm data reported by McMillan (2007) in which lack of father involvement characterized families living in marginalized areas of Guatemala. Furthermore, these authors affirm that promoting father involvement may not be the most beneficial approach. They explain that some Guatemalan mothers, liberated from oppressive and abusive relationships, were able to achieve family stability and a safe environment for their children and some women even achieved positions of leadership within their communities.

Needs related to larger systems

Whereas mothers did not express specific needs with regards to larger socio-political issues, they identified needs related to institutions that have a direct impact on their lives. For example, they reported limitations on their capacity to help their children with schoolwork. In fact, mothers identified helping children achieve educational achievement in their lives as a prominent concern. These data go in line with previous findings in which parenting interventions for Guatemalan mothers evolved by adding components of adult literacy and vocational training to empower women in their exploration of productive lives outside the home environment (McMillan & Burton, 2008). Thus, although women did not express a desire to directly impact the larger socio-political and economic structures, they reported a desire to challenge the expectations for Guatemalan women as limited exclusively to domestic responsibilities. According to Freire's (2005) principles of pedagogy of the oppressed, women in this study were actively involved in a process of *concientización* (critical political analysis), which led them to

explore concrete alternatives to challenge the position of subordination to which they have been subject in the Guatemalan society.

Limitations and Strengths of the Study

Important limitations of this investigation must be noted. First, as it is characteristic of qualitative studies, findings cannot be generalized to the larger Guatemalan population due to the small sample size and findings should be used tentatively when making references to the life experiences of women in Guatemala. Furthermore, because this was a sample recruited from a well-defined community setting (i.e., FV beneficiaries), and additional and contrasting life experiences of Guatemalan mothers in other contexts are not included in this report. Furthermore, for participants in this study, their experiences as women and mothers have been influenced in important ways by their interaction with FV teachers and advocates.

An additional limitation refers to sampling bias due to the fact that the study was restricted to women residing in a marginalized urban area in Guatemala City. In terms of ethnicity, the majority of participants in this study self-identified as Ladina (mestizo), and only three participants self-identified as Mayan women. Recently migrated from rural areas, these participants still adhered to wearing traditional clothing, and practicing native customs as well as language. Thus, the aggregated data may not capture the experiences of the minority Mayan participants. Finally, current findings are limited to mothers' reports, which may not accurately represent the perspectives of fathers and other people of influence in the lives of participants.

Notwithstanding current limitations, this investigation is also characterized by relevant strengths. First, this study provides a critical contribution to a seriously underdeveloped area of scholarship, particularly as it refers to documenting the life and parenting experiences of underserved Guatemalan mothers exposed to extraordinary adversity. The richness of the qualitative approach informing this investigation is considerable as detailed data address

important gaps in the literature. Furthermore, this investigation produced highly relevant findings to inform future community-based and parenting interventions aimed at supporting women in their childrearing efforts as well as to elevate their quality of life. Following a rigorous ecological framework, data collection was implemented by exploring in depth multiple dimensions in women's lives. Furthermore, although the sample size does not allow for generalization of findings, the current sample ensures meeting the standards for rigorous designs in qualitative research, considerably increasing the trustworthiness of the study.

Recommendations for Future Research

Current findings have important research implications. First, preliminary findings indicate the high feasibility for conducting parenting interventions aimed at addressing the needs expressed by research participants. In fact, I intend to utilize current data to conduct a pilot study aimed at testing the initial efficacy of a culturally adapted version of an evidence-based parenting intervention. The findings from this investigation will allow me to design recruitment, intervention implementation, and retention strategies grounded in the life experiences reported by research participants.

Present data also highlight the need to find alternatives to include fathers in future implementation studies, as research participants emphasized the great need for fathers to remain involved in the lives of their children. However, based on the high incidence of IPV reported by women in this study, the promotion of father involvement should be grounded according to gender-based perspectives to prevent iatrogenic effects.

An important limitation that must be addressed in the future refers to the need to effectively engage rural and Mayan families, as this segment of the population has been exposed to pervasive racial discrimination, exploitation, and exclusion. Although focusing in an urban population will be highly relevant, mental health disparities in Guatemala will only be thoroughly

addressed until the most vulnerable groups in the country are included in applied programs of research aimed at elevating their quality of life, within a comprehensive understanding of the historical oppression that they have experienced.

A critical consideration for future research refers to the need to develop research designs according to holistic approaches, particularly because the needs expressed by participants were not limited exclusively to parenting needs. Therefore, designing applied studies according to interdisciplinary perspectives would be highly significant in order to reach an integrative approach. For example, research in the field of community psychology has demonstrated the critical role that personal advocacy has in helping women leave abusive relationships (Beeble, Bybee, & Sullivan, 2010). Additionally, the critical role that Futuro Vivo (FV) has in the lives of participants, thoroughly demonstrates the need to launch future applied research projects within the core structure of FV, particularly as it refers to educational services. Within this perspective, attention to cumulative trauma commonly experienced by Guatemalan parents, as well as careful consideration to the multiple contextual stressors that impact their lives, should be guiding principles for the design of any future family-focused interventions. Thus, future studies should have a main focus (e.g., parenting education) as well as supportive components such as active systems of referral to IPV and mental health services.

Finally, future research efforts should focus on studying the impact of FV as a community-based program within this specific urban context. Specifically, it would be beneficial to collect quantitative data, as well as the implementation of longitudinal designs, in order to quantify and evaluate the long-term effects of this program. These research methodologies would allow determining the core elements that have contributed to the program's success, in order to replicate and disseminate a similar model of community intervention across Latin America.

Recommendations for Family Therapy Practice

Important contributions can be drawn from this study for the field of family therapy. First, the relevance of a holistic and interdisciplinary approach for multi-stressed mothers and their families in the context of Guatemala is evident (Maton, Perkins, Seeger, & 2006). Thus, family therapy services should never be offered in isolation to this population and must include appropriate planning to facilitate critical resources to address the most urgent needs of Guatemalan families.

As Foxen (2010) has stated, it is also essential to recognize women's responses to trauma beyond individualistic approaches, which narrowly center on "treating" individual symptoms, raising the risk for therapists to operate with tunnel visions and deficit-based perspectives. As data indicated, the cumulative trauma experiences reported by participants in this study highlight the need to understand trauma within historical contexts of political repression and widespread community violence. The conditions of these contexts range from gang violence to systematic terrorizing actions, particularly as violent drug cartels have extended their activities to systematic kidnapping and extortion. Thus, as Martín-Baró (1994) has expressed, the psychosocial trauma inflicted on the Guatemalan people must be overcome with community level efforts. The critical influence that FV has in the lives of research participants constitutes clear evidence that family therapy practice must be promoted in close collaboration within highly successful community-based initiatives. This collaboration will secure attaining the goal of empowering the most vulnerable members of the Guatemalan society by supporting their ability to engage in social change.

Within a family intervention framework, it is essential for therapists to focus and reinforce the expressions of resilience already embraced by Guatemalan families. For example, the inclusion of extended family and community members can be a natural option for supporting

clients in their therapeutic process. In line with this view, helping women build their social capital is also an action that has the potential for increasing the amount and quality of protective factors, as reported by participants in this study. These actions would fall in line with the family resilience framework proposed by Walsh (2003), which emphasizes the need to nurture families' potential for recovery and growth. In line with this strengths-based approach, McMillan and Burton (2009) have reported the importance of promoting emotional bonding and effective communication in parent-child relationships as a result of their parenting research with Guatemalan parents. Furthermore, from a transgenerational perspective, assisting mothers to cope effectively with unresolved trauma can help them to prevent child abuse and neglect (Cicchetti, Rogosch, & Toth, 2006), breaking intergenerational legacies of ineffective parenting.

Therapists must also be cognizant of the dynamics of gender and power operating in Guatemalan society, which have led to the normalization of IPV across all levels of society (Aguilar, 2005). Therefore, although the relevance of Latino cultural values must be recognized and utilized whenever appropriate, it is critical for therapists to remain aware that the promotion of specific cultural values can be iatrogenic (e.g., promoting family unity with women exposed to IPV). Therefore, therapists should privilege women's interpretations of gender and cultural values, particularly because in the majority of cases, they will be in the most vulnerable position in couples and families. Thus, an opportunity for centering couple and family therapy in the experiences of Guatemalan families can be taken by actively promoting a process of *concientización* (critical thinking) in which mental health services are implemented according to a thorough awareness of the socio-political context in which the promotion of these services occurs (Martín-Baró, 1994).

As McMillan (2007) also noticed, women suggested that fathers' long work schedules were one of the greatest obstacles for them to participate in parenting classes. Hence, organizing

parenting interventions to be delivered in a flexible format would be particularly beneficial to secure father engagement, as well as to engage fathers in settings that are familiar to them.

Self of the Researcher Reflections

Throughout the course of this investigation, I utilized myself as the main agent for analyzing and developing a grounded theory, always striving to be guided by the voices of participants. Under the guiding principles of community-based participatory research (CBPR), Latin American feminism, and liberation psychology, I approached my mission and responsibilities as a researcher with a serious commitment. This commitment was continuously reaffirmed with each encounter with my informants. I felt an enhanced sense of accountability when one woman, at the end of the focus group, expressed, "I want to thank you for your time that you dedicated to all that we have inside here… we keep everything in and people like you are needed. I feel that you have more voice. I mean, [you need] to raise that voice so that you can help the one who is fallen."

I have taken these words to heart and recognized that giving voice to this group of women does not imply that participants are voiceless, but rather, that their voices have been silenced historically through oppressive structures of violence and oppression. As a researcher, I am in a privileged position for transmitting participants' testimonies of their life experiences. Yet, I am also at risk of replicating dynamics of oppression given my social positionality as an educated, middle-class Ladina. Thus, I attempted to strive balancing my position of power by seeking and following the advice of community leaders on how to approach participants, and from women themselves. I also sought to build a safe and empowering environment during the interviews, which was confirmed by the personal accounts expressed by participants and community leaders. Based on this, I directly thanked women at the end of each focus group for being my teachers throughout this investigation.

A particularly meaningful reflection, which helped me to remain grounded throughout this experience, referred to Martín-Baró's (1994) concept about understanding oppressed populations according to their own social and historical contexts. For example, one of the internal struggles that I faced referred to the accurate interpretation of the participants' realities as I translated their quotes. Thus, in order to maintain fidelity to the meaning of participants' expressions, I corroborated with other native and bilingual speakers that the meaning of my translations fully captured the participants' experiences. I wanted to ensure that translated data did not lose the contextual meaning originally expressed by participants.

An additional challenge that I experienced referred to my first immersion in the data during the initial phase of the interviews, as the experiences reported by women were very challenging to hear and process. I was able to manage this experience through written narratives and reflections in my personal journal as well as critical conversations with my advisor, key community members, and colleagues, which primarily focused on my reactions and interpretation of the powerful stories of trauma and survival that participants shared. My therapeutic training proved to be extremely important for the moments in which the information that participants shared evoked intense and emotional reactions from everybody in the room. Regardless of the intensity, I was able to remain present and supportive towards participants, without disrupting the interview process. I also adhered to critical guidelines for placing participants' well-being above any research goals and by strongly emphasizing to them that they were in charge of the process at all times and were in total control of the amount of details they wanted to disclose.

Finally, I placed special attention to my reactions towards risk and protective factors reported by participants. For example, I noticed how my internal emotional state shifted as I heard the multiplicity of risk factors reported by women, as well as their extraordinary accounts of resilience in the midst of adversity. Based on my therapeutic training, I noticed my initial

tendency to move away from trauma narratives too quickly. Noticing this first reaction allowed to me achieve a more balanced listening position in which I thoroughly honored all their stories of trauma, adversity, as well as resilience and survival. In fact, my field notes and audit trail were key tools for noticing, assessing, and managing my biases and methodological decisions. The information captured through my written narratives was critical to help me achieve a balanced process of data collection and analysis, in which timing was appropriate as well as depth of exploration, always leading to the goal of fully honoring the voices of participants.

Conclusion

This qualitative investigation had the primary goal of developing a grounded theory focused on the most relevant experiences from a group of Guatemalan participants as women and mothers. Data indicate extraordinary challenges that participants experience on a daily basis as women and mothers. At the same time, mothers also reported unique testimonies of resilience in the face of this adversity. Research findings point out to significant cultural, historical, and contextual considerations for the practice of couples and family therapy with Guatemalan women and their families. Data also constitute a critical body of information for the future cultural adaptation of interventions aimed at supporting the lives of research participants as women and mothers. Within the richness of testimonies provided by participants, the following quote resembles the extraordinary sense of resilience shared by women in this investigation, "Being a mother is pain, joy, and a satisfaction, all at the same time. As years go by, the pain from past sacrifices becomes happiness and satisfaction today for me as a mother."

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A:

Study Consent Form

"Todo por mis hijos" [Everything for my children]:
Exploring the Parenting Experiences and Needs of Guatemalan Mothers

Consent Form

What we are doing:

This is a study that will help us understand your experiences as Guatemalan mothers. We expect to obtain this information by inviting you and other mothers for one group interview (focus group interview). Particularly, we want to know the challenges that mothers experience associated with their parenting efforts. We also want to ask you if you are interested in participating in parenting groups especially designed for Guatemalan mothers and what would be the cultural components that you would like to see included in the design of such groups. Finally, we would like to listen to your opinions regarding the importance of promoting the participation of fathers in parenting groups.

You can decide not to participate in this study or to stop participating in the interviews at any time. The group interviews will be digitally recorded and later, transcribed by Michigan State University graduate students. By carefully studying your responses, we will be able to understand your needs and feedback you provide to us. Your names and identities will remain confidential and the tapes and transcriptions will be kept in locked file cabinet located in a restricted area. Protecting your confidentiality will be a first priority for us.

Who is in charge?

The people in charge of this study are Ana Rocío Escobar-Chew and Dr. José Rubén Parra (Department of Human Development and Family Studies at Michigan State University), and Sister Savina Almonte and Sister Eutilia Sáenz from "Futuro Vivo" community program. Mrs. Escobar-Chew can be reached in Guatemala at (502) 2254-9315; Dr. Parra can be reached in the United States at (517) 432-2269; and Sister Almonte and Sister Sáenz in Guatemala at (502) 364-7499.

What will happen?

You will participate in one focus group interview with other Guatemalan mothers from Concepción Las Lomas. Each group will have no more than 8 mothers. You will be asked the following general questions in the first interview: (a) what issues do you consider to be challenges to your parenting efforts?, (b) what cultural components should be included in a parenting program especially designed for Guatemalan mothers?, and (c) what suggestions do you have in order to increase the participation of fathers in parenting programs?

Interviews will be conducted in your community settings (e.g., Futuro Vivo facilities). At all times you will decide the location and time(s) that are most appropriate to you.
Each parent will receive a $20 value gift basket with non-perishable food items for their participation in the group interview. Your participation is voluntary and can be stopped at any time without penalty.

Why the study is being done?

We want to better understand the experiences of Guatemalan mothers in this community and to explore the possibility of offering parenting classes to them if they consider that such a service would be beneficial to them and their families. If mothers express their desire to participate in parenting classes, we would like to include themes that are important in the Guatemalan culture and that relate to parenting issues. We would also like to explore ways to increase the number of fathers attending these groups.

Confidentiality:

Only Ana Rocío Escobar-Chew, Dr. Parra-Cardona and the staff designated by them will listen to the audiotapes and will know the answers to the questions. No one else will know how the participants answered the questions.

Risks and Benefits:

You might experience slight discomfort if you talk about issues that represent a challenge to your parenting efforts (i.e., acting out behavior of your children, financial problems).

You will a $20 value gift basket with non-perishable food items for your participation. We also expect that you will gain insight about your experience as parent, and will experience a sense of relief by having someone to listen to your stories.

If I have a question:

If you have concerns or questions about this study, such as scientific issues, how to do any part of it, or to report an injury, please contact the researcher Mrs. Ana Rocío Escobar-Chew. She can be reached in Guatemala at (502) 2254-9315, e-mail address: escobarc@msu.edu, or Dr. José Rubén Parra-Cardona. He can be reached in EEUU at (517) 432-2269, e-mail address: parracar@msu.edu, or mail: 3-D Human Ecology, Michigan State University, East Lansing, MI 48824. You may also contact Sister Almonte or Sister Sáenz at this number (502) 364-7499; address: 10ª calle 21-97, Vista Hermosa III, Zona.15, Guatemala; e-mail: futurovivo@gmail.com and futurovivo@itelgua.com

If you have questions or concerns about your role and rights as a research participant, would like to obtain information or offer input, or would like to register a complaint about this study, you may contact, anonymously if you wish, the Michigan State University's Human Research Protection Program at (517) 355-2180, Fax (517) 432-4503, or e-mail irb@msu.edu or regular mail at 207 Olds Hall, MSU, East Lansing, MI 48824.

Mrs. Ana Rocío Escobar-Chew has read this form to me out loud. All my questions have been answered and I have a copy of this form.

To agree to be part of this research study, initial the boxes below:

☐ I agree to participate in the focus group interview and it is my right to refuse to answer any particular question that I do not want to answer.

☐ I agree that my answers to questions and the audiotapes of the interviews can be used in research.

☐ I understand that I will receive $20 value gift basket with non-perishable food items for the interview.

☐ I agree to provide demographic and contact information about me and my family.

Signature of parent	Date
Signature of witness	Date

Thank you so much for your participation!

APPENDIX B:

Spanish Translation of the Study Consent Form

"Todo por mis hijos":
Explorando las experiencias de crianza infantil
y las necesidades de madres guatemaltecas

Formulario de Autorización para Participar en Investigación

Haremos lo siguiente:

Este es un estudio que nos ayudará a entender sus experiencias como madres guatemaltecas. Esperamos obtener esta información como resultado de invitarles a ustedes y a otras madres guatemaltecas a una entrevista de grupo. Particularmente, queremos saber sobre los retos y obstáculos que las madres guatemaltecas enfrentan al esforzarse en implementar prácticas de crianza con sus hijos(as). También deseamos saber si ustedes estarían interesadas en participar en grupos de discusión con otras madres con el propósito de explorar alternativas para mejorar sus prácticas de crianza. Estos grupos serán organizados especialmente para madres guatemaltecas. Queremos saber cuáles son los componentes culturales que les gustaría ver incluídos en estos grupos. Finalmente, queremos escuchar sus opiniones acerca de la importancia de promover la participación de papás hombres en los programas de crianza dirigidos a padres y madres.

Usted puede decidir no participar en este estudio o dejar de participar en cualquier momento. Las entrevistas de grupo serán grabadas y después transcritas (las voces grabadas serán escritos en computadora). Como resultado de analizar cuidadosamente sus opiniones, vamos a poder entender sus necesidades y sus respuestas. Sus nombres e identidades serán archivados para mantener su privacidad y las grabaciones y notas serán puestas en un archivador con llave en un lugar restringido. Proteger su privacidad será nuestra más alta prioridad.

¿Quién está a cargo?

Las personas encargadas de este estudio serán la Licda. Ana Rocío Escobar-Chew, el Dr. José Rubén Parra (Departamento Desarrollo Humano y Estudios de la Familia), Universidad del Estado de Michigan) y las dirigentes del programa comunitario "Futuro Vivo", Hermana Savina Almonte y Hermana Eutilia Sáenz. Usted puede localizar a la Licda. Escobar-Chew en Guatemala al teléfono (502) 2254-9315, al Dr. Parra-Cardona en Estados Unidos al teléfono (517) 432-2269; y a la Hermana Savina Almone y la Hermana Eutilia Sáenz en Guatemala al teléfono (502) 364-7499.

¿Qué va suceder?

Usted va a participar en una entrevista de grupo con otras madres guatemaltecas. La entrevista no va a pasar de 90 minutos y cada grupo no tendrá más de 8 participantes. Se les harán las siguientes preguntas en la entrevista de grupo: (a) ¿Qué cosas considera representan un obstáculo a sus esfuerzos como madre? (b) ¿Qué componentes culturales deben ser incluidos en un programa especialmente diseñado para madres guatemaltecas? (c) ¿Qué sugerencias tiene para aumentar la participación de papás hombres en los programas de crianza? A cada participante en la entrevista de grupo se obsequiará una canasta de regalo con alimentos no perecederos por el valor de $20. Su participación es voluntaria y usted tiene el derecho de dejar de participar en cualquier momento sin ninguna consecuencia.

¿Por qué se está realizando el estudio?

Queremos entender las experiencias de las madres guatemaltecas en esta comunidad, así como explorar la posibilidad de ofrecer clases de crianza infantil, si las madres guatemaltecas nos indican que este tipo de recursos sería de beneficio para ellas. Si las madres expresan su deseo para participar en las clases de crianza infantil, quisiéramos incluir temas que son importantes en la cultura guatemalteca y que se relacionan con temas de crianza. También nos gustaría explorar la manera en que pudiéramos aumentar el número de papás hombres que asisten a estos grupos.

Privacidad:

Solamente la Licda. Ana Rocío Escobar Chew, el Dr. Parra Cardona y personal designado por ellos podrán escuchar las grabaciones y sabrán las respuestas a nuestras preguntas. Nadie más sabrá las respuestas de las participantes. Su privacidad será protegida al mayor grado permitido por la ley.

Riesgos y Beneficios:

Usted pudiera sentir cierta incomodidad al hablar de temas que representan un reto para sus prácticas de crianza infantil (por ejemplo, hablar de los problemas de conducta de su hijo(a) o de problemas financieros). Usted recibirá una canasta de regalo con alimentos no perecederos con el valor de $20 por su participación. Esperamos que usted también logre obtener un mayor entendimiento de sus experiencias como madre, y pueda sentir alivio en saber que alguien esta escuchando su historia.

¿Si tengo preguntas?

Si usted tiene cualquier preocupación o pregunta acerca de este estudio, tal como asuntos científicos, cómo realizar alguna parte del estudio, o reportar algún daño, por favor contacte a la investigadora Licda. Escobar-Chew en Guatemala al teléfono (502) 2254-9315, correo electrónico: escobarc@msu.edu; o a el Dr. José Rubén Parra-Cardona al teléfono, en Estados Unidos: (517) 432-2269, dirección de correo electrónico: parracar@msu.edu, o por correo regular a esta dirección en Estados Unidos: 3-D Human Ecology, Michigan State University, East Lansing, MI 48824. En Guatemala, por favor contactar a Savina Almonte, directora del programa comunitario "Futuro Vivo", al (502) 364-7499; dirección: 10ª calle 21-97, Vista Hermosa III, Zona.15, Guatemala. Dirección electrónica: futurovivo@gmail.com; futurovivo@itelgua.com

Si usted tiene preguntas o preocupaciones acerca de su participación y sus derechos como participante de esta investigación, si quisiera obtener información o brindar sugerencias, o si quisiera presentar una queja acerca de este estudio, usted puede contactar, anónimamente, si lo desea, al Programa de Protección de Humanos en Investigaciones de la Universidad Estatal de Michigan [Michigan State University's Human Research Protection Program], al número en Estados Unidos: (517) 355-2180, Fax (517) 432-4503, por correo electrónico: irb@msu.edu, o por correo regular en Estados Unidos: 207 Olds Hall, MSU, East Lansing, MI 48824.

Antes de firmar la forma de autorización, la Licda. Ana Rocío Escobar Chew deberá leer este formulario a usted a en voz alta y le contestará cualquier duda/pregunta que pueda tener.

Por favor escriba sus iniciales en los recuadros de abajo si usted:

☐ Está de acuerdo en participar en la entrevista de grupo. Entiendo que es mi derecho negarme a responder cualquier pregunta que no quiera responder.

☐ Está de acuerdo que sus respuestas a nuestras preguntas y las grabaciones de las entrevistas puedan estar utilizadas en investigación.

☐ Está de acuerdo en recibir una canasta de regalo con alimentos no perecederos por el valor de $20 por su participación en esta entrevista.

☐ Está de acuerdo en proporcionar datos personales así como información que nos permita contactarlo(a) a usted y a su familia.

_____ _____

Firma del(a) participante Fecha

_____ _____

Firma de la(el) testigo Fecha

¡Muchas gracias por su participación!

APPENDIX C:

Study Interview Guide

Focus Group Interview Guide

We thank you for your participation in this group interview. We have invited you today because we want to learn more about your experiences as mothers. Your responses will help us understand your experiences related to your parenting efforts as well as the most common challenges that you experience as mothers. We would also like to explore your interest in participating in future parenting groups especially designed for Guatemalan mothers in order to support your parenting practices. Finally, we would like to hear your opinions related to the role of fathers in the lives of your children and to explore alternatives that you consider might increase father involvement in parenting programs.

We are really interested in your personal experiences and in any thoughts and feelings that you experience related to being a mother. There are no right or wrong answers because all your experiences are really important to us. Please remember that you have the right to stop this interview at any time if you feel like doing so or you can skip any question that you don't want to answer for any reason. Please let me know if you are confused with any questions I will ask you.

Grand Tour Question # 1: *Please describe what it is like being a woman in Guatemala*
Probes:

- Tell me about what you like about being a woman in your community?
- How relevant are for you, as a woman, your relationships with your family and your friends and neighbors in your community?
- Describe how the current situation of violence and insecurity affects your life as a woman (Including the threat of gangs).
- Describe how experiencing financial difficulties influences your life as woman.
- How does your race/ethnicity influence you as woman?
- Describe how discrimination and/or racism affect your life as a woman.
- Describe how the way men treat you as a woman affects you.
- Tell about your experiences as a working woman (at home or outside home).
- Guatemalan women tend to face many challenges in their lives (e.g., violence, discrimination, oppression, insecurity). Tell me about what helps you face the challenges like these and other in your community, and in your life?

Grand Tour Question # 2: *Please describe what it is like to be a mother.*
Probes:

- Describe the experiences that give you satisfaction and happiness as a mother.
- Tell me about what worries you the most about being a mother.
- Describe the daily challenges that you experience as a mother.
- What are the Guatemalan family values that influence your parenting practices? (*including religious and cultural (ethnic) values*)
- How did the time of war in Guatemala affect you as a mother?
- How does your work experiences influence your role as a mother?
- How does your family and friends influence your role as a mother?
- What support do you feel you receive as a mother from the government or other institutions?
- As a mother, tell about what helps you keep going on and have hope about the future for your children?

Grand Tour Question # 3: *What themes do you consider should be included in a parenting group for Guatemalan mothers? Please, describe the importance of including such themes.*
Probes:

In reference to future parenting groups:

- Describe the importance of talking in parenting groups about how Guatemalan family values (i.e., the importance of *family/familia)* influence parenting practices.
- Describe the importance of talking in parenting groups about ways to implement discipline with your children.
- Describe the importance of talking in parenting groups about ways in which you can help your children to accomplish goals in life.
- Describe the importance of talking in parenting groups about how to prevent your children from being exposed to drugs and alcohol.
- Describe the importance of talking in parenting groups about your children being exposed to gangs and delinquency in this community.
- Describe the importance of talking in parenting groups about helping your children with academics as well as ways to interact with the schools as a mother.
- What are the influences of government and private institutions in your performance as a mother? (Do you feel supported, isolated…?)
- What are your hopes for the future of your children?

Grand Tour Question # 4: *How relevant is for your children that their father remains involved in their lives?*
Probes:

- Describe the ways in which children can benefit from maintaining a relationship with their fathers.
- Describe the ways in which you consider that fathers should support their children (e.g., financial and emotional needs).
- How can we engage and retain fathers in a parenting program? How can we get them to come to parenting groups and participate?
- If we were to offer parenting groups in this community, what would be your preference for group composition (e.g., mothers only, mothers and fathers). Please explain.

About your children:

- If you have sons, what are the things you would like them to learn from their fathers? Please describe.
- If you have sons, what are the things you would not like them to learn from their fathers or learn differently? Please describe.
- If you have daughters, what are the things you would like them to learn about you? Please describe.
- If you have daughters, what are the things you would like them to learn differently from what was taught to you? Please describe.

Thank you for your participation!

APPENDIX D:

Spanish Translation of the Study Interview Guide

Guía de entrevista para grupos

Les agradecemos por su participación en esta entrevista grupal. Les hemos invitado el día de hoy porque deseamos aprender más acerca de sus experiencias como madres. Sus respuestas nos ayudarán a comprender sus experiencias relacionadas con sus esfuerzos para criar a sus hijos(as), así como también los retos más comunes que ustedes experimentan como madres. También nos gustaría explorar su interés en participar en futuros programas especialmente diseñados para madres guatemaltecas con el fin de apoyar sus prácticas de crianza infantil. Finalmente, nos gustaría escuchar su opinión en cuanto al papel de los papás hombres en las vidas de sus hijos(as) y explorar las opciones que ustedes consideran que puedan aumentar la participación de papás en los programas de crianza infantil. Estamos realmente interesados en sus experiencias personales y en cualquier pensamiento o sentimiento que usted experimente en relación a ser madre. No hay respuestas incorrectas que nos puedan dar porque todas sus experiencias son realmente muy importantes para nosotros. Por favor, recuerden que tienen el derecho de detener esta entrevista en cualquier momento si ustedes lo desean, o ustedes pueden saltarse cualquier pregunta que no quieran responder por cualquier razón. Por favor, déjenme saber si se encuentran confundidas por cualquier pregunta que les haga.

Pregunta General #1: *Por favor, describa ¿cómo es la experiencia de ser mujer en Guatemala?*
Preguntas de sondeo:

- Cuéntenme acerca de lo que le gusta sobre ser mujer en su comunidad.
- ¿Qué tan importante es para ustedes, como mujeres, su relación con su familia, sus amistades y vecinos en su comunidad?
- Describa cómo la situación de violencia e inseguridad afecta su vida como mujer (incluyendo el peligro de las maras).
- Describa cómo el experimentar dificultades económicas influencia su vida de mujer.
- Describa cómo la discriminación y/o el racismo afectan su vida como mujer.
- Describa cómo le afecta la forma en que los hombres la tratan a usted como mujer.
- Cuéntenme acerca de sus experiencias como mujer trabajadora en Guatemala (tanto en el hogar o fuera de él).
- Las mujeres guatemaltecas enfrentan muchos retos en su vida (por ejemplo, violencia, discriminación, opresión, inseguridad). Cuéntenme qué les ayuda a enfrentar retos como estos u otros en esta comunidad y en su vida?

Pregunta General # 2: *Por favor describa ¿cómo es para usted ser madre?*
Preguntas de sondeo:

- Describa las experiencias que le han dado más satisfacción y felicidad como madre.
- Cuénteme acerca de ¿qué le preocupa más acerca de ser madre?
- Describa los retos o dificultades diarias que experimenta como madre.
- ¿Cuáles son los valores familiares guatemaltecos que influyen la forma en que cría a sus hijos(as) (incluyendo valores religiosos y étnico-culturales)?
- ¿De qué manera(s) le afectó el tiempo de guerra en Guatemala como madre?
- ¿De qué manera sus experiencias en el trabajo influencian en su rol como madre?
- ¿De qué forma su familia, amistades y vecinos influencian su rol como madre?
- ¿Qué apoyo siente que recibe del gobierno u otras instituciones como madre?
- Como madres, cuéntenme ¿qué les ayuda a seguir adelante y tener esperanza acera del futuro de sus hijos/as?

Pregunta General # 3: *¿Qué temas considera usted que deberían ser incluidos en un grupo para madres guatemaltecas? Describa la importancia de incluir estos temas.*

Preguntas de sondeo:

En referencia a futuros grupos para madres:

- Describa la importancia de hablar en grupos para madres acerca de la manera en que los valores familiares guatemaltecos (ej.: la importancia de la familia) influye en sus prácticas de crianza infantil.
- Describa la importancia de hablar en grupos para madres acerca de maneras en cómo disciplinar sus hijos(as).
- Describa la importancia de hablar en grupos de madres acerca de las maneras en que usted puede ayudar a sus hijos(as) a cumplir metas en su vida.
- Describa la importancia de hablar en grupos para madres acerca de que sus hijos(as) estén expuestos(as) a las drogas y el alcohol.
- Describa la importancia de hablar en grupos para madres acerca de que sus hijos(as) estén expuestos(as) a las maras o a la delincuencia en esta comunidad.
- Describa la importancia de hablar en grupos para madres acerca de cómo ayudar a sus hijos(as) en la escuela, así como también de maneras de cómo tratar con las escuelas desde su papel de madres.
- ¿Cuál(es) es la influencia(s) que tiene el gobierno y las instituciones privadas en su labor como madre?
- ¿Cuáles son las esperanzas que tiene sobre el futuro de sus hijos/as?

Pregunta General # 4

Por favor describa ¿qué tan importante es que los papás hombres estén involucrados en las vidas de sus hijos(as)?

Preguntas de sondeo:

- Describa las maneras en las cuales los(as) niños(as) pueden beneficiarse de mantener una relación con sus papás hombres.
- Describa las maneras en que ustedes piensan que los papás hombres deberían de apoyar a sus hijos(as) (ej.: necesidades económicas y emocionales).
- Si se ofrecieran grupos de escuela para padres en su comunidad ¿cómo podemos motivar y mantenerlos a los papás hombres dentro de un programa para padres y madres? ¿Cómo podemos hacer para que asistan a los grupos de padres y madres y que participen?
- ¿Cuál sería su preferencia en cuanto a la composición de los grupos de escuela para padres? (Por ejemplo: grupo para mujeres solamente, o mixto: de mujeres y hombres).

Acerca de sus hijos/as:

- Si tienen hijos hombres, ¿cuáles serían las cosas que a ustedes les gustaría que sus hijos aprendieran de sus papás? Por favor, describa.
- Si tienen hijos hombres, ¿cuáles serían las cosas que a ustedes NO Les gustaría que sus hijos aprendieran de sus papás? Por favor, describa.
- Si tienen hijas, ¿cuáles serían las cosas que les gustaría que sus hijos aprendieran de ustedes? Por favor, describa.
- Si tienen hijas, ¿cuáles serían las cosas que les gustaría que sus hijos aprendieran diferente a como fueran educadas o criadas ustedes? Por favor, describa.

¡Muchas gracias por su participación!

APPENDIX E:

Family Demographic Information Questionnaire

PROJECT: "*Todo por mis hijos*" [Everything for my children]:
Exploring the Parenting Experiences and Needs of Guatemalan Mothers

Family Demographic Information[9]

Name: _____

Address: _____

Telephone number: _____

Preferred days and times during the week for being contacted:

_____

Alternative phone number: _____

Please provide the contact information of at least three people with whom you have frequent contact. I will only utilize this information in case you change residence or if is not possible to get in touch with you by using the information you provided before.

Name of a friend or family member	Address	Phone Number
1.		
2.		
3.		

[9] Form adapted from "*Datos Demográficos Familiares*" [Demographic Family Information]: Parra-Cardona et al., (2009) Evaluación de Relevancia y Eficacia de un Programa de Prácticas de Crianza Culturalmente Adaptado ["Testing relevance and efficacy in a culturally adapted parenting intervention"], Michigan State University.

Adults living with you at your home

Name of your family member	Age and Date of birth	Gender (M/F)	Civil Status *	Education **	Place of birth	Years living in Concepción Las Lomas	Speaks other language aside Spanish?

* Marital Status:
(1) Married
(2) Divorced
(3) Separated
(4) Widow
(5) Cohabiting
(6) Single

** Education Level:
(0) No formal education
(1-7) Elementary education
(8-10) Secondary education
(11-13) College degree/Trade School
(U) Went to college
(G) Graduated from college
(TE) Technical education

Family member (Adult)	Which ethnic group do you identify? (Maya, Ladino, Garífuna, Xinca, etc.)

Annual income from mother? _____

Annual income from father? _____

Other sources of family income? _____

Combined family income per year?

_____ Less than Q10,000 per year

_____ Q10,000 - Q 20,000 per year

_____ Q 21,000 - Q 30,000 per year

_____ Q 31,000 - Q 40,000 per year

_____ Q 41,000 - Q 50,000 per year

_____ Q 51,000 - Q 60,000 per year

_____ Q 61,000 - Q 80,000 per year

_____ More than Q 80,000 per year

Child(ren) and Adolescent(s) living at home:

Name(s) of child(ren) and/or adolescent(s)	Age and date of birth	Gender (M/F)	Place of birth	Years living in Concepción	Preferred language

APPENDIX F:

Spanish Translation of the Family Demographic Information Questionnaire

PROYECTO: "*Todo por mis hijos*": Explorando las experiencias maternas y necesidades de madres Guatemaltecas

Datos Demográficos Familiares[10]

Nombre: _____

Dirección: _____

Número de teléfono: _____

Días de la semana y horas en que usted prefiere que la contactemos:

_____

Teléfono (s) alternativo de contacto: _____

Por favor proporcione información acerca de tres personas con las cuales usted mantiene contacto frecuente. Solamente utilizaré esta información si usted cambia de residencia y nos es imposible contactarla con la información que nos acaba de proporcionar.

Nombre de amigo(a) o pariente	Dirección	Teléfono
1.		
2.		
3.		

[10] Formulario adaptado de "*Datos Demográficos Familiares*": Parra-Cardona et al., (2009) Evaluación de Relevancia y Eficacia de un Programa de Prácticas de Crianza Culturalmente Adaptado, Universidad Estatal de Michigan.

Adultos que viven con usted en su casa

Nombre del Miembro de la Familia	Edad y Fecha Naci-miento	Género (M/F)	Estado Civil*	Grado Escolar **	Lugar de Naci-miento	Años viviendo en Concep-ción	¿Habla otro idioma aparte de español?

* Estado Marital:
(1) Casada
(2) Divorciada
(3) Separada
(4) Viuda
(5) Unión de hecho
(6) Soltera

** Grado Escolar:
(1) Sin grado escolar
(1-7) Primaria
(8-10) Secundaria
(11-13) Diversificado
(U) Asistió a la universidad
(G) Graduado de la universidad
(TE) Educación Técnica

Miembro de la familia (Adultos)	¿Con qué grupo étnico se identifica? (Maya, Ladino, Garífuna, Xinca, etc.)

Cuál es el ingreso anual de la madre de familia? _____

¿Cuál es el ingreso anual del padre de familia? _____

¿Qué otras fuentes de ingreso tiene esta familia? _____

¿Cuál es el ingreso familiar anual?

_____ Menos de Q10,000 por año

_____ Q10,000 - Q20,000 por año

_____ Q21,000 - Q30,000 por año

_____ Q31,000 - Q40,000 por año

_____ Q 41,000 - Q50,000 por año

_____ Q51,000 - Q60,000 por año

_____ Q61,000 - Q80,000 por año

_____ Más de Q80,000 por año

Niños(as) y Adolescentes viviendo en la casa

Nombre del Niño(a) y/o Adolescente	Edad y Fecha Nacimiento	Género (M/F)	Lugar de Nacimiento	Años viviendo Concepción	Etnia	Lenguaje Preferido

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