“MY LIFE IS CHANGED BUT THE TRUST AIN’T THERE TO TRUST SOMEBODY ELSE”: EXPERIENCES OF RECOVERY FROM INTIMATE PARTNER ABUSE OF WOMEN OF MEXICAN HERITAGE IN A MID-SIZE CITY IN MICHIGAN

By

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ABSTRACT

"MY LIFE IS CHANGED BUT THE TRUST
AIN'T THERE TO TRUST SOMEBODY ELSE":
EXPERIENCES OF RECOVERY FROM INTIMATE PARTNER ABUSE OF WOMEN OF MEXICAN HERITAGE IN A MID-SIZE CITY IN MICHIGAN

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This exploratory qualitative study aimed to gain an understanding of the experiences of recovery from intimate partner abuse (IPA) of 17 women of Mexican heritage in a mid-size urban city in Michigan. IPA was defined as any type of physical, sexual, stalking, psychological harm or coercive control by a former intimate partner or spouse. Two aspects were explored: experiences of abuse and experiences of recovery from abuse.

The study used a feminist theory and intersectionality perspective as a guiding framework to understand the experiences of women considering their contextual situation. Data were collected using a semi-structured questionnaire and analyzed using a constructivist grounded theory by Charmaz.

The findings revealed that women understand their experiences of abuse as being connected to their early socialization about gender roles, history of child abuse, lack of sexual education, and the influence of the environment. Also, the participants revealed they experienced overlapping types of abuse: psychological, coercion, economic, physical, sexual, and stalking.

Despite the negative impact of the abuse on participants' physical and mental health, findings showed that women were able to recover from the abuse and to move on with their lives. Data suggested that the recovery was a gradual ongoing process of physical and psychological healing. Participants identified empowering experiences that helped them in their recovery from IPA. Such empowering experiences included life-changing religious realizations,

receiving services in Spanish, acquiring more education, receiving counseling services, and getting a job. Receiving social support from family and friends and having access to resources were identified as factors that aided in the recovery from IPA. However, some participants experienced limited access to such resources due to economic constraints, cultural beliefs about gender roles, and the impact of immigration policies.

Lastly, findings revealed that experiences of recovery from IPA vary based on whether women decided to leave their partners or to remain with them. Implications for culturally sensitive interventions for Latinas of Mexican heritage are discussed as well as implications for future research on issues of recovery for this specific Latino subgroup.

A la memoria de mis padres Dolores Ramírez Camargo y Juan Palma Ascencio.
You taught me the value of hard work, ethics and faith.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Statement of the Problem

Intimate partner violence (IPV) or Intimate Partner Abuse (IPA) is any type of physical, sexual, stalking, psychological harm or coercive control by a former intimate partner or spouse (Breiding, Basile, Smith, Black, & Mahendra, 2015). IPV is a prevalent issue among women in general with devastating impacts on women's physical and mental health (Campbell, 2002; Smith, 2003). Although women from all races and ethnicities are affected by IPV, scholars suggest that Latinas are more vulnerable to the impact of IPV than their white female counterparts. Despite the devastating effects of IPV, studies have shown that women can recover and have productive lives (Flasch, Murray, & Crowe, 2015; Javaherian, Krabacher, Andriacco, & German, 2007; Lewis, Henriksen & Watts, 2015; Blasco-Ros, Sánchez-Lorente, & Martinez, 2010; Smith, 2003), yet not all the women recover in the same way since recovery is shaped by women's cultural values, social status, resources, and available options she has access to (Dutton, Orloff & Hass, 2000). Then, women of color with limited resources, recovery can be a more stressful experience due to the several limitations of these women.

Recovery from abuse can be a stressful, painful, and lonely experience in which the survivor has to heal from past abuse, meet present needs not only for herself but also for her children and work toward the future (Anderson, Saunders, Yoshihama, Bybee, & Sullivan, 2003; Landenburger, 1998; Senter & Cadwell, 2002). Studies using samples of women who have received services at shelters and other organizations for IPV show that recovery can be accomplished (Allen & Wozniack, 2011). Nonetheless, most studies are limited in Latina

participation and the ones that include Latinas don't differentiate the ethnic subgroup of the Latinas.

Latino Subgroup of Mexicans

Latinos include people from different ethnic subgroups in the United States. Latinos come from 22 countries with Mexicans being the largest Latino subgroup. In 2017, there was an estimated 36.6 million Hispanics of Mexican origin in the U.S. or 62% of the U.S. Latino population (Noe-Bustamante, Flores, & Shah, 2019). The Latino subgroups have in common the centrality of the family, religiosity and often the Spanish language (Klevens, 2007), but also differ in their history of arrival in the United States and access to resources and information. For example, Mexicans have the largest presence in the United States and some Mexican American activists contend that Mexicans didn't cross the border, the border crossed Mexicans (Little, 2018). This statement refers to the history of war and conquest between Mexico and the United States by which Mexico lost 55% of its territory and overnight thousands of Mexican people became residents of the United States (Library of Congress, 2017). Then, Mexicans were considered as the "Mexican problem" (Sánchez, 1984) and the "most undesirable ethnic stock for the melting pot" (Ruiz, 1998, p. 28). The rejection toward Mexicans is well documented and reflected in the limited public services, recreational facilities, and poor education for the children (Ruiz, 1998).

At the time when this current study is taking place, there are hostile anti-immigration government policies that strongly affect undocumented people, many of which are of Mexican origin (Rothkopf, 2017; Voxgov, 2018). Advocates for women victims of IPV anticipate that immigration policies will place undocumented Latinas including women of Mexican heritage

at higher risk for abuse with less opportunities to exit an abusive relationship as women would be more reluctant to report and seek help (Boyd-Barret, 2019).

Prevalence and Impact of IPV on Women's Health

Although there is lack of consensus on prevalence rates of IPV among Latinos, scholars agree that this issue is a major concern among Latinas. The 2011 National Intimate Partner and Sexual Violence Survey (NISVS) estimated that 29.7% or approximately 5 million Latinas have experienced some form of physical violence by an intimate partner during their lifetime (Breiding, Smith, Basile, Walters, Chen & Merrick, 2014). Other studies as well have documented that IPV is a prevalent issue among Latinos (Ahrens, Rios-Mandel, Isas, & Lopez, 2010; Bauer, Rodríguez, & Perez-Stable, 2000; Fedovskiy, Higgins, & Paranjape, 2008; Krishnan, Hilbert, & Van Leeuwen, 2001) with deleterious effects on women's physical and mental health.

The impact of IPV on women's physical and mental health is also well documented (Campbell, 2002; Smith, 2003). Some of the physical health problems are physical trauma, chronic pain, adverse obstetric outcomes, and sexually transmitted infections (Campbell, 2002; Coker et al., 2002; Basile, Arias, Desai, & Thompson, 2004; Breiding et al., 2014; Finkelhor & Yllo, 1985). Literature shows that Latinas seem to be more vulnerable to the impact of IPV than non-Latinas. Fedovskiy and colleagues (2008) found than Compared to non-Latinas with stories of IPV, Latinas appear to experience higher rates of depression and PTSD symptoms. Caetano and Cunradi (2003) conducted a study comparing rates of IPV-related major depressive disorder (MDD) among different ethnic groups in a household sample and reported that abused Latinas had the highest rates of MDD (38%), compared to Blacks (30%), and Whites (20%). McFarlane, Groff, O'Brien, and Watson (2006) reported that Latinas experienced significantly more PTSD

than African American and white women and have thoughts of or have attempted suicide more than non-Latinas (Krishnan et al., 2001). This vulnerability may be explained by poverty, social isolation, disparities in economic and social resources, and immigration status (Runner, Yoshihama & Novick, 2009).

Experiences of IPV by Latinas of Mexican Heritage

In terms of IPV, a study found that women of Mexican heritage stay longer in abusive relationships, return to the abusive marriage more frequently and name fewer incidents as abusive as compared to non-Latina White counterparts (Torres, 1991). Studies have found that cultural constraints of familismo, marianismo and machismo prevent women from leaving an abusive relationship, but scholars have found that specifically, some women of Mexican heritage don't want to leave the relationship but want the violence to stop (Perilla, 2015). Another study reported that women in Mexico tended to rate the same IPV behaviors as less severe than did women living in the United States (Peek-Asa, Garcia, McArthur, & Castro, 2002). While this information has been useful to understand the experiences of abuse of women of Mexican heritage, there is much information to know on how women from this population understand their experiences of abuse in this specific context in the United States. This study will address this gap.

Women's Capacity to Recover from IPV

The literature on IPV often ends on the experiences of abuse, but emergent studies are focusing on the experiences of women after the abuse. These studies have shown that despite the negative impact of IPV on women's lives, they can recover and have productive lives (Flasch et al., 2015; Javaherian et al., 2007; Lewis et al., 2015; Sanchez-Lorente, Blasco-Ros & Martínez, 2012; Smith, 2003). The emphasis on the recovery is on women's strengths and empowerment

and on their capacity to overcome limitations. Scholars have called this process recovery (Flasch et al., 2015; Javaherian et al., 2007; Landenburger, 1989; Sanchez-Lorente et al., 2012; Smith, 2003); or healing (Lewis et al., 2015; Smith, 2003). Recovery and healing after the abuse are a time of restructuring oneself stressing the strengths and power of the women and conveying the image of women as capable of overcoming limitations and challenges (Landenburger, 1989). Recovery may be possible if the women receive the proper services and support during that transition period (Anderson, Renner, & Danis, 2012). Studies on recovery have shed light on the recovery from abuse but often those studies are limited to the experiences of non-Latinas (Landenburger, 1989) or the inclusion of Latinas is limited, and frequently the ethnicity of the Latino subgroups is not specified.

Considering the several cultural and institutional limitations women of Mexican heritage face in the United States, one can speculate that their experiences of abuse and recovery may be a daunting experience. Understanding how women of Mexican heritage recover from the abuse is essential to identify the needs and strengths and develop interventions to meet those needs. This qualitative exploratory study will address those identified gaps with the hope that the knowledge gained may inform services provided to other women of Mexican heritage who are in this recovery and healing stage as well as encourage further research on this topic with other Latino subgroups.

Purpose of the Study

This study has two main purposes:

1) Exploring the experiences of abuse by an intimate partner of women of Mexican heritage living in a mid-sized urban city in Michigan, U.S. considering the cultural context and the institutional anti-immigrant policies toward undocumented people.

2) Exploring the experiences of recovery from abuse of women of Mexican heritage living in a mid-sized urban city in Michigan in the physical, psychological and economic dimensions, identifying factors that fostered or hindered such process.

To fulfill these purposes, I will answer the following research questions about women of Mexican heritage in a mid-size urban city in Michigan:

1. How do these women understand their experience of abuse by an intimate partner and what factors do they identify as contributing to the abuse?
2. How do these women understand their experiences of recovery from the abuse by intimate partner and what factors do they identify as contributing to the recovery?
3. How do women understand their recovery at the physical, psychological and economic dimensions?
4. How do these women experience the impact of the immigration policy on their recovery from abuse by an intimate partner?
5. How do these women understand the impact of the beliefs about gender roles and the role of family in the recovery**?**

Organization of the Study

In Chapter One, the author introduces the problem of the lack of research on the experiences of recovery from intimate partner abuse of the specific Latino group of women of Mexican heritage. Knowledge gained from this study may inform the services provided to this specific group of women.

Chapter Two defines the theoretical framework of feminist theory and intersectionality perspective to guide this study. This chapter also includes a review of the literature on the issue of IPV identifying the risk factors associated with the cultural context of women of Mexican

heritage. A review the literature on recovery from IPA specifically on the physical, psychological and economic dimensions, and on the factors that facilitated the recovery for women in general and for women of Mexican heritage is also included.

Chapter Three describes the research design, justifies the constructivist grounded theory method of Charmaz (2006) as the method for data analysis and interpretation, describes the research instrument, ethics of the study, trustworthiness of the study and the process followed to do the data analysis.

Chapter Four presents the findings related to the reported experiences of abuse of women of Mexican heritage. Women in this sample seemed to understand that their experiences of abuse were connected to the socialization of gender roles for women and men, a history of childhood abuse, lack of sexual education, and to the influence of the environment that for some participants was related to environmental migrant workers' conditions. Types of abuse endured by participants are presented as well.

Chapter Five includes findings related to the reported experiences of recovery from IPA. Findings suggested that moving from a situation of abuse to a life of no abuse or less abuse for the participants in this study involved facing life-changing religious realizations centered on God, getting more education, receiving mental health services, getting a U-visa, receiving services in Spanish and getting a job. This chapter also includes a further exploration of the recovery from abuse in the physical, psychological, and economic dimensions. Data suggested that recovery from abuse for women of Mexican heritage who stayed with a partner followed a different pathway than for the women who left their partner. Receiving social support from family was identified as a key element that facilitated the recovery.

Chapter Six includes the discussion of the findings, implications for service providers who work with women of Mexican heritage, policy and research implications, and identifies limitations and strengths of the study.

CHAPTER TWO

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Introduction

The first part of this chapter introduces the theoretical framework that guides this study. Given that this study focuses on the specific population of women of Mexican heritage, a feminist theory and an intersectionality perspective were chosen as the theoretical frameworks for their focus on women and on the multiple and overlapping social and structural barriers that impact the lives of these women. The second part of this chapter includes a review of the literature on the two main aspects that this study is concerned about: experiences of abuse by an intimate partner and experiences of recovery from the abuse. In addition, a review of the literature on the identified cultural factors that shape the experiences of abuse and recovery of women of Mexican heritage is also discussed.

Feminist Theory

Although there are many forms of feminism, all of them share a concern with women's experiences of oppression in a male-dominated society (Campbell & Wasco, 2000), issues of gender equality, and women's rights (Rampton, 2015). As a theory, feminism has been informed by the women's movement. For example, first-wave feminism brought violence against women into national focus by advocating for battered women to have the right to divorce violent spouses on the grounds of cruelty (Pleck, 1987). However, first-wave feminists have been criticized for being centered on the experiences of white middle-class women (Roth, 2004). Then, the second wave feminists, in the 1960s and 1970s, that included many women of color, challenged white feminism on the grounds that their needs as women and women of color were not being addressed, specifically regarding their experiences with racism (Roth, 2004).

Second-wave feminists later set the foundation for radical feminism. Radical feminism has been used extensively to research the area of violence against women (Bograd, 1988; Dobash, & Dobash, 1998; Russell, 2007; Yllo, 2005). According to radical feminism, violence against women stems from a patriarchal system characterized by inequality between men and women dividing societal rights, privileges, and power primarily along the lines of sex and, as a result, oppresses women and privileges men (Lewis, 2019). In addition, Bograd (1988) has identified four tenets that identified feminist research. These tenets will guide this study. First, women are seen as "survivors of harrowing, life threatening experiences, who may have many adaptive capacities and strengths" (Bograd, 1988, p. 5). Second, feminists avoid victim-blaming perspectives that see women as helpless and deficient in the motivational, cognitive, and emotional skills necessary to leave an abusive relationship (Houston, 2014). Third, feminists focus on women and value women as legitimate generators of knowledge. Fourth, feminists understand and validate women's experiences of IPV and promote their empowerment (Bograd, 1988).

In the connection of violence and feminist theory, Yllo (2005) stresses that gender is not the only lens to understand the experiences of abuse of the women and women of color, but we have equally to address the intersection of race, ethnicity, class and gender. Then, considering that this study focuses on the experiences of abuse of the Latino subgroup of women of Mexican heritage, a vulnerable group of women subjected to many experiences of oppression (Carasthatis, 2014; Moraga & Anzaldúa, 1983; Roth, 2004), the intersectionality perspective will be used to help understand the experiences of abuse and recovery of this specific population.

Intersectionality Perspective

The theoretical foundations of the intersectionality can be traced to the feminist movement in the 1960s with the activism of women of color (Roth, 2004). For instance, Cherríe Moraga, a Chicana feminist, explained the concept of intersectionality based on the experiences of discrimination of her mother. She said that her mother was a poor Native American woman who dropped out of high school to care for younger siblings. Moraga explained how she saw her mother suffering from compounded sources of oppression: being Native, being poor, being uneducated, being a woman. Moraga said that those identities seemed to work together to limit her mother's opportunities (Glass, 2016). Later, in 1989, Kimberlé Crenshaw, a civil rights advocate and lawyer coined the concept of intersectionality to demonstrate the ways Black women were subjected to experiences of discrimination based on their race, gender, and color (Crenshaw, 1989). The concept of intersectionality has been useful to describe and understand the way multiple oppressions are experienced and a woman's access to resources. As Crenshaw (1991) stated, the live experiences of women of color cannot be adequately captured by only looking at race and gender as separate dimensions but as an intersection between racism and sexism. For instance, in the case of the Black women Crenshaw referred to, women have to be considered as Black women rather than women and Black.

Crenshaw (1991) explained how an intersectionality perspective is useful to explain the experiences of violence against women of color. Although women of different races and social classes are affected by violence, those experiences are qualitatively different depending on the race, class, and other social identities of the woman. Crenshaw (1991) explained how women of color in abusive relationships could also be burdened by poverty, child-care responsibilities, and lack of job skills. While these burdens can be explained as a consequence of gender and class

oppression, these burdens are compounded by racially discriminatory employment and housing practices, and disproportionately high unemployment that makes battered women of color less able to depend on the support of friends and relatives for temporary shelter (Crenshaw, 1991).

Scholars have used an intersectionality perspective to explain the multiple disadvantages women of color in abusive relationships face. For instance, Erez Adelman and Gregory (2009) used an intersectionality framework to understand the relationship between immigration and domestic violence in a study with 137 immigrant women in the United States. They found that the general difficulties that battered women face coexist with challenges they experience as immigrants. The convergence of these multiple structural disadvantages has been found to determine women's power and access to resources (Collins, 2000; Davis, 2008; Moraga & Anzaldúa, 1983). An intersectionality perspective challenges us to address the roots of the intersecting social disenfranchisements that impact the lives of women of color to create opportunities for these women that are more just.

Women of color, Latinas included, share similar experiences of oppression that makes intersectionality useful for understanding the multiple oppressions Latinas experience as well. As such, feminist theory and intersectionality can be productively combined to analyze the complexity of women of Mexican heritage's reported experiences of abuse and post abuse or after abuse by an intimate partner. By using feminist theory and an intersectional perspective, the researcher will focus on the complexity of women of Mexican heritage's reported experiences including their strengths, struggles, and their efforts to heal after the abuse. Limited research has been done on the experiences of abuse and recovery from abuse by an intimate partner using a feminist theory and intersectionality perspective for which this study will attempt to add to the body of literature on Latina women of Mexican heritage.

Review of the Literature on IPV

This review of the literature on IPV focuses on two main aspects. The first aspect is about the issue of IPA including definition and identified social and cultural risk factors for abuse among Latinas. Since the population investigated involves immigrant and abused women, a brief review of Violence Against Women Act (VAWA) is also included. The second part of the review focuses on literature about recovery discussing the challenges women face in the physical, psychological and economic dimensions as well as reviewing the factors that have been identified as facilitating the recovery from abuse.

Definition of Intimate Partner Violence

Intimate partner violence (IPV) or intimate partner abuse (IPA) refers to any type of abuse perpetrated by an intimate partner. In some studies, that included Latinas both terms have been used interchangeably (Kyriakakis, Dawson, & Edmond, 2012; Montalvo Liendo, Wardell, Engebretson, & Reininger, 2011) and both terms will be used interchangeably in this study as well. IPV includes different types of abuse, with the most common being physical, sexual, stalking, and psychological aggression (Breiding et al., 2014). More recently, scholars have added economic abuse (Adams, Sullivan, Bybee, & Greeson, 2008) and coercive control. Stark (2007) has pointed out on the need to recognize the abuse that happens with or without the use of physical hurt which is defined as coercive control (Stark, 2007). The definition of each type of abuse is provided below.

Physical violence. Physical violence is the intentional use of physical force by an intimate partner with the potential to cause death, disability, injury, or harm (Breiding et al., 2015). Examples of this type of violence include minor assaults, such as slapping and pushing; and severe assaults, such as punching and choking (Straus & Ramirez, 2007).

Sexual violence. Sexual violence is sexual behaviors perpetrated by "a current or former partner or spouse using physical force to compel the other to engage in a sexual act; attempts or completes the sex act with one who is unable to understand the nature of the act, decline participation, or communicate unwillingness because of illness, disability or the influence of alcohol or other drugs"(Sachs & Gomberg, 2009, p. 266).

Stalking. This type of abuse is a pattern of repeated unwanted attention and contact that causes fear or concern for one's safety or the safety of someone else (e.g., family member, close friend). Stalking behaviors can include, but are not limited to "receive unwanted e-mail messages, instant messages, or messages through social media; being watched or followed; and having someone approach or show up in the victim's home, workplace or school when unwanted" (Breiding et al., 2014, p. 3).

Psychological abuse. Psychological abuse is the use of verbal and non-verbal communication with the intent to harm another person mentally or emotionally, and/or to exert control over another person (Breiding et al., 2015).

Economic abuse. This type of abuse entails the use of controlling behaviors that limit a partner's ability to acquire, maintain, and use financial assets (Adams et al., 2008).

Coercive control. Although coercive control may include visible types of abuse, according to Stark (2012), this type of abuse refers to the state of control in which a woman lives. Within the coercive control framework, the abuse is not a series of isolated instances of abuse but as "an ongoing pattern of domination by which male abusive partners primarily interweave repeated acts of abuse including physical and sexual violence with intimidation, sexual degradation, isolation and control" (Stark 2012, p. 7). Stark (2012) states that the "primary outcome of coercive control is a condition of entrapment that can be hostage-like in the

harms it inflicts on dignity, autonomy and personhood as well as to physical and psychological integrity" (p. 7). Some tactics of coercive control are intimidation, isolation, depriving victims of their financial independence and material possessions and regulating their everyday behavior (Stark, 2012). The coercive control framework is useful to understand that women's responses to abuse are not just lack of will but a complicated situation of entrapment that "disable women's capacity to mobilize personal, material and social resources to resist or escape from the abuse" (Stark, 2012, p. 13).

The Latino Subgroup of Women of Mexican Heritage and IPV

Studies on IPV among Latinos frequently referred to this population as one general group without considering the differences among the diverse subgroups (Ahrens et al., 2010). By treating Latinos as one general group, we cannot identify their vulnerabilities and specific needs in situations of abuse by an intimate partner. Just considering country of origin, Latinos come from 22 Latino countries (Perilla, Vasquez Serrata, Weinberg & Lippy, 2012). Statistics show that the several Latino subgroups often share similarities such as poverty, inadequate housing, a high proportion of single-parent families, alcohol/drug addiction, acculturative stress, discrimination (Dana, 1998) and relatively low educational and economic status (Schneider, Martinez, & Owens, 2006). Also, Latinos share cultural ideas such as familism (Bernal & Enchautegui-de Jesus, 1994). On the other hand, Latinos differ in legal status, language and fluency abilities, skin color, religion (Bacigalupe, 2003) and in the case of the specific subgroup of Mexicans, a history of war with the United States, conquest, rejection, oppression and struggle for liberation (Bernal & Enchautegui-de Jesus, 1994; Garcia-Prieto, 1982; Tienda & Mitchell, 2006).

Mexican people have been in the United States with a history of animosity since the early 1820's (Rumbaut, 2006). The rejection of Mexicans has seemingly led to inadequate services in education, health, lack of jobs and overall, low quality of life for this specific group of people (Ruiz, 1998). Such struggles point to a multi-faceted intersection of discrimination predicated on the grounds of race, skin color, language, and systems of power. Currently, the situation for Latinos and people of Mexican origin has not improved. Under President Trump's administration immigration laws, thousands of unauthorized Latinos and lawful permanent residents convicted of crimes are at risk for deportation (Meissner & Gelatt, 2019; Voxgov, 2018). In general, this political and social context of uneasiness for Latinos may impact situations of abuse by Latinas and specifically women of Mexican heritage.

Considering that some Latino subgroups may be more vulnerable to IP and addressing the need for studies on the experiences of abuse by specific Latino subgroups, this study will focus on the experiences of abuse and recovery from abuse of women of Mexican heritage in the United States. The study is intended to develop knowledge of IPV on women of Mexican heritage by analyzing the experiences of victimization of this specific group of women.

Risk Factors for Intimate Partner Violence among Latinas

Intimate partner violence (IPV) or intimate partner abuse (IPA) is a prevalent issue for Latinos (Brabeck & Guzmán, 2008) with an impact on the physical and mental health of women (Kelly, 2010; Krishnan et al., 2001; Lown & Vega, 2001). The literature has identified several risk factors for IPV among Latinas; some of which are history of child abuse, economic dependency (Moreno, 2007); low educational attainment (Brabeck & Guzmán, 2009; Vidales, 2010), lack of mastering the English language (Brabeck & Guzmán, 2009), lack of access to

information about rights and services (Murdaugh et al., 2004), and an undocumented status (Ingram, 2007).

History of childhood physical and sexual abuse. Studies with women in general, have found that having a history of childhood physical and sexual abuse increases the risk of IPV (Bonomi, Anderson, Rivara & Thompson, 2007; West, William, & Siegel, 2000). However, little is known about these risk factors for IPA among women of Mexican origin (Marrs Fuchsel, 2013). A study by Moreno (2007) of 32 Latinas with HIV on the relationship of culture, gender and other cultural factors, found that many participants reported experiencing childhood abuse that continued throughout adulthood. As children, they said that never requested help in stopping or dealing with the abuse or reported the abuse. Romero, Wyatt, Loeb, Carmona and Solis (1999) also found high incidences of reported childhood abuse among Latinas and a high rate of nondisclosure. However, these studies were not directly investigating childhood abuse and the impact of adulthood relationships.

Economic dependency. A handful of studies have found that immigrant women who arrive in a new country have many disadvantages in social status and limited human capital resources relative to men (Bui & Morash, 1999). There is evidence that Latinas in households with incomes below $10,000 per year are more likely than other women to be abused by an intimate partner (Vidales, 2010). Other studies whose sample included women of Mexican origin found that women's economic dependency was a factor for the participants not to leave their husband (Moreno, 2007; Reina & Lohman, 2015). Thus, being financially dependent on their partner is a risk for victimization among women of Mexican origin.

Low educational attainment. In general, Latinos in the U.S. have the lowest levels of education when compared to other ethnic groups (Ryan & Sieben, 2012). Scholars have argued

that Latinas with low level of education are more vulnerable to be abused by an intimate partner, are less informed about their legal rights on instances of abuse (Vidales, 2010) and have less access to services (Bauer, Rodriguez, Szkupinski Quiroga, & Flores-Ortiz, 2000; Murdaugh et al., 2004). In turn, the lack of education may prevent them from finding a well-paying and stable job.

Immigration and undocumented status. Similarly, immigration status or undocumented status has been identified as a significant obstacle in seeking help and in leaving abusive relationships among immigrant Latinas (Bauer, Rodriguez, Szkupinski Quiroga, & Flores-Ortiz, 2000; Cunradi, 2009; Frias & Angel, 2005; Harris, Firestone, & Vega, 2005; Ingram, 2007; Sabina, Cuevas, & Zadnick, 2015).

Scholars have found that women with an undocumented status are less likely to seek legal and mental health services (Alegría et al., 2007; Erez & Hartley, 2003), are more apt to remain silent about the abuse and are more likely to stay in the abusive relationship (Crandall, Senturia, Sullivan, & Shiu-Thorton, 2005; Moreno, 2007). Although the situation for immigrant battered women has changed with the passing of the federal law of Violence Against Women (VAWA) in 1994, some scholars contend that VAWA has failed to protect some immigrant women (Bhuyan, 2008; Goldman, 1999).

The Violence Against Women Act (VAWA)

In the United States, the Violence Against Women Act (VAWA) was passed to protect victims of IPV in 1994. Under this law, undocumented immigrant women who experienced IPV could apply for a legal status without the support from their partners through a U-visa. The conditions to apply for this visa were that women showed proof of having experienced extreme mental and physical abuse and that they were willing to assist authorities in investigating crimes,

including domestic violence (Department of Homeland Security, 2017; Rajaram, Novak, Barrios, Rogers, & Leal, 2015). Immigrant women who met those requirements could apply and be granted a U-visa. The U-visa grants a woman "work authorization and a social security number" (Rajaram et al., 2015, p. 2) and allows her a temporary legal status through deferred action for up to four years. The U-visa can help a woman attain permanent residency after three years of continuous and lawful presence in the U.S. and after five years, a woman can apply for citizenship (Rajaram et al., 2015). Although limited research exists on the benefits of having a U-visa, scholars have reported that gaining a lawful status gives the women a sense of stability in this country (Ingram et al., 2010; Rajaram et al., 2015).

Despite the identified benefits of VAWA, scholars Bhuyan, (2008) and Goldman, (1999) contend that VAWA has failed to protect poor immigrant women who are in abusive relationships arguing that meeting the extreme cruelty, physical and mental abuse requirements (American Immigration Council, 2012; Orloff, Roberts, & Gitler, 2015; Valente, Hart, Zeya, & Malefyt, 2001) to apply for a U-visa can be overwhelming for undocumented women. In addition, undocumented women may not speak English, are not familiar with the community resources, are afraid of the court system, and fear the risk of deportation (Bhuyan, 2008; Goldman, 1999; Hass, Dutton, & Orloff, 2000; Ingram et al., 2010). Although participants in this study will not be asked about their legal status, the author of this study foresees that issues of U-visa will be volunteered by some participants since they are women of Mexican heritage.

The identified social factors for IPV suggest that women of Mexican heritage may be a vulnerable group for abuse. Next, the identified cultural factors that may play an important role in the experiences of abuse of women of Mexican heritage will be reviewed.

Cultural Factors Associated with IPV Among Women of Mexican Heritage

The literature on IPV among Latinas frequently cites the influence of the cultural constructs of *familismo*, *marianismo* and *machismo* as risk factors for IPV. Most studies referred to Latinas as a homogeneous group **(**see Bonomi, Anderson, Cannon, Slesnick, & Rodriguez, 2009; Gonzalez-Guarda et al., 2011; Moreno, 2007) including women of Mexican heritage. Limited studies have focused on a specific subgroup of Latinas. Considering the connection of those identified constructs to IPV, a review the literature within these populations is followed.

Familismo. Empirical evidence shows that family is important for Latinas (Campos, Rojas-Perez, Guardino, 2016). Latino attitudes of placing the family ahead of individual interests and development have been termed as familismo (Brabeck & Guzmán, 2009). More specifically, familismo is a strong identification and attachment of individuals with their families (nuclear and extended), and strong feelings of loyalty, reciprocity, and solidarity among members of the same family (Sabogal et al., 1987; Triandis, Marin, Betancourt, Lisansky & Chang, 1982). Familismo can be positive in instances of seeking help. A quantitative study with 75 women of Mexican origin found that a higher level of familismo was associated with a higher frequency of help seeking (Brabeck & Guzmán, 2009). Familismo was measured with a psychometric instrument reflecting endorsement of family attitudes. Some of the statements in the instrument were "relatives are more important than friends" (p. 822). Participants who endorsed those statements were more likely to seek help in situations of abuse. Brabeck and Guzmán (2009) concluded that having a sense of belonging, responsibility, obligation and proximity to family was associated with the women's behavior of seeking help. Although the findings for this study support the importance of family for women of Mexican heritage, some scholars suggest that data collection using quantitative methods on issues of interpersonal violence among Latinas may not be the

best suitable option considering that this population favors a supportive environment where women can speak and be heard (Ahrens, Isas, & Viveros, 2011; Campbell, Adams, Wasco, Ahrens, & Self, 2010). Plus, quantitative studies cannot fully capture the nuanced perspectives of participants for which findings should be interpreted with caution.

To the contrary, familismo can be a deterrent for the disclosure of sexual abuse (Acevedo 2000; Bauer, Rodriguez, Szkupinski Quiroga, & Flores-Ortiz, 2000; Marrs Fuchsel, 2013; Sorenson, 1996). A qualitative study by Ahrens and colleagues (2010) with 65 Latinas, mostly of Mexican origin, investigated the impact of cultural influences on the identification and disclosure of IPV, the authors found that prioritizing the family's well-being was associated specifically with the denial of experiences of sexual abuse to protect the family. Although the study yielded important findings, the points of view collected were based mostly on vicarious experiences of the participants who knew someone who had been sexually or physically abused as opposed to having experienced the abuse themselves.

The mixed results on the impact of family in the experiences of abuse may be explained by methodological differences of qualitative and quantitative studies, study sample, and on the specific type of abuse, such as sexual abuse and physical abuse. The lack of clarity of the impact of family on abuse among Latinas is an area calling for further investigation.

In efforts to gain more information about the influence of the family on instances of IPV, scholars are trying to be more specific about what family dimension is associated with the abuse. Some of the family dimensions are ties between family members, behaviors and attitudes, perceptions of the family, family honor, and obligation to family (Guilamo-Ramos, Bouris, Jaccard, Lesesne & Ballan, 2009; Lugo Steidel & Contreras, 2003; Sabogal et al., 1987). Marrs Fuchsel, (2013) in her study with nine immigrant women of Mexican origin, supports a

multidimensional definition of familismo in the case of the dimension of support from family members. Participants in her study "described their family was very important in their lives; yet, all of them had difficulty in disclosing information about the abuse to immediate family members because they felt embarrassed and unsupported" (p. 386).

Given that the response of the family in situations of abuse among women of Mexican heritage can be complicated, this study will explore the influence of the family on current situations of abuse and on after or post abuse as reported by the participants.

Marianismo. Marianismo has been used to refer to specific women's behaviors that show adherence to traditional and delineated gender roles. Under this definition, women are considered sources of boundless love and "absolute self-sacrifice" (Diaz-Guerrero, 1975, p. 3). In 1973, political scientist Evelyn Stevens coined the term marianismo to explain the behavior of Latinas as women and mothers. Marianismo is derived from the Virgin Mary, the woman in Catholic theology who was both a virgin and the mother of the Savior Jesus, and who serves as a model of femininity (Englander, Yanez, & Barney, 2012; Stevens, 1973). Marianismo portrays women as powerless, submissive, ignorant about sex, and passive in sexual interactions (Ahrens et al., 2010; Marin, Tschnn, Gomez, & Kegeless, 1993; Perilla, Bakeman, & Norris, 1994; Russell, Alexander & Corbo, 2000).

Although marianismo has been used as an interpretative framework for Latina women's behavior in the area of sexual abuse and IPV, Latino scholars have challenged this interpretation, arguing that marianismo ignores women's social class, unique cultural contexts, religious beliefs, ethnic origins, and levels of education (Navarro, 2002, p. 265). Moreover, some theorists contend that adherence to marianista beliefs contributes to the normalization of men's power and control, intergenerational abuse (Agoff et al., 2007; Moreno, 2007; Perilla et al., 2012), and

discourage women from seeking help when living with abuse (Moya et al., 2014; Reina et al., 2014). Researchers who stated that marianismo is limited because it focuses more on the internalization of those virgin-like attitudes while not giving attention to the women's lack of legal status, educational attainment and patriarchal systems that prevent women from challenging the abuse (Bui & Morash, 1999). Furthermore, marianismo seems to be a concept used by scholars but not known by participants. A qualitative study on physical activity with Latinas found that the participants were not aware of such concept (D'Alonzo, 2012). The different perspectives between researchers and participants seem to indicate the need for further research to explore how women of Mexican heritage understand their experiences of abuse and the connection to marianismo.

Machismo. Some studies that include Latinas cite machismo as a risk factor for IPV among this population (Gonzalez-Guarda et al., 2011; Moreno, 2007; Ramos-Lira, Koss, & Russo, 1999). Machismo refers to male behavior that encourages and expresses sexual prowess, alcohol consumption, aggressive behavior, and the belief that men are physically and morally superior to women (Panitz, McConchie, Sauber, & Fonseca, 1983). Machismo is assumed to encourage the dominance of men and subjugation of women. Adherence to traditional gender roles has been found to be associated with women less likely to seek help (Vera, 2002).

Machismo has been found to be supported by structural disadvantages that contribute to abuse (Gonzalez-Guarda et al., 2011; Moreno, 2007; Ramos-Lira et al., 1999). For example, Gonzalez-Guarda and colleagues (2011) found that machismo attitudes about gender, particularly male authority over his wife and a man's perceived right to drink and have intercourse when he pleased, placed Latinas with histories of IPV at increased risk for further abuse (Gonzalez-Guarda et al., 2011). Contrary to this negative perspective of machismo,

Comas-Diaz (1995) suggested a positive connotation of machismo that refers to men's responsibilities to their families and as maleness, or virility. In other words, machismo can refer to a man's role as a provider and his responsibility for the welfare, honor, dignity, and protection of the family (Comas-Diaz, 1995). However, in instances of abuse, this positive connotation has not been identified.

Although machismo permeates IPV literature among Latinos, the definition of machismo is still complex to understand. Machismo has been attributed to men's behavior, as having more privileges than women and often assuming ownership of their wives (Gonzalez-Guarda et al., 2011) but machismo has also been defined as women's adherence to traditional gender roles (Brabeck & Guzmán, 2009). Findings from Brabeck and Guzmán's (2009) study suggest that women and men can hold machistas attitudes. However, there is still lack of clarity about the definition of machismo in the context of IPV among Latinas. In addition, scholars have criticized the use of this construct arguing that machismo reinforces negative stereotypes of Hispanics (Mirandé & Enriquez, 1979). Machismo understood as male dominance over women conflicts with feminist theory ideas that challenges the unbalanced power of women and men. Even though machismo has been identified as a risk factor for IPV, Klevens (2007) suggests further research to clarify the importance of male dominance on issues of IPV. This study will explore how a specific group of women of Mexican heritage report understanding the influence of the beliefs about gender roles or machismo in their experiences of IPV.

Although familismo, machismo, and marianismo have been frequently cited in the literature on IPV among Latinas, specifically on studies among women of Mexican heritage, some scholars contend that those constructs reinforce racial and gender stereotypes (Mirandé & Enriquez, 1979; Rocha-Sanchez & Diaz-Loving, 2005) and suggest to use those constructs with

caution. In addition, those constructs are not considering the impact of other structural forces that play an important role on how women behave in instances of abuse. Considering those limitations on the literature, the present study will explore the experiences of abuse of women of Mexican heritage by listening to their unique perspectives and how they appear to understand the impact of culture and social context on their instances of abuse.

Recovery from Intimate Partner Abuse (IPA)

Research on the experiences of recovery after abuse is an emergent area for which studies are still limited (Flasch et al., 2015; Ulloa, Hammett, Guzman & Hokoda, 2014) and even less research has been done on the experiences of recovery from IPA of minority women including Latinas (Montalvo Liendo et al., 2011). Scholars have referred to the time after the abuse as healing or recovery (Landenburger, 1989; Senter & Caldwell, 2002). From this perspective, recovery is another stage of the continuum of the experience of abuse for which separating both experiences may lead to inaccurate information. For the review of the literature, the author will draw from the literature on recovery and healing as both concepts have been used interchangeably.

One of the challenges found in the literature is the identification of when the recovery from IPA begins. Landenburger (1989) and Anderson and colleagues (2012) placed recovery to after a woman has exited an abusive relationship. However, this approach may be inappropriate for women who remain with their partner, as is the case of some immigrant women of Mexican origin. Specifically, Macias and colleagues (2013) found that, for some women of Mexican heritage, leaving the relationship was not their first choice for many reasons, including attachment and commitment to their partners, hope for change, children having a father, and financial reasons; but the women said that they did not want to be abused anymore. Then for this

study, recovery is defined as the time after the abuse has stopped. This definition differs from studies that placed "the recovery" after the woman leaves the abusive relationship considering what Macias and colleagues (2013) stated, that some women of Mexican heritage might decide to stay with their partners.

Recovery is the "restructuring of one's life" (Landenburger, 1998, p. 702) that takes place after separation. After separation, women may have experienced lingering feelings of attachment and loss around the former intimate partner (Landenburger, 1998; Senter & Cadwell, 2002). In studies on recovery, women have been shown to miss the positive qualities of their partners and the relationship. Longitudinal data collected by Dutton and Painter (1993) has indicated that the sense of attachment experienced by recently separated women decreased by 27% over a period of 6 months. In some studies, women have reported feeling a complete loss of their core selves (Kirkwood, 1993), requiring them to undergo a process of "identity transition" to reconstruct a new sense of self (Flasch et al., 2015; Landenburger, 1993; Ulrich, 1991).

Flasch and colleagues (2015) identified two dimensions in the recovery from abuse: the intrapersonal and interpersonal dimensions. The intrapersonal dimension refers to the individual physical efforts a woman has to do to overcome the many challenges imposed by the separation from a partner. It involves actions of healing from the mental and physical symptoms of abuse; fostering acceptance and forgiveness of self and abuser; education and reexamination of abuse; determinations of whether and how to enter new intimate relationships; and acknowledgment of the long-term process of overcoming abuse. The interpersonal dimension refers to the recovery process as it occurs in relation to others such as building positive relationships and social support and using one's experiences with abuse to help others (Flasch et al., 2015).

Although Flasch and colleagues' (2015) study shed light on the process of recovery, this work had methodological limitations. For instance, the study sample included mainly white women from the United States and from other countries, excluding the experiences of women of color. In addition, the study used a phenomenology method, yet data collection lacked the lengthy interviews recommended for the understanding and interpretation of participants' perceptions of the phenomenon investigated (Creswell, 2013).

Similarly, a study by Allen and Wozniack (2011) explored the experiences of healing and recovery after the abuse of 11 women. Women were participants in a program with a semi-structured curriculum focused on helping women develop alternative ways of thinking about themselves and their future after the abuse. Participants identified events that indicate healing and among those indicators were reclaiming self that involved the integration of the past with present and accepting one's self as a work in progress. This definition of healing is similar to recovery in the sense that they both involve a process of restructuration of one's self. An important point in Allen and Wozniack's (2011) study was the inclusion of spirituality, prayer and hope to facilitate healing after abuse. Scholars have found that women of Mexican heritage relied more on religious coping strategies to deal with the abuse (De la Rosa, Barnett-Queen, Messick, & Gurrola, 2015).

The limitation of Allen and Wozniack's study (2011) is that participants were recruited from a shelter and were selected to participate in the program ensuring that they were no longer in crisis, not living with their partner and demonstrated an appropriate level of insight and reflective capacity for group participation.

While these studies are useful as explorations of women's recovery and healing after abuse, they lack Latina representation, specifically representation of women of Mexican heritage.

Trying to address the identified gap, a major goal of the study is to understand how this sample of women of Mexican heritage experience healing and recovery from IPA.

Dimensions of Recovery from IPA

Researchers have identified different dimensions of the recovery including psychological, physical, and economic. The purpose of studying each dimension in depth is to gain more information of the recovery process from IPA. The following dimensions are discussed next.

Psychological

Longitudinal studies of recovery after abuse have reported that abused women experience significant reductions in their levels of depression and anxiety over time (Campbell & Soeken, 1999). However, another study found that women continued to report greater ongoing use of somatic and psychiatric care than non-abused women over a five-year period (Bergman & Brismar, 1991). Another study that assessed battered women 14.5 months after exiting a shelter, found that even after ending the abusive relationship, these women experienced significantly less physical and mental difficulties (Sutherland, Bybee, & Sullivan, 1998). Together, these studies suggest that recovery from IPA is a long-term process.

Zlotnick, Johnson, and Kohn (2006) used a community sample of married and cohabiting women to compare women with stories of IPV to women without stories of IPV over a five-year follow-up period. Women with stories of IPV experienced greater degrees of depression symptoms, more functional impairment, lower self-esteem, and less life satisfaction. No evidence was found to suggest that women remaining in abusive relationships were worse off in terms of psychosocial difficulties than women who left abusive relationships. Zlotnick and colleagues (2006) concluded that women who have experienced IPV were at risk of a range of

long-term mental health concerns, irrespective of whether they stayed or left the abusive relationship.

Recovery may be different for women who leave an abusive relationship than for women who stay with their partner. A study by Lowe, Humphreys, and Williams (2007) with survivors of IPV found that women experienced sleep disturbances post-abuse. Women from the focus group reported problems of aching limbs and teeth grinding, which they related to "sleeping tightly" following the abuse. They also reported recurring bad dreams that involved hearing or seeing their ex-partner. Most of the women reported that they had spent considerable periods of time with the quality and quantity of their sleep restricted and that they felt the impact on their health and well-being to be significant.

In addition to the intrapersonal actions a woman survivor of IPV has to overcome, Murray, Crowe, and Overstreet (2018) found that, after enduring abuse, women grappled with external stress related to a lack of understanding of the issue of IPV. In such cases, women were blamed for the abuses they experienced; discriminated and treated differently by others and judged for their abuse; lost status; suffered isolation and separation from others; and experienced guilt, embarrassment, and secrecy. Murray and colleagues' (2018) study included a small number of Latinas, yet their specific Latino sub-groups were not specified.

Other stressors found to be associated with interpersonal dimensions of recovery include changes in family composition and roles and relationships, as well as children's difficulties in processing these changes (Anderson et al., 2003). Researchers have also found that during recovery, women reported and experienced feelings of fear, anxiety, trepidation, and anger toward many situations such as the abuse, themselves, men in general, law enforcement, and God (Senter & Cadwell, 2002). Yet, despite the stressors, women have also reported experiencing

feelings of empowerment during recovery (Farrell, 1996). For instance, a study found that women defined their experiences of healing and recovery as having a sense of inner peace and hope for the future, spirituality, forgiveness, and reconnection with the community and others (Allen & Wozniack, 2011).

Specifically, studies with Latinas on mental health post-abuse have found higher rates of depression (Ragavan et al., 2017), poor mental health, and somatic symptoms. Krishnan and colleagues (2001) found that, compared with other abused non-Latinas, Latinas had more tendencies for suicidal ideation. Participants in another study said that the violence they endured with their partner affected their relationships with men, as they were mistrustful of men and afraid of being hurt again (Molina & Abel, 2010). On the same venue, Hazen, Connelly, Soriano and Landsverk (2008) found that psychological maltreatment in the form of emotional and verbal abuse was related to somatization of symptoms.

Since the impact of the abuse on women's mental health may be profound with implications for the recovery, this study will explore how the women in this sample report having experienced the psychological recovery.

Physical

The impact of IPV on women's physical health has also been well documented. Some of the most common problems identified among survivors of IPV are chronic pain (Campbell, 2002; Campbell et al., 2002; Loxton, Schofield, Hussain, & Mishra, 2006; Nicolaidis et al., 2008; Vives-Cases, Ruiz-Cantero, Escribà-Agüir, & Miralles, 2011; Wuest et al., 2008) backache, neck pain, and headaches (Vives-Cases et al., 2011). In a study with Canadian women, 35% of the surveyed women reported high levels of disabling pain and swollen, painful joints,

even though they had been separated from their abusive partners for an average of 20 months (Wuest et al., 2008).

In a qualitative study that included Latinas, participants reported health problems of weight gain and obesity after separation from their partners. The authors concluded that such problems could have been attributed to compulsive overeating and eating for comfort after separation from abusive partners (Ragavan, et al., 2017). In another study with 29 Mexican immigrant women, the scholars also found that participants attributed severe weight, miscarriages, and premature births to the economic and physical abuse they endured (Kyriakakis et al., 2012).

Despite the well-documented impact of IPV on women's physical health, studies on how women of Mexican heritage are affected and how they recover physically are limited. This study will explore how this specific group of women of Mexican heritage recover physically after the abuse.

Economic

Researchers have also identified financial challenges that women faced following abuse (Javaherain, et al., 2007; King et al., 2017; Sanders, 2015). For example, King and colleagues (2017) explored the financial cost of recovery from IPV among a group of 103 mostly white women, who had suffered IPV-related brain injuries and had several mental and health challenges as a result. In their study, participants had to have been out of the relationship for at least two years to minimize the risk of emotional distress caused by recalling past abuse. King and colleagues (2017) found that women experienced challenges in finding work and getting a job, maintaining employment, and providing the money necessary to resettle following an abusive relationship. Other researchers identified challenges that included legal debt, financial

abuse, and the absence of child support (Senter & Cadwell, 2002). In terms of material needs, having a house and economic resources had been shown to be a major concern for women who separated from abusive partners (Kirkwood, 1993).

Women have also been observed acquiring new or altered responsibilities as they become single parents or sole providers. These new roles may add stress to women's lives who may have had limited access to key social materials and internal coping resources (Pearlin, Lieberman, Menaghan, & Mullan, 1981). During recovery, it is generally understood that most survivors may face housing difficulties, financial debt, and parenting problems (Senter & Cadwell, 2002). Many women may have to negotiate sudden and major losses in economic resources as a result of separation (Anderson et al., 2003). Many battered women arrive at shelters with no money or possessions except for the clothes they are wearing (Tutty, 1998). After leaving an abusive partner, women often struggle to meet their economic needs for food, shelter, and safety (Landenburger, 1989; Senter & Cadwell, 2002) and with finding employment or increasing their income to compensate for the loss of their partner's financial contributions.

Factors that Facilitate Recovery from IPA

Recovery from abuse can be a stressful experience, however, researchers have found that the deleterious impact of the abuse may be lessened by the access to resources and having social support (Alexander, Tracy, Radek, & Koverola, 2009; Anderson et al., 2003; Blasco-Ros et al., 2010; Flasch, et al., 2015; Song, 2012).

Women must also possess the strength necessary to learn, grow, and change to recover (Song & Shih, 2010). Anderson and colleagues (2003) defined coping resources as external and internal necessities like material goods and services, income, social support, and self-efficacy (p. 182). In turn, accessing resources and having social support mediates the impact of the abuse on

the physical and mental health of the women facilitating their recovery (Anderson et al., 2003; Flasch et al., 2015).

Support from family. A qualitative study with 15 women survivors of IPV, mostly Caucasian women, found that having the support from family upon leaving the relationship facilitated the recovery and healing process. However, the study was limited to capture the experiences of white women (Smith, 2003).

Family can be both encouraging in stopping or a deterrent to getting out of an abusive relationship. A quantitative study with 279 abused and non-abused immigrant Latinas, found that one of reasons abused women did not leave the relationship was because their mother told them not to leave (Dutton et al., 2000). For Latinas, knowledge about the support from family after women have left an abusive relationship is limited. In a study about childhood sexual abuse and intimate partner violence (Marrs Fuchsel, 2013), participants described that their family was very important to them; yet all of the nine participants had difficulty disclosing information about domestic violence (DV) to their immediate family members because they felt embarrassed, unsupported, and as if they had failed in their committed relationships.

Comprehensive programs. Evidence shows that comprehensive programs for IPV survivors have a positive effect on survivors' quality of life. For instance, Sullivan and Bybee (1999) developed a community-based support and advocacy program for survivors of IPV, in which half of the participants were randomly assigned to receive advocacy services designed to increase their access to community resources and social support after exiting the shelter. Advocates often helped women obtain housing, education, legal assistance, employment, childcare, health care, and social support. Women who had worked with advocates for 10 weeks continued to show improvement even two years later compared to women in the control

condition. They reported more social support, higher quality of life, lower rates of re-abuse, fewer depression symptoms, and less challenges accessing community resources compared to the women who did not receive the same advocacy services (Sullivan & Bybee, 1999).

Similarly, a qualitative study by Molina and Abel (2010) explored post-divorce IPV-related experiences of 24 immigrant Latinas who were receiving legal and social work services through a local organization. Data was collected through support groups and almost half of the participants said they were undocumented. According to participants, immigration services were among the most helpful forms of assistance they received. Moreover, the women said that the support they received in the support group as well as individual counseling (Molina & Abel, 2010) helped them significantly during the separation and the divorce process. Overall, participants credited their positive post-divorce adjustment to the work of the bilingual and bicultural support group worker that assisted in the divorce process. As a result of these post-divorce legal and social services interventions, 10 participants (out of 24) established legal residence and three received work permits.

Spirituality and religious beliefs. Although knowledge of recovery from IPV by women of Mexican heritage is limited, some scholars have found that minority women rely more on spiritual and religious strategies to cope with physical abuse (Bent-Goodley & Fowler, 2006; Yick, 2008). Researchers have identified that after the abuse, some survivors may experience a need for spiritual healing often manifested through feelings of despair, belief that life is meaningless, or a perception that one is powerless. Then, qualitative analyses of women's stories reveal that spiritual healing may help to restore the survivor's sense of meaningfulness and empowerment (De la Rosa et al., 2015; Dunbar & Jeannechild, 1996). Furthermore, evidence suggests that spirituality and religious involvement may buffer the deleterious effects on the

emotional and wellbeing of survivors of IPA (Lown & Vega, 2001). For instance, Bryant-Davis (2005) examined the coping strategies of 70 African American survivors of childhood violence. The scholars found that among other strategies, 55% of respondents relied on their spirituality to make sense of the trauma and by doing this; participants increased their own feelings of efficacy in handling the effects of the trauma.

Regarding women of Mexican heritage, De la Rosa and colleagues (2015) conducted a quantitative study with 54 Mexico-born women who were residing along U.S.–Mexico border cities to explore the correlation between spirituality, resilience and IPA. Results indicated that women who scored higher in spirituality also reported greater resilient characteristics. Similarly, participants who reported an increase in level of spirituality also reported a lower number of types of abusive experiences. De la Rosa and colleagues' (2015) study indicated that spirituality could be a factor in coping against IPA.

Summary

The review of the literature in this chapter includes three parts: theoretical framework of feminist theory and intersectionality perspective to guide this specific study with women of Mexican heritage; empirical studies on IPV identifying social and cultural risk factors for IPV among Latinas; and a review of studies on recovery from IPA in the physical, psychological and economic dimensions. This last part also discussed some identified factors that may facilitate the recovery. The next chapter will describe the methods used in this study.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODS

Introduction

This chapter begins with an introduction to grounded theory in general and identifies the three main approaches: classic (Glaser), Strauss and Corbin, and constructivist grounded theory (Charmaz, 2006). Philosophical and epistemological differences among the three approaches are discussed, as they are important for the selection of the grounded theory approach most appropriate for this study. Then the description of the research design follows as well as the justification for the selection of the constructivist grounded theory of Kathy Charmaz (2006). This approach was selected considering the goal of the study and its view on the role of participant and researcher as co-creators of knowledge. A description of the instrument, ethics, trustworthiness of the study, and explanation of the coding scheme in accordance with the tenets of constructivist grounded theory are included. The chapter concludes with an introduction to the study findings in Chapter Four.

Background of Grounded Theory

Grounded theory has been described as "useful for research in areas where there are major gaps in our understanding, and where a new perspective might be beneficial" (Schreiber, 2001, p. 57). The goal of grounded theory is to develop a theory grounded in the data, rather than to impose pre-existing theories on the data. The philosophical roots of grounded theory are symbolic interactionism and pragmatism. Symbolic interactionism is comprised of three core premises. The first premise is that any given action directed toward something is based on the meaning that it has for the actor. The second premise is that this meaning arises out of the interactions the actor has with other people. The third premise is that people modify these

meanings through an active, interpretative process and transform these meanings according to the situations in which they find themselves (Olson, 2018). Pragmatism (Dewey, 1917; Mead, 1934 as cited in Olson, 2018), on the other hand, refers to the idea that knowledge develops when people reflect on their own experiences. This idea rejects the notion that knowledge exists independently of peoples' activity and is simply awaiting to be discovered; instead, pragmatism assumes that knowledge is provisional, always evolving and, thus, neither certain nor static (Olson, 2018).

Three Grounded Theory Approaches

Grounded theory was first developed by Barney Glaser and Anselm Strauss in 1967 and is often referred to as classical grounded theory (Glaser, 1978). Mills, Bonner and Francis (2006) stated that over time, other approaches or perspectives have emerged as the grounded theory of Anselmo Strauss and Juliet Corbin (1998) also called "evolved grounded theory," and the "constructivist grounded theory" developed by Kathy Charmaz (2006). The three approaches have differences and similarities based on the way to understand the reality (ontology) and how to get the knowledge (epistemology) (Singh & Estefan, 2018).

Glaser holds a positivist philosophy and an objectivist epistemology. In Glaser's grounded theory, reality is independent of researcher; the phenomena can be observed from a neutral position by a dispassionate, passive observer. With this approach, a certain set of data should produce the same grounded theory if the research were rigorous (Duchscher & Morgan, 2004; Heath & Cowley, 2004).

Strauss and Corbin (1998) viewed that reality needs to be constructed and they asserted the possibility of multiple perspectives. However, to develop theory, the researcher's ability is

needed, which should use a rigorous methodological process to avoid the researcher's subjectivity and maintain an objective view.

Constructivist grounded theory developed by Charmaz (2006) believes in the possibility of multiple theoretical interpretations from one set of data (Greckhamer & Koro-Ljungberg, 2005) based on the researcher's interpretation and on the perspectives of the actors as they construct their particular social worlds. Reality changes over time and is a function and outcome of a researcher's interpretation (Charmaz, 2006). While constructivist grounded theory maintained much of classical grounded theory of Glaser, this approach differs on how to get the knowledge of reality. Charmaz (2014) emphasizes using intensive interviewing to attend to participants' stories and to construct theories. Researchers use thoughtful probes to understand implicit meanings and are attentive to the participants' context (Charmaz, 2014). Therefore, the creation of knowledge is influenced by a researcher's experience (Charmaz, 2006).

Differences Among the Three Grounded Theory Approaches

Since the three grounded theory approaches have derived from the root of grounded theory's philosophy, they have similarities such as obtaining data from natural setting, applying theoretical sampling as an analytical tool, doing data collection and analysis simultaneously, and theoretical sensitivity (Singh & Estefan, 2018). Theoretical sensitivity is a multidimensional concept that includes the researchers' level of insight into the research area, how attuned they are to the nuances and complexity of the participants' words and actions, their ability to reconstruct meaning from the data generated with the participant, and their capacity to "separate the pertinent from that which isn't" (Strauss & Corbin, 1990, p. 44).

However, the three approaches differ in their view of three aspects: the role of the researcher, the place of the review of the literature and the coding process. A description of each of these concepts within each grounded theory approach is discussed next.

Role of the researcher. In the Glaserian approach, the role of the researcher is a distant observer and independent researcher. The relationship of the participant and researcher should be objective. Within the Strauss and Corbin approach, there is an interactive relationship of the researchers with the participants. However, the researchers should maintain their objective view by keeping a distance from the data and analysis through a rigorous methodological process (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). For the constructivist grounded theory approach, researchers should take an active role by engaging passionately in the process of theory construction. In this approach, the reality will be discovered by mutual relationships between the researchers with the participants (Charmaz, 2006). Charmaz (2006) sees researchers as part of the research endeavor rather than objective observers and asserts that researchers' values must be acknowledged by themselves and by their readers as an inevitable part of the outcome (Appleton & King, 1997; Guba & Lincoln, 1989).

Place of the review of literature. The review of the literature is an aspect highly contested by classical and evolved grounded theorists. The Glaserian approach warns the researchers not to review the literature in the substantive and associated area before collecting data to avoid their ideas influencing the data. In the view of Strauss and Corbin, review of the literature before engaging in data collection is encouraged because it provides another perspective to the researcher's theoretical reconstruction (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). Charmaz (2006) also encourages the researcher to do a review of the literature and to engage in a

comprehensive review of the literature after data analysis to facilitate openness and creativity of the researcher (Charmaz, 2006).

Coding process. Coding is the essential analytical process used to develop a theory. The three grounded theory approaches use the same terms in the coding process. Glaser and Straus described two levels of coding, substantive and theoretical coding (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). Strauss and Corbin (1990) proposed different levels of coding procedures that are open, axial coding and selective coding. Charmaz' (2006) coding procedures are called initial, focused and theoretical coding. Different from Strauss and Corbin's rigorous coding process, Charmaz emphasizes researcher creativity and freedom in theory development (Bryant & Charmaz, 2007). She emphasizes "flexible guidelines, not methodological rules, recipes and requirements" in the coding process (Charmaz, 2006, p. 11; Evans, 2013). This principle of flexibility can become challenging for which Charmaz (2006) recommends that the researcher must learn to tolerate ambiguity and become receptive to creating emergent categories and strategies.

Description of Research Design

The criteria suggested to choose a suitable grounded theory are the goals of the study and the researcher's philosophical beliefs about knowledge development (Rieger, 2018). Since the goal of this study is to increase the understanding of the reported experiences of abuse and recovery from abuse of women of Mexican heritage, the constructivist grounded theory was considered a suitable choice. Furthermore, constructivist grounded theory stresses the role of the researcher and participant as co-constructors in the development of knowledge. In this study, participants are women whose stories are recognized as research material for which considering their perspectives and realities is important. I believe that a constructivist grounded theory approach, and its suggested intensive interviewing method are an appropriate choice considering

that women of Mexican heritage respond better when they perceive a trusting and interactive environment with the interviewer (Ahrens et al., 2011). In addition, constructive grounded theory fits the feminism theory and intersectionality. A feminist perspective acknowledges the perspective of the women and intersectionality recognizes multiple perspectives of the women on the same phenomenon based on their social context.

Thus, this exploratory study on experiences of abuse and recovery from abuse of women of Mexican heritage uses a constructivist grounded theory approach.

Charmaz (2009) defines and describes constructivist grounded theory as:

> ...a contemporary revision of Glaser and Strauss's classic grounded theory. It assumes a relativist epistemology, sees knowledge as socially produced, acknowledges multiple standpoints of both the research participants and the grounded theorist, and takes a reflexive stance toward our actions, situations, and participants in the field setting – and our analytic constructions of them (2009, p. 129).

In this approach, researchers take a reflexive stance in analyzing their research, experience, decisions and interpretations, and the interests, positions and assumptions that influence their research. This reflexive stance helps to inform readers of how the researcher has conducted the research in terms of relating to and representing participants in the results and analysis (Charmaz, 2006).

Study sample. For qualitative studies using grounded theory, Creswell (2013) suggests a range from 20 to 50 participants or at least 25 interviews for small projects (Charmaz, 2014) or until reaching saturation of the emergent categories (Charmaz, 2006). For this study, 17 women of Mexican heritage participated; five of whom did a second interview, totaling 22 interviews overall. The size of the study was determined by reaching saturation of the main categories when no more new themes emerged. Thus, the size of the sample can be considered a close approximation to Creswell's (2013) and Charmaz's (2006) suggestions.

Recruitment of participants. Participants were recruited from a mid-sized urban city in the state of Michigan using a purposive sampling technique. Purposive sampling is the "selection of information-rich cases for in-depth study. Information-rich cases are those from which one can learn a great deal about issues of central importance to the purpose of the inquiry" (Patton, 2015, p. 264). The city where this study takes place has services for women who have experienced domestic violence and those services are open to all women. However, the services are limited and not always offered in Spanish. Twelve participants reported having never received specific services for women experiencing abuse by an intimate partner.

Participant recruitment was conducted with the support of service providers at some community organizations who identified and encouraged women to participate. The implementation of this study took place in a historical time of the United States where immigration policies are being enforced via the deportation of many Latinos who lack legal status (Lopez, Gonzalez-Barrera, & Krogstad, 2018). This factor may have had an impact on willingness to participate. Per comments from recruiters at the organizations, many women were invited to participate; yet, only a small number participated in the interviews. Recruitment and interviewing of participants took place from August 2018 to July 2019.

Recruitment materials. After obtaining MSU's Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval, flyers in English and Spanish (See Appendix A and Appendix B) were distributed to the service providers in the community who had previously agreed to hand them out to potential participants. To protect participants' identities, prospective participants were instructed to contact the researcher if they were interested in participating. The researcher's contact information was included on each flyer. Only after prospective participants made the first call or sent a text did the researcher follow up to continue with a brief screening and scheduling of an

interview if the potential participant agreed. Moreover, the flyers were not displayed publicly in order to avoid any suspicion of participation.

Inclusion and exclusion criteria. In agreement with the constructivist grounded theory stance on the review of the literature (Charmaz, 2006) a review of the literature was conducted and used to create the criteria for participation. Initially, this study focused on Mexican women born in Mexico who immigrated to the United States. However, given the slow rate of women calling to participate, the inclusion criterion was modified to include women of Mexican heritage with one or both parents being of Mexican origin.

Thus, the finalized criteria for participation were women of Mexican heritage who were born in Mexico or the United States; were at least 18 years old; had reportedly been in an abusive intimate relationship at some point of their lives; and who said they had not been physically abused in the last six months prior to participation (Davis, 2002; Flasch et al., 2015; Javaherian et al., 2007; King et al., 2017). The decision to distinguish between women who were or were not facing crisis situations was based on findings from qualitative studies suggesting that women continue to suffer from the effects of the violence and other violence-related stressors from at least 5 years after the abuse (Anderson et al., 2003; Hoff, 1990). None of the people who contacted the interviewer were excluded from participating.

Interviews. Once a participant agreed to participate, a face-to-face interview was scheduled at a time convenient for the participant and the researcher in a confidential place. Meeting locations were determined by prospective participants and included a Latino church in the city, a community center catering to Hispanics/Latinos, participants' churches, and participants' homes. Most participants chose their Catholic church for the interview, in a quiet church classroom. Other interviews took place at a community center, in a confidential room or

at participants' home where only the participant and interviewer were present. At the site of the interview, an informed consent available in English and Spanish (See Appendix C and Appendix D) was obtained to audiotape the interview. The interviews were recorded and transcribed, and it was explained to participants that the interviews would be used for research purposes only. Participants were informed that they could stop the interview at any time they wished. Equally, they were asked for their consent to participate in a second interview if more time was needed to complete sharing their experiences of abuse and recovery.

Research with Latinas

Researchers who have worked with Latinos acknowledge and recommend the importance of embodying cultural sensitivity when conducting studies with this population (Ahrens et al., 2011; Montalvo Liendo et al., 2011; Silva-Martinez, 2017). By being culturally sensitive, scholars have suggested considering the value of "confianza" (trust) among Latinos. Confianza is a form of mutually supportive relationships developed over time or through affinity networks (Añez, Silva, Paris, & Bedregal, 2008; Larkey et al., 2002). For this specific study and its exploration of the sensitive topic of abuse by an intimate partner, confianza with the researcher was critical for recruitment and collection of rich data. The confianza was observed directly through service providers at the recruited organizations. Services providers have known the interviewer for many years, trusted her, and encouraged women to participate.

Additionally, the confianza of participants toward the researcher emerged from the researcher's community involvement of about ten years. She has volunteered at community organizations; delivered community presentations on different topics, stressing women's empowerment; and, as a social worker, has served as broker connecting people to services in the community. Thus, the researcher's presence in the community where the recruitment took place

facilitated exploration of the issue of IPV with the targeted Latino subgroup of women of Mexican heritage.

Research Study Instrument

After conducting a review of the literature on the experiences of intimate partner abuse, getting out of an abusive relationship, and recovery from IPV, a semi-structured questionnaire available in English and Spanish with open-ended questions and several probes were designed (See Appendix E and Appendix F) (Streubert & Carpenter, 2007). The questionnaire was written in English and translated into Spanish by the researcher, who is a Spanish speaker born in Mexico. A retired Mexican American educator proficient in English and Spanish reviewed the translations of the instrument. An example open-ended question is: Tell me about your experience of being abused by your partner. The probes are the following: When did the abuse start? Type and severity of abuse. What made the abuse end (or cease)? Any kind of help you have received to deal with and to end the abuse.

In addition to the questionnaire, participants were asked to fill out a sheet available in English and Spanish with 15 non-identifiable demographic-related questions (See Appendix G and Appendix H) including age, marital status, level of education, work status, church membership and attendance, and the types of abuse they have experienced.

The research instrument underwent a change approved by MSU's Institutional Review Board (IRB), specifically related to the language in English and Spanish. I observed that some Spanish-speaking participants struggled to understand the word “coercion” (Starks, 2007). By participant’s feedback, “coercion” was translated to *chantaje* o *amenaza* (blackmailing or threat). After the modification, participants did not report any language difficulty. Participants chose the language in which they wanted to do the interview. Most participants chose Spanish or a

combination of both English and Spanish. The interview was planned to last 60 minutes. However, for some participants sharing about their experiences of abuse and recovery took longer than an hour. Participants were given the choice of either staying longer and talking about the two main aspects of the abuse and recovery or coming back for a second interview to finish sharing their experiences. Some participants decided to stay while others chose to come back for a second interview.

Ethics of the Study

Considering the sensitivity of the issue of abuse by an intimate partner and the vulnerability of the population being researched, protection of the participants' identity was critical to this study.

Informed consent. An informed consent including all steps required by IRB was created in English (See Appendix C) and translated into Spanish (See Appendix D) by the author of this study, who was born in Mexico. At the site of the interview, participants received information about study goals and rights as participants and once again were asked for consent to participate. Considering the sensitivity of the topic, IRB waived the requirement to obtain a signed consent. Nonetheless, participants checked boxes indicating their voluntary participation in the study. All participants decided to continue with the study and agreed to do a second interview if some information included in the research instrument was missing. They were informed that the interviewer would call them to schedule a second interview. Most participants provided in-depth data in the first interview for which a second interview was not needed.

Research participant protection. Confidentiality of the participants was carefully maintained during all the stages of the research process. No identifiable information was collected at any stage of the study. During recruitment, participants were asked to make initial

contact with the interviewer to ensure that they were free to participate. Participants were reassured they were in control of what they wanted to share during the interview, for example, a participant requested to stop the recorder when she shared part of her experience and requested that such information was excluded from the data analysis. Her request was honored. To protect participants' identities, they were asked to use a pseudonym and were asked to refrain from using personal names associated with their stories. If the participant revealed an identifiable name or place, this information was deleted from the transcriptions before coding.

Risks and benefits of participation. Participants were also informed that they might experience distress through recollection of their experiences of abuse. To account for this risk, I searched in the area for organizations that provided services for IPV and bilingual service providers where participants could receive psychological attention if needed. Based on the search, I compiled a list of the service organizations and identified one bilingual service provider. Most participants said that they wouldn't require psychological help. Other participants asked if services in Spanish were offered at the organizations on the list. Unfortunately, the list was limited due to the small number of bilingual therapists in the area. Previously, I obtained a list of identified bilingual therapists in the area through another bilingual therapist and contacted each therapist. Of the thirteen identified bilingual therapists contacted only one said she was familiar with Mexican culture and felt comfortable to provide therapy in Spanish.

Participants were informed that they would not directly benefit from this study but that their stories could help other women. Furthermore, they were told they would receive a $10 gift card to a grocery store for participation in each interview.

Use of language in interviews and translation. Conducting research in one language and translating it to another language may pose challenges related to the principle of justice

(Olson, 2018). According to Olson (2018), language "is the primary symbol system through which meaning is conveyed across all cultures, but some words available in one culture are not necessarily available in other cultures" (p. 491). This statement was valid in this study as it was previously mentioned that the word "coercion" was difficult to translate in Spanish in a way that conveyed the same meaning as in Spanish.

To overcome the issues with the language, participants in this study were given the choice of doing the interview in the language of their preference. The interviewer, who is a native from Mexico and holds a college degree from Mexico, typed the transcriptions. She also conducted the data analysis. However, she was also conscious of the translation challenges echoing what Olson (2018) suggests. She states that translating interview data into a language known by a researcher may inadvertently result in the loss of important information, which could be considered a violation of the principle of justice. Thus, the possibility of losing important information in the translation of the women's interviews was considered a concern because translating experiences and conveying cultural meanings can be a difficult task that requires a high level of cultural competence.

For this study, only the in vivo quotes in Spanish that were used to support the categories were translated into English. A decentering translation method was used to translate the quotes. The decentering method is a process in which both languages are considered equally important, and the original-language version of an item may be altered to obtain conceptual equivalence for both languages (Marin & Marin, 1991). The decentering process can be useful in the use of idiomatic equivalence, which cannot be obtained when researchers employ direct translation with an idiom. For example, the expression in Spanish "estar como lazo de puerco cagado" (be as loop of shitted pork) cannot be directly translated into English, as it would not make any sense.

On the other hand, translating by meaning would be to use a description of what the participant meant to say such as "Imagine a pig tied up to a post with its rope all covered with its own shit." The translator's familiarity with the culture and language facilitated this translation and description of this image.

Overall, the in vivo quotes were first translated using a general computer program, then were edited by the interviewer, and finally, were reviewed by a bilingual and bicultural experienced Mexican American educator who has worked on issues of education with Latinos and non-Latinos in Michigan for more than 25 years. In addition, some participants shared part of their experiences in both English and in Spanish. This was helpful to collect the experiences of the women in their own words in English.

Trustworthiness of the Study

To try to ensure the trustworthiness of the study, I followed the criteria prescribed by Lincoln and Guba (1985) of credibility, dependability, confirmability, and transferability.

Credibility. Credibility is the equivalent of internal validity in quantitative research and is concerned with truth-value. Credibility includes activities that increase the probability that credible findings will be produced (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Strategies to try to ensure credibility include prolonged engagement, persistent observation, triangulation and member checking, and peer debriefing.

Prolonged engagement "is the process of building trust and rapport with the participants to foster rich, detailed responses" (Cope, 2014, p. 88). For this study, I engaged in prolonged interviews with participants, totaling 25 hours, 21 minutes, and 38 seconds of interview time. The average time per interview was 1.49 hours per participant. I tried to build trust with the interviewees since the first contact and at the interview.

Persistence observation is the researcher's attention to informants' expressions of emotions that provides depth to the study (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). The topic investigated in the present study was highly emotional. Often, participants showed expressions of pain, sadness, anger, and happiness according to what they were describing. A participant pounded on the table while she was sharing experiences saying they caused her anger, or participants cried when they shared painful experiences. Another expression of participants' emotions seemed to be the tone of their voice. At times, they talked fast, at times, they stuttered, or hesitated. These observations were written on the transcripts and field notes and helped with the interpretation of the analysis.

Triangulation is the process of using multiple sources to draw conclusions on the phenomena investigated. In this study, triangulation was confirmed by data from the interviews and field notes. Plus, the findings were confirmed by the scientific literature (Cope, 2014).

Member checking can be done by "taking the final report or specific descriptions or themes back to participants and determining whether these participants feel that they are accurate" (Creswell, 2003, p.196). For this study, the researcher took back the main findings and themes to some participants. Participants agreed with the findings and added information that enriched the categories. For instance, on the issue of child sexual abuse in the migrant communities, a participant added more details to her story. Another participant offered a different conceptualization of her relationship with her father changing it from ambiguous to resentful. Overall, participants expressed agreement with the findings and commented that they had more information to share.

Peer debriefing has been described as "a process of exposing oneself to a disinterested peer in a manner paralleling an analytical session or the purpose of exploring aspects of the inquiry that might otherwise remain only implicit within the inquirer's mind (Lincoln & Guba,

1985, p. 308). Peer debriefing requires the researcher work together with one or several colleagues who hold impartial views of the study. For this study, three peers offered their perspective on the study findings but only one was available to meet with the researcher of this study on regular basis. The peer who engaged in several conversations about the research study had access to the transcripts. The peers gave the researcher clear and concise feedback on strengths, weaknesses of the data analysis, offered new perspectives and challenged the author of this study to engage in a deeper data analysis.

Dependability. Dependability involves participants' evaluation of the findings, interpretation, and recommendations of the study, such that all are supported by the data as received from participants of the study. One strategy for meeting this criterion is to keep an audit trail (Korstjens & Moser, 2018) that was kept by the interviewer.

Confirmability. Confirmability refers to the degree to which the findings of the research study can be confirmed by other researchers. Confirmability "is concerned with establishing that the data and interpretations of the findings are not figments of the inquirer's imagination, but clearly derived from the data" (Korstjens & Moser, 2018, p.121). This criterion can be met by keeping an audit trail, or a recording of the steps taken from the start of a research project to the development and reporting of the findings. For this study, I kept an audit trail, and consistently documented the steps taken in the research project.

Transferability. Transferability refers to the probability that the study findings have meaning to others in similar situations. A strategy for meeting this criterion is to use thick description (Korstjens & Moser, 2018), which includes descriptions of not only participants' behaviors and the experiences, but their contexts as well. This ensures that the behaviors and experiences communicated in the study can be meaningful to an outsider or transferable

(Korstjens & Moser, 2018). In addition to the interviews, demographic information of the participants was gathered to better understand participants' social and economic context. The criterion of transferability depends on the aim of the qualitative study (Sandelowski, 1986) that for this study was limited to the experiences of a small group of women of Mexican heritage in a city in Michigan. Thus, the findings may be transferable to women in similar situations as the participants in this study.

Researcher reflexivity. In addition to the elements previously discussed, in constructivist grounded theory researcher reflexivity is a major strategy for enhancing the rigor of a study (Charmaz, 2006). Reflexivity is the process of carrying on continuous internal dialogue and critical self-evaluation of a researcher's positionality, as well as active acknowledgement and explicit recognition that this position may affect the research process and outcome (Bradbury-Jones, 2007; Guillemin & Gillam, 2004; Pillow, 2003). I was aware of my education, religious beliefs, beliefs about the societal roles of women and men as well as the experiences of discrimination of the people of Mexican heritage in this country. I am a highly educated woman with a college degree from Mexico plus three academic degrees from the United States. Through these years of education, I acquired knowledge of the Mexican culture as well as tools to develop critical perspective toward my culture in terms of roles of women and men that are also identified as machismo and marianismo. Although I believe that those concepts represent partial truth, I remained open to accept other points of view. I was aware of my Catholic religious beliefs and was careful to not impose or convey those beliefs with participants during interviews and in the data analysis. I was aware of my views toward people of Mexican heritage. I believed in the different social conditions for Mexican people and as a member of this specific group, I could relate to some struggles Mexicans face in this country. In terms of abuse

by an intimate partner, I was sensitive to the pain and of the participants, as I have worked with women who have experienced IPV and have been involved in different research projects related to this issue. These qualifications gave me an insider's perspective to work in this study. Yet, I was also aware that they might lead to biased results. To minimize personal biases, I took time to self-reflect on my position on the findings. In a journal, I recorded emotional reactions to women's experiences and shared perspectives with a bilingual woman who is familiar with the issues of abuse among Latinos.

Data Analysis in Constructivist Grounded Theory

The early stage of the coding process is similar across the three grounded theory approaches (Charmaz, 2014; Glaser, 1978; Strauss & Corbin, 1998). The approaches describe coding as an ongoing process of breaking down, analyzing, and synthesizing data as theory is being built. Small pieces of data are grouped and labeled based on their properties or characteristics. Glaser and Strauss and Corbin named this beginning stage of coding "open coding" (Glaser, 1978; Strauss & Corbin, 1998), whereas Charmaz referred to it as "initial coding" (Charmaz, 2006).

Initial coding. After each interview, the participant's story was transcribed verbatim and reviewed several times for accuracy. The initial coding was done by hand and was coded incident-by-incident, using gerunds to define categories as recommended by Charmaz (2012) "Grounded theorists code for actions and meanings and do so in gerunds, as much as possible" (p. 5) (See Table 1). In addition, to facilitate the initial coding, I used some questions suggested by Charmaz (2006): "What process(es) is at issue here? How can I define it? When, why, and how does the process change? What are the consequences of the process?" (Charmaz, 2006, p. 51). Then, I identified themes in the women's stories, for example, experiences of pain during

childhood, experiences of abuse in an adult intimate relationship, events that aimed at the recovery process, and impact of immigration on the recovery. Each of these themes was assigned a color-code.

The process of merging codes to concepts, concepts to categories, and the formation of their interrelations was iterative and continued in further coding stages (Singh & Estefan, 2018). Theoretical sampling or looking for data that may be pertinent to and further inform the emergent categories is an important element in grounded theory (Charmaz, 2006). As concepts and categories emerged a request for a modification of some questions was submitted to IRB.

Table 1. Example of Initial Coding

Open Codes	Extract from an interview
Not knowing about resources Not knowing where to go Being afraid Being educated in Mexico Believing you must endure the abuse Setting expectations for marriage Feeling conflicted about sharing the abuse Being embarrassed about sharing the abuse Being afraid of misjudgment Expressing societal misunderstanding of IPV Wishing people were supportive Feeling internal fear and terror Trying to deal with abuse Threatening to leave partner Being threatened and controlled	en ese tiempo, piensa uno que no tiene como no … primero no sabe de recursos, qué recursos tiene, no sabe a dónde ir y el miedo, el miedo y el pensamiento que le ponen en México de que tienes que aguantar a tu pareja hasta que los dos mueran. Desde que te casas esa es la vida que tienes que soportar, esa es la vida que tienes que llevar. Entonces, como que da, da vergüenza contarle a las personas, "no, pues eso es lo que me está pasando" porque piensas que te va a decir, "es que eso es lo que tú te buscaste. Eso es lo que querías casándote pues eso es lo que tienes" en… en lugar de "cómo te voy a ayudar a buscar una solución, te voy a buscar quien te pueda ayudar," no, "pues llevas esa vida porque tú quieres." "Sigues así porque tú quieres porque ya lo hubieras dejado." Pero no se entiende… el miedo y el terror que tiene uno por dentro, porque luego sí, yo recuerdo que le dije una vez que si no cambiaba iba a agarrar el niño y me iba a ir. Dijo la única forma en la que vas a salir y no me vas a poder volver a ver es… muerta. In that time, one thinks that we don't have, no first one does not know about resources, neither where to go and then the fear, the fear and the though you learned in Mexico that you have to put up with your partner until both die. Since you get married, that's the life you have to endure, that's the life you have to live. So, it is like, it's embarrassing telling people, "this is what's happening to me" because you think they are going to say, this is what you wanted. That is what you wanted when you wanted to get married, now is what you have... instead of " I am going to help you find a solution, I'm going to help you whoever can help you," no, "you are living that because you want. You are in that situation because you want otherwise you had already left him." But they don't understand the fear and the terror that one feels inside. I remember one time I told him, that if he did not change, I was going to take the baby and I was going to leave. He said the only way you're going to leave and never see me again is … dead.

Selective or focused coding. Charmaz (2006) called this level of coding "focused." In focused coding, researchers select major categories based on that which is relevant to the emerging theory. The selection of major categories is done through an inductive process of constant comparison: comparing data to data, incident-to-incident, and category to category (Charmaz, 2014). Categories were selected if they explained an underlying process of the phenomenon and by saturation of the categories. For instance, the experiences of abuse in childhood and learning about gender roles were selected because according to participants, they had an impact on how participants managed the abuse in their intimate relationships as adults. The second criterion of saturation was determined by the number of participants that talked about the issue, which in this case was 50% or more (at least 8 participants).

At the level of focus coding, Strauss and Corbin (1998) include axial coding. Axial coding is "reassembling" (Strauss & Corbin, 1998) the fractured data that have started to make sense during open coding. Charmaz (2006) gives more flexibility on the coding process than Strauss and Corbin but suggests that students who prefer having a present structure while doing the data analysis may use the formal procedures of axial coding prescribed by Strauss and Corbin. Then, considering the researcher's personal experience, axial coding was conducted by relating categories to subcategories, specifying properties and dimensions to give coherence to the emerging analysis (Charmaz, 2006; Strauss & Corbin, 1990, 1998). An example of axial coding is provided in Table 2.

Table 2. Example of Axial Coding

Category	Subcategories	Quotes from interviews
Seeking advice Talking to a priest Realizing God does not want her suffering Feeling stronger	Type of empowering experience: Religious	Especialmente un sacerdote muy joven me dijo “no, Dios no quiere eso para ti.” Entonces tú eres la que estas decidiendo eso, si tú lo decides pues eso tú no puedes culpar a nadie más que a ti misma. Entonces de ahí fue cuando yo también empecé a sentirme fuerte y decir “bueno Dios no quiere esto para mi yo tampoco lo quiero.” (Alma Rosa) Especially a very young priest told me "no, God doesn't want that for you." So, you're the one who's deciding that, if you chose that, then you can't blame anybody else but yourself. Then from that realization, is when I started feeling strong and say, "well, if God doesn't want this for, I don’t want it either."
Perceiving abuse has stopped Deciding to stop being abused Attending a workshop Being in touch with herself Being afraid of computers Attending a computer course Opening doors Having hope	Type of empowering experience: Education	No ha habido abuso porque hace poquito más de un año que hubo unos incidentes que… (suspira profundo)… que me hicieron decidir poner un alto, decir no más. … Aún vivo con él, él vive en la casa (suspira profundo) pero fueron varias cosas que pasaron juntas entre esas fue un taller de… para mujeres… y eso me puso en contacto con quién soy yo. (María) There has been no abuse because just over a year ago there were some incidents that... (deep sigh)... that made me decide to put a stop, say no more.... I still live with him, he lives at the house (deep sigh) but there were several things that happened together, among those was a workshop of... for women… that put me in touch with who I am. …mira ahorita en mi trabajo que estoy haciendo pues… a veces enfrento muchos retos que no sé cómo pero ahí voy. Al principio le tenía miedo a la computadora, gracias a [nombre del programa de computación] ya no, ya no. Eso me abrió otra puerta, ¿verdad? y las cosas empezaron a caer, así durante ese año empezaron a cambiar para mí. Entonces me hizo tener esperanza otra vez. (María) Look right now in my work... sometimes I face a lot of challenges that I don't know [how to solve] but I try. Before I was afraid of the computer, thanks to [name of computer program] no longer I am afraid. That opened another door for me, didn't it? And things started to fall in place. So, in this year things started to change for me. That gave me hope again.

Table 2. (cont'd)

Getting information about her rights Feeling relief and safe Not worrying about being deported Receiving information in her language Becoming courageous Asking for help Getting help in Spanish Feeling confident Being able to explain well	Type of empowering experience: Receiving services in Spanish	Entonces [el policía] también me dijo, "tú tienes derechos. El tiene la obligación de mantenerlos, él tiene obligación de darte el teléfono, o sea las cosas de la niña y y todo eso, Y me dijo, "y también hay un programa. Hay un programa para personas con violencia que se trata de una visa, la visa U. Infórmate de eso…. Entonces me quedé como más tranquila cuando el policía me dijo "tú no te preocupes porque estás deportada" eso fue para mí como si me hubieran dicho wow o sea no te va a pasar nada… Entonces eso a mí me quito un miedo, como el 80% de todo porque ese era su amenaza de siempre, decir tú estás deportada, a la que se van a llevar es a ti, a la que van a encerrar es a ti. Entonces lo que me dijo el policía, y me lo dijo en mi idioma, me quitó mucho, mucho miedo y desde ahí fue como otro valor. (María del Sol) So [the police] also said, "You have rights, he has an obligation to provide for you. He has an obligation to give you the phone, this means to provide for the girl. He also told me "there's also a program. There's a program for people with violence. It's about a visa, the U visa. Get some information…." Then, when the policeman told me "don't worry, you cannot be deported" that was a relief. That took my fears away, like an 80% of my fears because he always threatened me by saying you have a history of deportation, they are going to take you, you are the one who is going to be put in jail. Then, what the police told me, and he told me that in Spanish, it took my fear away and I felt like more brave. Recuerdo que me armé de valor ahí y yo le dije a ella que estaba pasando por una mala situación, que estaba siendo víctima de abuso doméstico. Y me dijo "no te muevas de aquí, no te muevas de aquí." Hablaban español. Así que todavía me dio más confianza de que iba a poder comunicarme, iba a, pude decirle bien lo que está pasando. (Alma) I remember, becoming so courageous and I told her that I was going through a bad situation, that I was being a victim of domestic abuse. And she said, "Don't move from here, don't move from here." They spoke Spanish. So, it gave me more confidence that I was going to be able to communicate; I was going to be able to explain well what was going on.

Using comparative methods. A key element of the data analysis in grounded theory is the "constant comparative method" (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). This is "a method of analysis that generates successively more abstract concepts and theories through inductive processes of comparing data with data, data with category, category with category, and category with concept. Comparisons then constitute each stage of analytic development" (Charmaz, 2006, p. 187). Accordingly, the researcher compared interviews with interviews and categories with categories to understand differences in the data and how those differences could be explained. For example, participants who had received mental health services seemed to express a deeper understanding of the abuse that happened in their lives than participants who had not received such services.

Charmaz (2006) suggests, first, to compare data with data to find similarities and differences. For example, comparing interview statements and incidents in different interviews (Charmaz, 2006, p. 54) and moving along with the analysis until a grounded theory is fully integrated (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). For this study, an interview was compared with other interviews to identify what was similar and what was different, as well as the circumstances or contexts that made the event different. Then the incidents in a story were compared with other incidents in the other women's narratives, establishing analytical distinctions. An example of this comparison was done in the case of two participants with similar stories of child abuse. Both women were born in the United States, both described experiencing frequent sexual abuse in their childhood, and both reported having received at least three years of counseling. At the interview, one of the participants expressed that she still feels confused believing she may have been responsible for the abuse due to her easygoing personality while the other participant said that she felt the abuse was partly due to the faults of the legal and justice systems that lack strong

policies to protect children from abuse. She went on to say that this realization led her to be a strong advocate to protect children from sexual abuse.

Thus, in these two specific cases, I looked for the factors that made these stories different One of the women shared that she grew up with loving parents but due to economic hardships, both parents had to work in the fields while they left their children alone at home. This participant emphasized the love her parents had toward their children and how she felt loved. Whereas in the case of the other woman, she shared that was abandoned by her biological father, was psychological abused by her mother and felt unprotected and unloved by her mother. Thus, in terms of the analysis, it was observed that having or missing the love and support of family could be a factor contributing to how both women internalized the experience of abuse. Thus, the emergent code was the role of the support in managing experiences of abuse.

Theoretical coding. Grounded theorist researchers also use theoretical coding, or a sophisticated level of coding that follows the codes selected during focused coding (Glaser, 1978, p. 63). According to Glaser (1978), this type of coding reveals "how the substantive codes may relate to each other as hypotheses to be integrated into a theory" (p. 72). It specifies possible relationships between categories that have been developed during focused and axial coding.

At this level of coding, with the study goals in mind and the emergent substantive codes, I started constructing the theory. To organize the data, I used the clustering strategy suggested by Charmaz (2006). Clustering is a flexible, non-lineal, visual technique for understanding and organizing material yielded from interviews (Rico, 1983 as cited in Charmaz, 2006). On paper, I constructed clusters by placing the main topic or idea at the center and arranged the subtopics around making connections between ideas and categories.

I engaged in deep reflection making sure that the findings were grounded on the data and tried to be mindful of personal bias. For the interpretation of data, I connected events to the social context and situations of participants to avoid treating participants' experiences as fragmented and separated (Charmaz, 2006). The use of the memos aided in this process of building the theory as I reviewed them to integrate such information with the emergent theory. Findings of the major themes were discussed with some participants and other people expert on the issue to enhance the trustworthiness of the study. Participants agreed with the findings and the other people provided feedback on some themes such as the religious aspect and the abuse in the migrant camps.

Memos. Memos are written records of the analysis. They are usually complex and analytically in-depth thoughts about an event (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). According to Charmaz (2006), memo writing is an opportunity for researchers to explore ideas and categories without worrying about verb tense, overuse of prepositional phrases, or lengthy sentences. Memos can be revised later in the process of data analysis. As prescribed by Charmaz (2006), I wrote memos after each interview. I wrote 30 memos assigning title, date and the name of the interview from where the memo emerged. In the memos, I wrote insights, identified gaps in the data, categories, comparisons of data to data and included raw data. Memos were helpful in the building of the theory.

In vivo codes. These are codes of participants' terms and help to preserve participants' meanings (Charmaz, 2006). Consistent with feminist theory, I gave voice to the women by respecting the women's language. I included in vivo codes in Spanish that were translated into English. During the interviews, I constantly asked for clarification of information instead of making assumptions about what participants meant. I avoided the language of intention and

ensured the statements I made were supported by the data as suggested by Charmaz, (2006). I translated the quotes using a decentering process and two bilingual people reviewed the translations for accuracy. As described previously, decentering is a process in which both languages are considered equally important, and the original-language version of an item may be altered to obtain conceptual equivalence for both languages (Marin & Marin, 1991).

Field notes. These are descriptions of social interactions and the contexts in which they occurred (Roper & Shapira, 2000). Charmaz suggests the use of notes to aid in development of the theory. For this study, special attention was given to the way women used nonverbals in sharing their stories, identifying long pauses of silence, times when they cried, and when they showed emotions such as anger, happiness, fear, and pain. This information was helpful for the interpretation of the data to see how participants seemed to understand and feel the experiences they were describing. For example, a participant who said the sexual abuse by her partner was not right and she pounded on the table. Thus, the oral description of the event and the nonverbal actions provided additional information for a more accurate interpretation of the meaning of the abuse as shared by participants.

Summary

A discussion of grounded theory and the selection of the specific grounded theory approach were discussed in this chapter. The chapter also included a description of the research design, research study instrument, ethics of the study, trustworthiness strategies, practical coding procedures and data analysis. Chapter Four will discuss findings of the experiences of IPA as reported by women of Mexican heritage.

CHAPTER FOUR

FINDINGS: REPORTED EXPERIENCES OF ABUSE

Introduction

The purpose of this exploratory study is to understand the experiences of abuse by an intimate partner and recovery from abuse of women of Mexican heritage in a mid-sized urban city in Michigan.

To fulfill this purpose, I will answer the following research questions:

1. How do these women understand their experience of abuse by an intimate partner and what factors do they identify as contributing to the abuse?
2. How do these women understand their experiences of recovery from the abuse by intimate partner and what factors do they identify as contributing to the recovery?
3. How do women understand their recovery at the physical, psychological and economic dimensions?
4. How do these women experience the impact of the immigration policy on their recovery from abuse by an intimate partner?
5. How do these women understand the impact of the beliefs about gender roles and the role of family in the recovery**?**

Demographic Description of Study Sample

This study used a community-based sample of 17 women of Mexican heritage (See Table 3). Ten participants were born in Mexico and seven participants were born in the United States. Participants born in Mexico arrived to the United States, two of them where under 18 years old when they arrived to this country; four participants were in their 20's; 2 participants in their 30's; and 2 participants immigrated when they were in their 40's. Seven participants were first

generation women of Mexican heritage born in the U.S. They identified themselves as being Mexicans born in the United States. One of the participants was born in the U.S. but raised in Mexico until age 16 when she came back to the United States. The age of all participants was between 35 to 85 years with an average age of 55.5 years. Ten participants (59%) were at least 56 years old or younger.

Seven participants had an education level between 5^{th} to 8^{th} grades; five women had an education level between 9^{th} to 12^{th} grades, and five participants had some college education. Thus, twelve participants (70%) completed high school or less. Eleven participants received their formal education in Mexico and six participants were educated in the U.S.

Thirteen participants were bilingual and four spoke Spanish only. Twelve interviews were done in Spanish, two in English and three were bilingual. Participants chose the place for the interview considering confidentiality and safety for participants. Eight interviews were held at a community center, four interviews took place at a Catholic church and five interviews were done at the participants' home.

As far as marital status, twelve participants separated from their partner. From those 12, seven remained single and five entered another relationship. Five participants stayed with the partner who inflicted the abuse. All participants had children with the minimum number of children per participant as two and the maximum as four children.

Thirteen women were working, two were on disability, one was retired, and one was unemployed. In terms of income, 13 participants reported an income of $30,000 or less, 2 participants reported an income of more than $31,000, and 2 did not respond. The sample included low-income working women.

The number of years participants lived in an abusive relationship was in the range of 2 and 30 years, with an average of 15.47 years living in abuse (see Table 4). Five participants remained with partner who abused them. However, they reported that the situation of abuse had changed and that they had not been abused in at least 6 months previous to the interview as stated in the criteria for participation. Thus, participants had lived without being physically abused by a partner for a minimum of 1 year and a maximum of 38 years.

Thirteen (70%) participants were Catholic, one was Christian, one Jehovah's Witness, one said she believed in God and one did not respond. Thirteen (76%) participants said they go to church at least once a week or more, three participants do not go to church and one did not respond.

Seventeen (100%) participants reported having experienced psychological abuse, 14 (82%) reported physical abuse, 11 (64%) participants reported sexual abuse and 9 (53%) participants reported having experienced coercion.

Although legal status was not asked, participants volunteered this information. Participants born in the United States were citizens, others where naturalized citizens through their partners, some had residency status, other participants had the U-visa that is granted to victims of IPV, and one did not disclose her legal status. Frequency of legal status is not provided for confidentiality purposes.

The demographic information of participants is provided in the two following charts. Participants' names in Table 4 are pseudonyms that women chose to protect their identity.

Table 3. Demographic Characteristics of Participants (N=17)

Variables	Frequency	Percentage
Country of birth		
Mexico	10	59%
United States	7	41%
Age		
35-45	4	24%
46-55	4	24%
56-65	7	41%
66 or more	2	11%
Average Age	55.5	
Education		
5^{th} – 8^{th} grade	7	41%
9^{th} – 12^{th}	5	29.5%
Some years of college or more	5	29.5%
Marital Status		
Single/Separated	7	41%
Separated living with another partner	5	29.5%
Living with partner	5	29.5%
Language(s) spoken		
Spanish only	4	23.5%
Bilingual (English and Spanish)	13	76.5%
Employment		
Employed	13	76.5%
Disability/retired	3	17.5%
Non-employed	1	6%
Income		
Less than $15,000.00	6	35%
Between $16,000 and $30,000.00	7	41%
Between $31,000.00 and $60,000.00	1	6%
More than $61,000.00	1	6%
Not answered	2	12%
Religion		
Catholic	13	76.5%
Non-Catholic	4	23.5%
Type(s) of abuse		
Psychological	17	100%
Physical	14	82%
Sexual	11	64%
Coercion	9	53%

Table 4. Non-categorical Demographic Information of Participants (N=17)

Pseudonym	No. Children	No. of years living in abuse	No. of years out of abuse	Age of arrival to U.S.	No. of years in U.S.	Country of Birth
Alma	2	9	9	16	19	Mexico
[a] Alma Rosa	4	13	8	23	32	Mexico
[b] Blanca	3	23	7	16	27	U.S.
Carmen	3	24	15	41	15	Mexico
Jimena	2	27	5	26	26	Mexico
Leilani	2	8	16	25	25	Mexico
Luisa	4	26	13	26	36	Mexico
[a] Lupita	2	2	11	30	12	Mexico
[a]María	3	32	1	15	40	Mexico
[a] María del Sol	2	11	10	30	11	Mexico
Renata	2	6	38	42	18	Mexico
Amelia	4	13	5		85	U.S.
Cathy	4	4	15		63	U.S.
Gloria	2	12	5		56	U.S.
[a] Gloria 2	2	30	15		62	U.S.
Jade	2	13	4		66	U.S.
Martha	2	10	30		60	U.S.
Average	2.5	15.47	12.17			

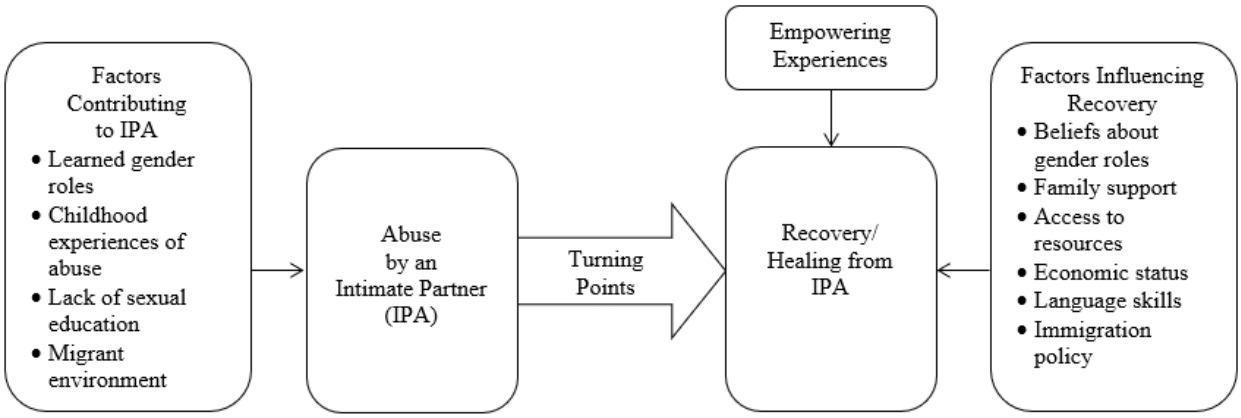
[a] Participants who remained with partner
[b] Participants born in U.S. raised in Mexico

This study uses a feminist theory and an intersectionality perspective to interpret the findings. Feminist theory understands violence against women as emerging from patriarchal beliefs that gives more privileges to men and place women in status of inferiority to men (Lewis, 2019). Feminist theory sees women as survivors with many capacities and strengths and acknowledges women's experiences as sources of knowledge focusing on women's advocacy and empowerment (Bograd, 1988). An intersectionality perspective (Crenshaw, 1989) helps to understand the experiences of abuse of women of color, in this case, women of Mexican heritage

considering their social, cultural and economic disadvantages making their experiences different than those of privileged women.

The following diagram represents the conceptual theory of the experiences of recovery from abuse by an intimate partner of women of Mexican heritage. Each one of the points in the diagram will be addressed in the research questions.

Figure 1. Conceptual Representation of Recovery from IPA



Conceptual Representation of Recovery from IPA

Data suggests that experiences of IPA were shaped by cultural and social factors. Women identified four types of factors that contributed to the abuse in their intimate relationships with a partner. Three types of factors were related to their childhood and one to the immigrant conditions of the Mexican women born in Mexico. The factors were learned gender roles of men and women, childhood experiences of abuse and witnessing mother being abuse, the lack of sexual education, and the migrant living conditions. Women entered a relationship carrying 'preexisting vulnerabilities" (Crenshaw, 1991, p. 1249) leading to experiencing different types of abuse. During the abuses, women faced turning points defined as "major influences on a woman's decision to leave a relationship" (Campbell, Rose, Kub, & Nedd, 1998, p. 751) or to stop living in abuse. Women experienced empowering experiences that gave them the strength to

continue acting to stop the abuse. After the abuse stopped or lessened, (for some women) women experienced times of healing and recovering. Recovery is and ongoing process of physical and psychological healing. Several factors influence the recovery from IPA such as beliefs about gender roles and family support, economic status, language skills, and immigration policy.

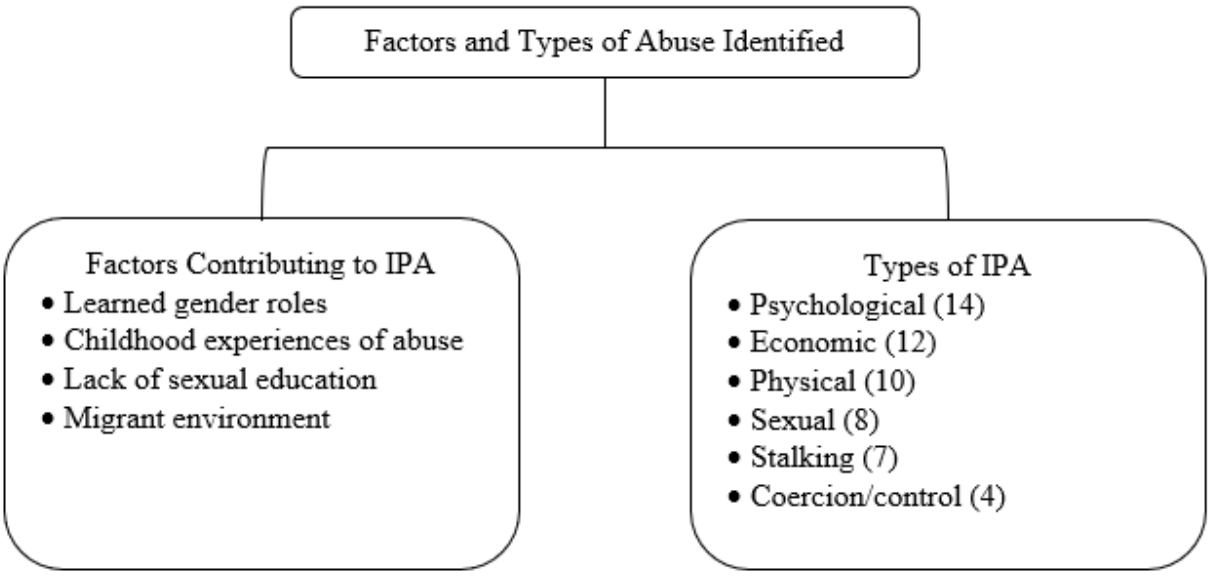
Findings related to the reported experiences of abuse are presented in Chapter Four and Findings about recovery from abuse are presented in Chapter Five.

Research Question 1. How do women of Mexican heritage in a mid-sized urban city in Michigan understand their experiences of abuse by an intimate partner and what factors they identify as contributing to the abuse?

All participants seemed to have an understanding that they have been abused by an intimate partner. They identified that their experiences of abuse were connected to their experiences in childhood. They identified the different types of abuse they endured: psychological, economic, physical, sexual, and stalking, and coercion/control. The types of abuse were organized under one category. The number in parenthesis corresponds to the number of participants that experienced the particular type of abuse. See Figure 2.

The factors participants identified as contributing to the abuse were organized in four categories: learned gender roles, childhood experiences, lack of sexual education and influences of the migrant environment.

Figure 2. Factors and Types of IPA



Factors Contributing to IPA

Learned gender roles. Fifteen participants shared how they were taught about the gender roles for women and men. Participants seemed to understand that girls were seen to have less value than boys. Participants saw that as women, they had less opportunities to get an education. If they attended school, they were limited in participating in school activities, because the ideas about marriage had them at home cleaning and cooking. They did not have an opportunity to protest or express their voice.

***Value placed on women*.** Participants' experiences seem to suggest that women felt to be inferior to and less productive than men. A participant said that she did not feel loved by her father for being a woman. Amelia said she was born in the United States from migrant worker parents, and that she endured physical and psychological abuse by her father. This excerpt from her story seems to reflect Amelia's understanding of being a woman:

> Yo creo que desde que nací, mi mamá me dijo que mi papá, pronto cuando nací yo, entró al cuarto donde estaba mamá, donde había nacido y luego, luego me dijo que porque era otra niña y no quería otras mujeres. Yo soy casi en medio de la familia y no, dijo que me

había agarrado de las patitas y me iba a ventar pa' fuera…Recién nacida, yah porque era otra mujer y luego pues… no me quería, yo creo (se ríe)…Pues no, que porque quería otro hombre, quería más hombres que mujeres porque a las mujeres dijo que no servían pa' nada, nomás pa' que otro hombre las lograra y no quería a las mujeres. No nos quería a las mujeres, no nos quería nada.

I think from birth, my mom told me that my dad, as soon as I was born, he entered the room where mom was, where she gave birth to me and right way, he said, because I was another girl and he did not want another girl. I am pretty much a middle child and my mother said that he took me by my feet and was going to throw me outside. Newborn yeah, because I was another girl and then...I think he didn't love me (laugh)... Well, he wanted boys. He wanted more boys than girls because he said that women were useless, only for another man to get them and he did not love the girls. He did not love us as women. He did not love us at all.

Women had no voice. Some participants said that as children, they were told to be quiet and not complain. As women, the same ideas of being quiet and obedient were brought into their relationship with a partner that combined with machista ideas seemed to be the suitable environment for abuse.

Alma recounted that she was born in Mexico and lost her mother when she was four years old. Her oldest sister became in charge of the family at age 7. She said that growing up with a machista father was difficult. Alma defined "machista" as her father's controlling behavior by which children could not protest nor say anything. She said that those women's behaviors were the same behaviors expected by her partner's family where women seemed not to count. Alma recalled:

Entonces [mi papá] así era con nosotros que no, no aguantaba y entonces yo pienso que de ahí trae uno la mentalidad o se queda con eso de que tiene que obedecer, que uno se tiene que quedar callado por, por cómo creció. Entonces…… tenía 18 años cuando me fui con el papá de mi hijo. Y… no pasó mucho tiempo para que, que él también que viene de una familia machista y de una familia donde … los, los hombres están hablando y las mujeres solamente están a un lado pero sin decir nada y no pueden… dar su opinión. Tienen que estar ahí sentadas calladas y eso es todo.

Then, he [my father] was like that with us, that he couldn't stand [noises] and then I think that it is where one developed that mentality and bring it to a relationship, that you have to obey, that one has to be quiet because it was the way we were raised. Then, I was 18

> years old when I eloped with the father of my son. And... it didn't take long for that, that he, who also comes from a machista family and from a family where ... men, men are talking, and women are only on the side but without saying anything and can't... give their opinion. They had to be seated without talking, that's all.

Another participant said that she felt that her voice did not count in her relationship with her partner. Luisa said she had to ask her oldest son to speak for her to his father about stopping violent behaviors because her husband did not listen to her anymore. She recounted "Cuando yo llegué [a la casa] le dije a mi hijo mayor, le dije 'tienes que hablar con tu papá porque yo no sé qué le pasa pero, pero me da miedo.' Y entonces él dijo 'sí, yo'" ["When I arrived [to the house] I told my eldest son, I said, 'You have to talk to your dad because I don't know what's wrong with him but, but I'm afraid.' And then he said, 'yes, I will'"].

Less opportunities to get an education. Women seemed to understand that they had less opportunities to get an education or a quality education because they were told that their husbands would provide for them. Participants suggested that they also felt limited to get an education because they had to be caretakers in the home, because there wasn't enough money, or just because education for the girls was not a priority for the parents. A participant said that she had a difficult time going to college because her dad did not consider that level of education necessary for women. Four participants shared some experiences that seem to reflect their limited educational opportunities.

Gloria said she was born in the United States, was the eldest of five siblings and had to do a lot of the housework. She stated that after school she had to go straight home. As she got older, her mother did not allow her to participate in school activities, and it seemed like anything related to school was seen as unimportant. Although, she finished high school, she felt that her educational experience and her exposure to other opportunities were limited. This quote seems to reflect her experience:

> I had to be home. The minute I came home from school, I better start cleaning house, have dinner ready. I started doing this at 13. She [mom] did not want me to be involved with this school. Yo nunca estaba…ni un club, nada, nada de la escuela. De la escuela derechita pa' la casa. No podía salir, you know. So…when I look back, I was in a shell. Tenía miedo. Tenía, ah, yo tenía mucho miedo. Yo le tenía mucho miedo a mamá. Siempre le tenía miedo. Y siempre me hablaba mal.
>
> I had to be home, the minute I came home from school I better start cleaning house, have dinner ready. I started doing this at 13. She [mom] did not want me to be involved with this school. I was never in any club, nothing, nothing from school. It was straight to school and straight home. I couldn't go out, you know. So, when I look back, I was in a shell. I was afraid. I was, ah, I was very afraid. I was so afraid of my mom. I was always afraid of her. And, she always talked bad/mean to me.

Martha said that she was born in the United States from migrant worker parents. She said that although her father wanted his children to attend school, in his mind a high school education was considered sufficient for his daughters since they were supposed to get married and stay home. Martha said that convincing her dad to let her attend college was difficult. Here is what she shared:

> En la mente de mi papá todas las mujeres se iban a casar y íbamos a ser como mami, you know, tener la casa, tener babies, cuidar la casa, cuidar el esposo, cuidar los niños. So, en la mente de mi papá, no necesitábamos education… you know, formal education after college or after high school.
>
> In my dad's mind all the women were going to get married and we were going to be like mommy, you know, having a home, having babies, taking care of the house [clean], caring for the husband, caring for the kids. So, in my dad's mind, we didn't need education... you know, any formal education after college or after high school.

Cathy, a woman born in the United States from migrant worker parents, said that she wanted to join the Job Corps but she was discouraged. She was told, "oh no, no, you can't go, you know. No, no, you have to stay home until you get married. You know, girls don't go away like that."

Leilani also shared that as a woman she had less opportunity to study. She said that she grew up in Mexico and that her dad was very violent and would beat up her mother. She shared

that although her mother wanted to send her daughters to school, the father opposed. Leilani said that her father kicked her mother and siblings out of the house, and then, her mother, a single mother, had less resources to send her daughters to school. Leilani said:

> Cuando vivíamos con mi papá, mi papá decía que nosotras de mujeres no teníamos que estudiar, que nosotros sabiendo limpiar, cocinar, que la mujer le tocaba ah la casa, los hijos y que no tenía que estudiar, que no tenía que estudiar. Entonces, pero mi mamá decía, "no, sí tienen que ir a la escuela" y mi mamá pues nos mandó a la escuela lo que ella pudo mandarnos pero no, yo no terminé. No terminé mi primaria. No, no terminé mi primaria.
>
> When we lived with my dad, my dad used to say that, we, women didn't have to study, that knowing how to clean, cook, that a woman's role was to stay in the house, taking care of the children and that she didn't have to study. She did not have to study. Then my mom said, "No, they have to go to school." And my mom sent us to school as long as she could but no, I didn't finish. I didn't finish elementary school. No, I did not finish elementary school.

Ideas about marriage. Another factor that participants identified as contributing to the abuse was the idea that marriage was forever, "until death do us part" which women were expected to embrace without protest, as in the case of Blanca. Blanca, a woman born in the U.S. but raised and educated in Mexico said that she could not tolerate her partner's behavior of spending more time with his female friends than with her. Blanca learned that marriage was a commitment to her husband:

> Entonces mi tía me decía, "hija, si te vas a casar, si te vas a juntar, tú te quedas con ese hombre hasta que la muerte los separe." Entonces yo creí en eso ¿no? de que en, mi esposo, el papá de mis hijos, el esposo de que si me va a, si me voy a estar con él es porque va a ser mi esposo, es porque se va a casar conmigo.
>
> Then my aunt told me, "Dear, if you are going to marry, if you are going to get together, you are going to stay with that man until death separates you. So then, I believe the same thing, no? That in, my husband, the father of my sons, the husband that if he is, if I am going to be with him it's because he is going to be my husband, it's because he is going to marry me.

Childhood experiences of abuse. Histories of child abuse together with the expectations of a woman's behaviors to be quiet and obedient were identified as factors for abuse. Another factor that emerged was witnessing the mother being abused. These childhood experiences made abuse seem normal.

History of child abuse. In this study, 13 women said they have experienced some type of abuse in childhood. Ten participants said they suffered psychological abuse, 7 participants experienced physical abuse, and 4 participants shared they suffered child sexual abuse. As documented by scholars (West et al., 2000), a history of physical and sexual abuse increases the risk of IPV. Following are quotes that reflect the abused endured by some participants in their childhood.

Maria, a woman born in Mexico said she was taught with physical and psychological abuse to be obedient, quiet, and not to express her opinion as a child. Maria said that she learned to obey "por las malas" (in a bad way - by being hit). As an adult, she said, she transferred that obedience of authority to her husband with whom she lived 32 years of psychological and economically abuse. She stated that against her will, her partner sent her to Mexico with the children where she lived for nine years while he stayed in the United States. Maria said she was forced to go between the two households to care for his needs and then, those of the children in Mexico with limited economic and social support from her partner. She said, she wanted to be the "perfect wife", obeying her husband and not giving him any reason to complain about her. Maria expressed how she felt about her obedience as a child and in her marriage:

> Entonces no me quedo otra más que obedecer, porque si de algo he pecado yo, es de ser obediente pero así fui educada, ¿Verdad? Fui educada y no necesariamente por las buenas, por las malas. Mi mamá me pegaba mucho porque fui rebelde, porque yo no aceptaba…Después de tantos años de estar acostumbrada o educada de esa manera, de que "usted se calla y hace lo que se le manda," ¿Verdad? Tanto en mi casa como en la escuela, y luego me caso y es lo mismo.

> So, I did not have any other alternative except to obey, because if I have sinned, it has been of being obedient, but that is how I was educated, right? I was educated and not necessarily in a good way, but in a bad hard way. My mom used to beat me a lot because I was rebellious, because I didn't obey... After so many years of being accustomed or educated like "you shut up and do what you're told," right? Both at home and at school, and then I get married and it's the same.

Witnessing mother being abused. Eight participants said they witnessed their mothers being physically and psychologically abused for which they believed that abuse was a normal part of marriage. This participant was warned that married life was difficult.

Carmen, a woman born in Mexico connected the experience of abuse of her mother with the expectation for her own marriage. She shared:

> Yo decía que era normal porque como que yo vi los golpes con mi mamá, mi papá le pegaba a mi mamá, casi la mata. Entonces pues yo pensé que eso era normal y como, como mi mamá y mi hermano el mayor me lo advirtieron. Y mi hermano me dijo, "mira, casarte no nomas es por casarte, es una responsabilidad, le tienes que lavar, planchar, hacer de comer, porque cuando uno se casa pues para eso, para eso supuestamente busca uno a la mujer.

> I thought that it [abuse] was normal because I saw my mother being hit. My dad beat my mom. He almost killed her. So, I thought that it was normal and like, like my mom and brother, the oldest brother warned me. And my brother told me, "Look, getting married is not just to get married, it's a responsibility. You have to wash and iron his clothes, cook for him because when one gets married, that is exactly why. That is why a man looks for a woman to do all that.

Lack of sexual education. Seven participants suggested that the lack of sexual education was connected to the abuse they endured in adulthood. Participants said that they were not talked to about periods/menstrual cycles, "[mi mamá] nunca me habló de que iba a tener un periodo, ¿verdad? Que me iba venir un periodo" ["My mom never told me that I was going to have a period"], and that they were naïve about human sexuality. A participant said that "en mi casa no se hablaba de la regla, no se hablaba de sexo, no se hablaba de menopausia, no se hablaba nada de eso. It was nothing. You could not talk about that" ["at my house there was no talk about period, no talk about sex, no talk about menopause, nothing was talked about it. It was nothing.

You could not talk about that"]. Participants suggested that without this knowledge, they were more vulnerable to be sexual abused. Two specific forms of sexual abuse were identified: a forced abortion and an accusation of statutory rape. Following is the description of these subcategories of sexual abuse:

Forced abortion. Renata said that she was naïve about human development to the point of being misled about her pregnancy and had an abortion without her consent or knowledge. Renata shared that was born in Mexico and as an adolescent she ran away from home escaping the physical and psychological abuse she suffered from both parents. She went to a bigger city to work and had a boyfriend. In that city, a neighbor offered to help her find a job, kidnapped her, and held her captive in another house. She suggested that she was coerced to marry him and got pregnant. The man sent for a nurse under the guise of providing her prenatal care. Renata said that she was innocent on matters of sexuality and she followed the nurse's instructions. She said that three days later, she realized that the nurse had caused her to lose her baby or performed an abortion on her. This is what Renata shared:

> Mi marido me hizo abortar. Casi me moría por eso. Fíjate yo no sabía lo que era estar embarazada, yo no sabía lo que era el tener un aborto, yo no sabía nada, nada porque todo eso… no sé, yo era como que muy inocente pero fíjate me mandó una enfermera y esa enfermera me dijo, "la voy a este, me mandó su esposo que yo le venga, venga a ver cómo está de su embarazo porque esto es muy importante para él que quiere que la vea." Cuando ella me dijo, "vamos a revisar su embarazo", me empezó a revisar por donde quiera… Yo nunca supe que era un aborto. Nunca lo supe. Eso es un abuso muy grande de él. Yo quisiera que él pagara lo que él me hizo. Ya pasaron casi 40 años y no se me olvida lo que él me hizo.
> My husband made me have an abortion. I almost died because of it. Look, I didn't know what it was like to be pregnant. I didn't know what it was like to have an abortion. I didn't know anything, nothing because all that,... I don't know, I was like very innocent, but look, he sent me a nurse and the nurse told me, "I'm going to, your husband sent me, he sent me to check how your pregnancy is going because this is very important to him." When she told me, "We're going to check your pregnancy", she started checking me all over… I never knew that it was an abortion. I never knew it. That was very abusive. I'd like him to pay for what he did to me because what he did to me, that it's not right. It's not right what he did to me. It's been almost 40 years and I cannot forget what he did to me.

***Statutory rape*.** Gloria also suggested that her experience of physical and sexual was connected to her lack of knowledge on many issues including sexuality. Gloria was born in the United States and she stated that as a child, she endured physical and psychological abuse by her mother. Her father abandoned them, and her mother raised her. Gloria said that she had many restrictions in her social life and never taught about sex. At age 18, she got pregnant by a 16-year-old man. Gloria's pregnancy situation became more complicated because her mother in-law was angry and wanted to press charges against her for statutory rape. Gloria said that she was ignorant about many issues of life. She shared:

> Fui pa' la escuela. Me embaracé, pues no salía, comencé a salir con mi primer esposo, era una manera yo sentía que era chamaca de 15, 16 años, you know, 18 años porque él tenía 16 años. Y yo no me miraba muchacha de 18 años porque mamá siempre me tenía en la casa. Si mis hermanos salían pudieran llegar a la casa a la media noche y eran más chicos pero yo no… no sabía nada, que era adulta. That I was of legal age of 18 years old. And, and that being with a person younger than me was wrong. In my mind, I was still a kid cuz mom didn't let me do nothing, didn't let me grow up, didn't, you know.
>
> I went to school. I got pregnant. I didn't go out. I started dating my first husband, although I was already 18, I felt like a 15, 16-year-old girl, you know, he was 16. And I did not look like an 18-year-old girl because mom always had me in the house. If my brothers went out, they were allowed to come back even at midnight and they were younger than me but I didn't know anything... I didn't know that I was an adult. That I was of legal age of 18 years old. And, and that being with a person younger than me was wrong. In my mind, I was still a kid cuz mom didn't let me do nothing, didn't let me grow up, didn't, you know.

Migrant environment. Women seemed to understand that the environment of migrant workers contributed to IPA. Four ways of how the migrant environment contributed to IPA were identified: risk for abuse of girls and women, limited English skills, living with relatives, and gossiping.

Risk for abuse of girls and women. In this study, some women of Mexican heritage born in the U.S. were children of migrant workers. Migrants or seasonal workers refers to Latinas who

could be U.S. born or immigrants (born outside the U.S.) employed in the seasonal/temporary labor force and/or move to different locations to find work (Hazen & Soriano, 2007). Life in the migrant community may offer some social support, however, it can pose risks for drugs and perpetuate a lack of education. The following quote is a participant's perspective of the community where she grew up:

> With the people that I grew up with umm, they were…they were brought to different places to work in the fields as children... the women just wanted… (struggle)… the parents seemed like they didn't guide their, their children… to educate themselves... It was a community that they all knew each other, and they all mingled with each other…all these people that grew up with they all would come over and they would drink and dance and everything. They would all get together and drink and some of them were doing drugs. (Cathy)

In addition, six participants who said they had worked in the migrant fields suggested that the migrant community posed risk for sexual abuse of children and women. They said that often, parents had to leave children at home alone or with friends/compadres and those were the times for the sexual predators to abuse the children. One of the participants, Cathy, a third-generation migrant born in the U.S. shared how she was abused by a compadre of her mother:

> I was sexually abused as a child all the time…umm, my mother's compadre which he already passed away. And his wife passed away maybe…ten years ago now and uh, we were, I was very closed to her children. We, we grew up together. These were people that were in that group of people. And, uh, I am, I am very close to her children still…

Jade also grew up working in the fields and was sexually abused. She stated that:

> The reason we moved here to Michigan, we worked in the fields, so we worked in the fields every, well…until I was 17…As far as abuse too, I was sexually abused, molested by friends of, of my family when I was little…

In the migrant community in which participants grew up, young girls were abused but also women could be abused. The abuse could be connected to the limited education women had, lack of mastering the English language, and the ideas about women having to endure the abuse.

This quote reflects one of the participant's interpretation of the abuse of women in a migrant community:

> Hispanic people have disadvantages from generations behind. They came to this country seeking a better life but, but, they weren't able to get that better life because they couldn't speak the language and they weren't accepted. And so, they married whoever, (laughed) you know, like came along or, you know…women were supposed to just tolerate everything that, that their husband said because my mother with my stepdad… umm, tolerated everything under the moon with him

Limited English skills. A participant, child of migrant workers shared how the psychological abuse she endured with her partner brought back memories of the abuse she experienced at school for her lack of English skills. Martha said that her partner used to tell her "You're so dumb!" She said, "yo ya tenía eso en mi cabeza anyway porque las monjitas me decían la misma cosa… y me sentía bien horrible…" ["I already had those words in my head anyway because the nuns would call me the same thing…I would feel horrible"].

The following quote seems to reflect Martha's experience of being called a dumbass at school:

> …las monjitas me decían la misma cosa, que yo era, you know, I was dumb, especialmente porque hablaba español y no el inglés muy bien. So, my lessons…I was, I was English learner when I went to kindergarten, first grade, and second grade. So, I didn't do well on, on my papers, y las monjitas, especialmente una, me decían 'dumb ass.'
>
> The nuns used to say those same words to me, you know, that I was dumb, especially because I spoke Spanish and didn't speak English very well. So, my lessons…I was an English learner when I went to kindergarten, first grade, and second grade. So, I didn't do well on, on my papers, and the nuns, especially one of them used to call me "dumb ass."

Living with relatives. Data revealed that for women born in Mexico who immigrated to this country, it was common to live with relatives or have relatives live with them. Four women born in Mexico shared that they had lived with relatives and that the presence of relatives triggered situations of abuse.

In this participant's story, relatives of her husband came to live with Maria del Sol's family. One of the participants shared that living with in-laws changed her family's environment. María del Sol asserted:

> Nos vinimos para acá después y pues el principio fue todo más o menos bien pero después pues, ya empezó… llegó su papá y su hermana a vivir con nosotros y ahí empezó a cambiar. Si, y ahí empezó a a cambiar más las cosas como a… si, a ser todo diferente; como que el señor, mi suegro opinaba de todo, hasta de cómo debería de vestirme yo, ¿verdad? Entonces pues empezaron problemas y problemas y problemas y ahí empezó todo y cada vez más y más y más.
>
> We came here [the United States] later and, in the beginning, everything was more or less ok, but then it changed. His father and sister came to live with us and that's when everything changed. Yes, everything was different; like the man, my father-in-law, was very opinionated, even dictating how I should dress, right? Then problems and problems and problems began and that was the beginning and gradually escalated more, more and more.

***Gossiping*.** Data from this study revealed that for the women born in Mexico, the environment posed other risks. When women immigrated to the U.S., they usually lived in proximity to people from their own town and families often knew each other. This closeness with people from the community could be dangerous in instances of abuse. A participant shared how, living in proximity with her husband's relatives led to gossiping and to a situation of severe abuse by which she was at risk of being killed.

Carmen shared that at her work and house's environment there was "chisme" [gossip] that contributed to what she called, "the tragedy." A person gossiped that Carmen was having an affair with another man. Carmen recounted that she had this conversation with her husband:

> [Esposo] "No, pues es que por ahí una persona me dijo que tú andas con él." Le dije, "pues dime qué persona es para que me lo diga en mi cara." Y nunca me quiso decir quién era esa persona. Entonces un muchacho que era vecino de nosotros me dijo, :señora, yo sé quién era. Hasta apenas supimos quién era la persona que le decía todos los chismes a su esposo."
>
> [Husband] "A person out there told me that you are having an affair with him." I said, "well, tell me who is that person so he or she can tell me in my face." And he never told

> me who that person was. Then a young man who was a former neighbor said, "Mrs., I know who the person was. We recently found out who was the person who gossiped to your husband."

Carmen stated that her jealous husband became enraged, killed Carmen's alleged lover and stabbed her almost to the point of death. Carmen said that after the abuse, some people around her and even her husband's relatives in Mexico blamed her for the tragedy. Carmen stated that she was warned by other relative to be careful when and if she goes to Mexico because her brother in law threatened to hurt her. This quote seems to reflect how the threats were passed on to Carmen by another relative (sister-in-law) from another relative (brother-in-law): "Él dice que, el día que vengas te va a matar porque tiene mucho coraje porque por culpa tuya, por andar de perra y de puta. Dice, su hermano cayó en la cárcel" ["He (brother-in-law) says, the day you come (to Mexico), he is going to kill you because he has a lot of anger that because of you, for being a bitch and a whore. He says his brother is in prison"]. Carmen said that after the abuse she lives with the physical pain and feels guilty for the death of an innocent man.

The factors women identified as contributing to their experiences of IPA have been discussed. Following is the description of the identified types of abuse women said they endured.

Types of IPA

As women shared their various experiences of abuse, six different types of abuse were identified: psychological (14), economic (12), physical (10), sexual (8), stalking (7), and coercion/control (4).

Psychological abuse. According to Breiding and colleagues (2015), psychological abuse is the use of verbal and nonverbal communication with the intent to harm another person mentally or emotionally. In the current study, participants defined psychological abuse as calling

women derogatory names and belittling remarks, making women feel guilty, insignificant or useless. For one participant, the psychological abuse was vilifying her as a mother with her children. Women said they felt humiliation, hopelessness and one participant said she felt that her spirit was crushed (aplastado). The following quotes show the psychological abuse some participants said they endured.

Blanca, born in the United States and raised in Mexico, said she lived physical and psychological abuse for 23 years. For her, psychological abuse was defined as not being treated with dignity and being treated more like a housekeeper than a housewife. She said that her partner would go out with friends alone and sometimes, female friends would call the house. Yet, she was expected not to complain. This is what she said:

> Nos dábamos como choques ¿no? De que él me decía que todo lo que yo pensaba que era mal, o sea me quería hacer sentir que yo estaba equivocada en todo lo que yo decía, en todo lo que yo hacía…Entonces eso a mí, me sentía yo bien confundida, cuando mi ex marido me dice, 'mi papá hace eso y mi mamá no le dice nada,' yo me siento muy mal… sentía que mi dignidad estaba bajo la tierra y que cada vez que mi ex marido hacia algo la pisoteaba más, con más tierra y como la que la aplastaba para que se apretara más la tierra, así se me sentía.
>
> We'd have confrontations, right? Where he told me that everything I thought was wrong, or well, he wanted to make me feel that I was wrong in everything I said and in everything I did…Well, that for me, I felt very confused, when my ex-husband would tell me, 'my father used to do that and my mother never said anything.' I would feel bad…I'd feel like my dignity (self-worth) was down to the ground and each time my ex-husband told me something, I felt lower, stepped on with even more dirt piled on and like he would humiliate me (squash me) so the dirt just packed down heavier. That's how I felt.

Renata said that she was abused for six years by a man who kidnapped her, coerced her to marry him, abandoned her with two children in Mexico and later took the children away from her. Her husband came to the United States and there married someone else. Renata solicited child support triggering more abuse since her husband was opposed to it. Renata stated that after her partner abandoned her, she worked hard to provide food, house and education for her

children. She expected some acknowledgement for her efforts but instead her partner turned the children against her. Renata said that partner blamed her for the separation, applied for a divorce, failed to provide child support, and took the children away from her to live with his new wife. Renata said that all those actions caused her pain and anger that she has not been able to heal. This quote seems to reflect her rage:

> El papá de mis hijos con tal de quedar como una blanca paloma, a mí me puso de lo peor, has de cuenta que tu vez un lazo cagado de un puerco, yo estoy más sucia que un lazo de puerco cagado porque el papá de mis hijos les dice, no, tu mamá esto y esto y esto y esto, y todo la mamá; la mamá es la que hizo tantas cosas mal, el papá nunca hizo nada. El quedó como santo y la que está llena de pecados soy yo.
>
> The father of my children, to look totally innocent of any fault, raked me over the coals. He put me down. Imagine a pig tied up to a post with its rope all covered with its own shit. Well, according to him, I am dirtier than the pig's shit covered rope because the father of my children tells them, no, your mom this and this and this and only about the mom. The mom did everything wrong, but the dad never did anything [wrong]. He was pictured as a saint and I was the one who was totally at fault (full of sins).

Economic abuse. Twelve participants indicated that they had experienced economic abuse. While research is limited on the economic abuse of women of Mexican heritage, Galvez, Mankoski, McGlade, Ruiz, and Glass, (2011) suggested that the tactics of economic abuse for Latinas, may be different than for non-Latinas. Some of the tactics identified with non-Latinas included running up credit card debt for the survivor, excessive gambling or purposely ruining credit scores (Adams et al., 2008) while the tactics used for Latinas seem to be ethnic specific (Davila, Johnson, Postmus, 2017) like not allowing partners to obtain a driver's license, restricting the use of automobiles, and sending partners to their country of origin (Galvez et al., 2011). In agreement with Galvez and colleagues (2011), some of tactics of economic abuse described by the participants in this study included refusing to pay for house expenses, not allowing use of the cars even to take children to the doctor, restricting the amount of money for family expenses, humiliating the woman when money was requested, using the children's food

stamps to buy marijuana, and not providing child support. Economic coercion was used to control the women's behaviors.

The following are two quotes showing the economic abuse experienced by Luisa and Jimena:

> Me atrevía a esconder una parte del dinero y esa fue otra de las cosas que pasaron ahí. Un día había escondido yo dinero en la tarjeta de las estampillas y luego él vino y me las pidió y no pude. Quería sacar mi dinero antes de entregarle la tarjeta y entonces cuando miró se molestó muchísimo y si... y me estaba ahorcando que porque le estaba robando. Era mi dinero el que yo había trabajado, pero yo le estaba robando a él. (Luisa)

> I dared to hide a part of the money and that was another of the things that happened there. One day, I hid some money on the card of the stamps [food stamps] and then, he came and asked me for them, and I couldn't. I wanted to take out my money before giving him the card and but, when he saw that, he got very mad and…he was choking me because I was stealing him money. It was my money, money that I had worked for, but he said I was stealing from him.

> … fue eso de lo económico o sea que ya después ya no pagó nada, nada. Y yo pagaba, tenía trabajos, tenía trabajo aquí, tenía trabajo allá, tenía como tres trabajos. Y yo pagaba el carro y pagaba la casa. Ya empezamos a tener problemas de… no quería pagar nada y ¿qué le hacía al dinero? Nada! Entonces este ahí si empezó a rebelarse y luego fue cuando me di cuenta de que sacó dinero. Te estoy hablando de 15,000 dolars, y yo decía ¿Qué le hiciste a 15,000 dolars? "Es mi dinero," me decía "es mi dinero, yo hago con el lo que yo quiera." (Jimena)

> ….it was about economic or well, afterward he did not pay anything, nothing. And, I paid. I worked. I had jobs here and there. I had three jobs. And, I made the payments for the car and the house. We started to have problems of…him not wanting to pay for anything and I was wondering what he was doing with the money he earned. That's when he started showing his true colors and then, I found out that he had taken money out [from the bank account]. I'm talking about $15,000 and I asked him , what did you do with the money? "It's my money." He would say, "It's my money and I do whatever I want with my money."

Physical abuse. Scholars have found that women in abusive relationships are injured in the head, face, neck, and abdomen (Campbell, 2002). Ten participants mentioned specific types of physical injuries they had suffered including being: hit in the stomach during pregnancy, punched in the face to the point of breaking a bone, pushed, slapped on the face, kicked, choked,

pulled by the hair and dragged, hit with a bat on the hands, arms, and head, and had a gun on the neck to force sex. Three participants shared the experiences of physical abuse that they endured:

Maria del Sol said she was abused physically and psychologically for eleven years. This episode of abuse happened when she was pregnant. She said she was taking a shower and could not answer the phone when her husband called. When he got home, he started hitting her. She stated that:

> Entonces él llegó y me dijo que donde estaba…el chiste es que llegó fúrico, fúrico, fúrico y empezamos a discutir, a gritar…hasta que me acuerdo que esa vez este embarazada, me empezó a empujar y a jalonear y estaba. Yo me estaba peinando en el baño. Él me empujó tan feo que yo fui a dar a la tina del baño, embarazada, bien ya con una panza bien grande que me daba hasta trabajo salirme de la tina del empujón.
>
> Then he came and asked that where I was... the point is that he came enraged, enraged and we started arguing, screaming... even remember that I was pregnant, he started pushing and pulling me. I was combing my hair in the bathroom. He pushed me so hard that I fell in to the bathtub, pregnant, with my belly very big that it was difficult to get out of the tub.

Carmen said that was born in Mexico and was abused for 24 years. She shared that she had endured physical, psychological, economical, sexual and stalking types of abuse.

> Yo me casé a los 17 años, a la semana que me casé empecé a sufrir golpes con mi pareja y …toda mi vida, de como a los 18 años hasta los cuarenta, cuarenta y dos años más o menos que yo me separé de él porque fueron golpes, humillaciones, maltratos, …me engañaba con mujeres, a veces no me daba ni para darles de comer a mis hijos en México.
>
> I got married at 17, right after the first week I started to suffer blows from my partner and ... all my life, since I was about 18 until I was forty, forty-two years when I separated from him because I experienced beatings, humiliations, mistreatment, eh...He was cheating on me. Sometimes, he did not even give me money to feed my children in Mexico.

Lupita said she endured physical and psychological abuse for two years. This incident of abuse happened when her husband was drunk and coming back from her parent's house:

> El venia tomado, venia de la casa de mis papás, de trabajar. Yo me había adelantado ya a la casa con los niños…Y este, él llegó. Empezamos a discutir. Me empujó, cuando me

> empuja voy a dará a unas bicicletas que teníamos de los niños y me lastimé, me pegué o sea caía hacia atrás y me levanto, y mi respuesta fue jalarlo y decirle pero ¿por qué me pegas? ¿Por qué me empujas? Y él me vuelve a empujar y me dice, discusiones, ¿verdad? Palabras fuertes. Entonces agarra y él me vuelve a empujar. Cuando él me empuja me vuelvo a ir.
>
> He would come drunk, coming from my parents' home, from work. I had already gone ahead to the house with the children. And then, he arrived. We began to argue. He pushed me. When he pushed me, I hit the bicycles that we had for the children and I got hurt. I hit myself or, I fell backwards and then I got up. My response was to pull him and to tell him, but why you are hitting me? Why are you pushing me? And then, he pushed me again and started being verbally abusive, right? Telling me strong words. Then he pushed me again. When he pushed me, I fell again.

Sexual abuse. The issue of sexual abuse is an area in which 8 participants shared briefly. They said sex was embarrassing to talk about because it was a private issue. The participants shared how their partners used coercion to have sex. For some participants, the sexual abuse involved physical force or violent acts like using a gun or knife, compliance to avoid being beat and for others, the abuse involved being pressured by guilt or being coerced. Sexual abuse includes behaviors such as the partner insisting on having sex without a condom or the partner using physical force or a weapon to coerce sexual intercourse (Hazen & Soriano, 2007). Two participants shared their point of view of and experience of sexual abuse.

Alma Rosa said, "Esas cosas son vergonzosas para mí y no tenia, no tenía este con quien hablar principalmente porque ¿con quién iba a hablar, esas cosas? No" ["Those things are embarrassing to me and I didn't have, I didn't have anybody with whom to talk to. Who was I going to share these things with? No"].

Leilani shared her experience of sexual abuse. She said, "luego a veces cuando yo no quería tener sexo él agarraba y me ponía la navaja en el cuello y me obligaba a tener sexo o me quemaba con el cigarro" ["Sometimes when I did not want to have sex, he grabbed and would

put a knife to my neck and he would force me to have sex or he would burn me with a cigarette"].

Stalking. Seven participants shared they that had been stalked by their partner. A participant shared how her phone messages were recorded. In some cases, the partner solicited the help of a family member or friend to follow and observe her. Participants shared their feelings of being controlled, having no freedom, and the sense of powerlessness.

Amelia said that her husband put a recorder at home to see with whom she talked to during the day. Amelia said she had to aguantar (bear the abuse). "¡Fíjate que una vez puso una, una recorder. La conectó con el teléfon pa' ver que hacía en el día, a ver con quien hablaba! ["Imagine! One day he put a recorder. He connected it to the telephone to see what I did during the day, to see who I talk to"].

Leilani said her partner's sister followed her around. This quote seems to reflect the stalking she experienced:

> Cuando él se iba para México, los fines de cada, cada fin de año se iba, dejaba una hermana de él conmigo cuidándome y la mujer a veces cuando yo me metía a bañar, ella ponía una silla detrás del… pues ahí cerca del baño ¿verdad? para poder cuidarme y no me dejaba ni a sol ni asombra ni él tampoco. Yo no tenía contacto con nadie porque estaba como secuestrada ahí con él porque no me dejaba salir a ningún lado (llora).
>
> When he used to leave to Mexico, at the end of every, every end of the year he would leave, he would leave a sister to stay with me, to follow me around and the woman, sometimes, when I took a shower, she would put a chair behind the... Well, right there near the bathroom, right? So, she could stalk me and would not leave me alone not even for a minute. He did not let me either. I had no contact with anyone because I was kind of kidnapped there with him because he wouldn't let me go anywhere (cries).

Coercion/control. As defined by Stark (2012), coercion refers to the state of control in which a woman lives. This is "an ongoing pattern of domination by which male abusive partner primary interweave repeated acts of abuse including physical and sexual violence with intimidation, sexual degradation, isolation and control" (p.7). Participants did not use the word

"coercion." The word some participants used was "control." This quote seems to reflect the coercion to have sex experienced by one of the participants:

> El abuso que, que yo siento que fue más fuerte fue lo... psicológico, los celos y este control y también... la actividad sexual porque yo pienso que una mujer no todo el tiempo está dispuesta, especialmente cuando tienes niños a tener relaciones sexuales, no importa como quieras a tu pareja. Entonces pues ahí si acaso tú dices que no quieres nada, no había golpes ni nada, pero había abuso mental "o esto ya no me quieres" cosas así que mejor era dar de sí porque no podías dormir.
>
> The abuse that I feel was stronger was the... psychological, the jealousy and this control and also...the sexual activity because I think a woman isn't always willing to, especially when you have kids. to have sexual relations no matter how much you love your partner. Well then, if you say you don't want to, there were no punches or anything, but there was mental abuse. "Oh, it's because you don't love me anymore." These types of things so it was better to give in because otherwise you couldn't sleep.

Based on this study, prevalence of all types of abuse by an intimate partner was high. Findings confirmed what scholars have found that intimate partner abuse is a concern for the Latinos and specifically for Mexicans (Ahrens et al., 2010).

This chapter included the findings about the participants' reported experiences of IPA. The factors that participants identified as having an impact on their experiences of IPA, and the specific types of abuse participants said they endured. The next chapter will include the findings on participants' reported experiences of recovery.

CHAPTER FIVE

FINDINGS: REPORTED EXPERIENCES OF RECOVERY FROM IPA

Research Question 2. How do these women understand their experiences of recovery from the abuse by intimate partner and what factors do they identify as contributing to the recovery?

Women's Understanding of Recovery from the Abuse

Participants seemed to understand their experiences of recovery as a time of continued healing and relief. As Jade said: "There's still lotta of emotion and lotta of healing and yet then, the relief of being out of it [abusive relationship]." Other participant, Martha said: "I am in therapy right now because I still, you know, now that I have survived, I want to understand. La Martha de ahorita [The present Martha] is still trying to figure things out."

Other participants expressed that is a time to enjoy being free from their partner's demands and feel happy After divorced from her husband Martha said that "tenía una paz en mi mente, porque no tenía que apurarme del hombre de la casa, no le tenía que server, no tenía nada de eso, nada" ["I had peace in my mind, because I didn't have to be responsible for the man of the house. I didn't have to serve him. I didn't have to worry about him. I had nothing of that"]. Luisa, stated: "Estoy libre, estoy contenta, tengo mucho gozo con mis hijos que están conmigo, y no precisamente que estén conmigo pero están ahí" ["I am free. I am happy, I have a lot of joy with my children who are with me, well, not exactly that they are with me, but they are close"].

They are trying to break with cultural norms about gender roles especially with their children. Lupita said she is trying to educate her children with the mentality that both boys and girls have equal value as humans, and both can help with chores at home. However, she says her

husband has a different perspective on the education of boys and girls. This quote from Lupita seems to show some of her struggles with her husband:

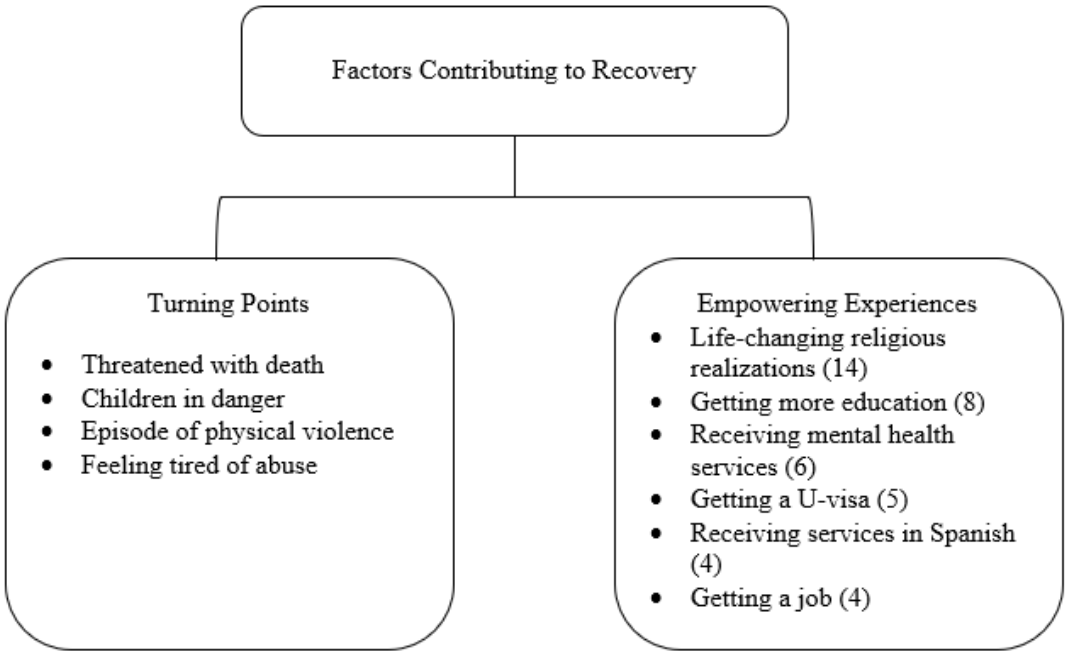
> …a mi hijo, de un principio cuando estaban más chiquitos, este él le decía, “hijo, ayúdame a hacer esto, o ayúdame a sacar la basura o así.” “¿Y por qué lo vas a poner a él? ¡Dile a la niña que lo haga! ¿El por qué lo va a hacer?” O a veces le digo “pues porque no le va a pasar nada.” Y eran pleitos, eran discusiones eran de que, él es hombre o he luchado por decir “no hijo, no te va a pasar nada ni se te va a caer la mano, ni se te va a quitar tu hombría, ni se te va… no te va a pasar nada, tanto tu hermana como tú tiene los mismos derechos y valen.”
>
> ... to my son, starting when they were younger, sometimes I would say, "Son, help me do this, or help me take the trash out or something similar." And, [husband told her] “why are you having him to do that? Tell the girl to do it! Why is he going to do it?” Sometimes I would tell him “because it won’t hurt him.” And we got into quarrels, verbal confrontations because he said he was a man. I've struggled to say "no, son, you're not going to lose anything. You are not going to lose a hand or your manhood if you do it. Both your sister and you have the same rights and have the same value”.

Recovery from the abuse seems to be a time to continue healing psychologically, time to break with previous beliefs, and a time of enjoyment and content.

Factors Contributing to Recovery from the Abuse

Two main categories were identified under the factors contributing to recovery from IPA: Turning Points and Empowering Experiences. See Figure 3.

Figure 3. Factors Contributing to Recovery from IPA



Turning Points

Participants in this study reported experiencing some events that influence their decision to stop the abuse and moving toward recovery. Since these events were similar to what Campbell and colleagues (1998) found in their study with African American women in their process of achieving nonviolence, such events were categorized as turning points. Campbell and colleagues(1998) defined a turning point as "a specific incident or process that is seen as pivotal to how the relationship is viewed, how the woman views herself or a major influence on a woman's decision to leave a relation" (p. 751). Among the turning points identified by Campbell and colleagues (1998) were being threatened with death, a serious injury or an incident of being hit. Similar to Campbell and colleagues (1998)'s findings, participants in this study reported having experienced being threatened with death, seeing that their children were in danger, an

episode of physical violence, and feeling tired of the abuse as events or turning points leading to stop living in abuse.

Threatened with death. Luisa said she had experienced all types of abuse and it seemed that she knew how to handle it but when she saw that her partner's abusive behavior was escalating to the point of wanting her killed, she sought help:

> Y me dijo "si supieras mis pensamientos te daría miedo." Fue un lunes, el martes yo, yo conocía una gente, en [nombre de una organización comunitaria] que eran bien amables, eran trabajadoras sociales… so ese día fui y pedí hablar con una trabajadora social y le conté lo que me había dicho. Entonces ella me dijo, "no se suba a ningún carro con él," dijo, "no vaya cuando la invite a salir," dijo "usted no salga."
>
> And he said to me, "If you knew my thoughts, you'd be afraid." It was on a Monday. On Tuesday I, I knew people, in [name of a community organization] who were very kind, they were social workers... So, on that day, I went and asked to speak to a social worker, and I told her what he told me. Then she said, "Don't get in any cars with him," she said, "don't go with him when he invites you to go out." She said, "Don't go out."

Children in danger. Martha said she had a history of child sexual abuse and also experienced sexual abuse in the relationship with a partner. Despite the abuse, she was trying to save her marriage but when her and her partner's daughters were growing up, she was terrified thinking that her daughters could be abused too. This realization triggered seeking help and getting out of the abusive relationship.

Blanca also said she got a divorce when she saw how her children were being affected by the abuse. Blanca, born in the U.S. and raised in Mexico, feared for the safety of her children:

> Lo que me llevó a tomar la decisión de divorciarme fue primero que él empezó a afectar mucho a mis hijos… Mi hijo mayor como que siempre estaba asustado, que le daba miedo ver la reacción de su papá cuando se molestaba…. Y el otro motivo fue de que mi ex marido ya estaba tratando a sus hijos como me trataba a mí y fue cuando yo no soporté eso…
>
> What led me to make the decision to divorce was, first that his behavior began to affect my children a lot. My eldest son was always scared, He was afraid to see his dad's reaction when he was upset.... And the other reason was that my ex-husband was

> beginning to treat his children the way he treated me and that's when I decided to stop that.

Episode of physical violence. Maria del Sol said she became desperate when the psychological and physical abuses were increasing. In one occasion, after her husband assaulted her, she called the police feeling afraid and taking the risk of being deported. She said that "Entonces ese día yo ya estaba tan desesperada, tan desesperada que dije ya no puede haber cosa peor que esto, ¡si me llevan, que me lleven! Le hablé a la policía…" ["Then, on that day, I was so desperate, so desperate that I thought, there can't be anything worse thing than this. If they take me [deport me], it's ok. I don't care if the police take me…"].

Feeling tired of abuse. Jimena said she experienced psychological and economic abuse that after feeling tired and hopelessness about her marriage, she decided to get a divorce. She expressed her feelings:

> Y hubo un día que, que me sentía así como que había un agujero tan grande que yo, tratando de echarle, de echarle y echarle y el agujero se iba haciendo más grande, más grande y que no pude. Un día me cansé como que ya sin fuerza fue cuando yo dije no, pues nos vamos a divorciar y lo hice.
>
> And there was a day that, that I felt like that there was a hole so big that I was trying to fill it, to fill it and to fill it. Instead the hole began getting bigger and bigger until I couldn't handle it. One day, I got tired that without any more energy, I said, no, we're going to get a divorce and I did it.

Empowering Experiences

Data in this study showed that in the process to stop living in abuse, all participants experienced situations that made them feel empowered. For some participants, to stop living in the abuse meant separation from the partner but five participants decided to stay with partners. Nonetheless, all participants had empowering experiences. Participants described these experiences as situations by which they gained confidence, courage, strength, and knowledge. The words participants used were "sentirse más fuerte" (feeling stronger), "darse valor" (being

courageous), and “sentirse más valiente” (feeling braver). The empowering experiences were categorized as: life-changing religious realizations (14), getting more education/information (8), receiving mental health services (6), getting a U-visa (5), receiving services in Spanish (4), and getting a job (4). The numbers in parenthesis reflect the number of participants that mentioned that experience. Most participants mentioned more than one experience.

Life-changing religious realizations. This category involved experiences including thrust in God, prayer, church involvement, and talking to a religious leader. Fourteen participants mentioned how these experiences were encouraging and gave them courage to continue acting to stop the abuse. Following are some quotes that reflect the participants’ religious experiences:

Alma Rosa stated she had experienced psychological and sexual abuse. After talking to a priest, she became confident and determined that she had to stop living in the abuse. She said “Fue cuando yo también empecé a sentirme fuerte y decir, bueno, Dios no quiere esto para mí, yo tampoco lo quiero” [“That’s the moment when I also began feeling strong and saying, well, God doesn't want this for me. I don't want it either”].

Blanca shared that after attending a prayer service at church, she felt liberated from fears, anger, anxiety, and at the same time, she was empowered to confront her partner. When she arrived home, she told her husband in a commanding way: “O te largas, o me largo” [“Either you get out, or I am out”]. She added that she experienced a strong change in herself that even she was surprised. She said: “Yo me quedé sorprendida porque yo nunca le había hablado así y él también se quedó sorprendido …Yo no me conocía porque yo venía como con mucho valor porque yo a él ya no le tenía miedo…” [“I was surprised because I had never spoken to him like that and he was also surprised...I didn't recognize myself. I felt very brave and I was no longer afraid of him”].

Luisa said that she suffered all types of abuse and had been in two different women's shelters but returned with her husband each time. Luisa said she often surrendered to her husband's authority and complied with his decisions. She said her family moved constantly whenever her partner decided and they left all their belongings behind. Luisa said she never opposed her partner's decision until the day when they attended a Spanish-speaking church where she felt "good." Luisa said that her husband noticing that she felt "good" there, tried to take the whole family to another church but, for the first time, she opposed her husband's decisions. She said: "Fue la primera vez que en realidad me paré en algo firme, de lo que no me arrepiento para nada" ["It was the first time I actually stood my ground and didn't regret it at all"]. Luisa attributed her courage to not to comply with her husband's decisions to her church participation.

Getting more education/information. Eight participants said how getting more education or getting more knowledge made them feel more confident to continue their process of stopping the living in the abuse. With more education, some participants got a job, gained social mobility and had access to more resources.

Alma Rosa shared how taking a basic computer course helped her get a job:

> Yo fui sola a aprender este, computadoras en un escuela pública de puros muchachos de la prepa, que era gratis y ¿sabes cuál era la condición que fuera? Iba a la escuela ya que terminaba con todo, de 6 de la tarde a las 10 de la noche y me tenía que llevar a los niños, los niños me tenían que esperar y así estudie seis meses. Y gracias a ese curso que tome encontré trabajo… Entonces cuando le dije a mi esposo que yo iba a trabajar me dijo que no me iban a contratar, que cómo se me ocurría si yo ni siquiera sabía inglés. Entonces cuando ya me contrataron pues me dio mucho gusto. Entonces ya este, mi esposo se dio cuenta que podía…
>
> I went by myself to learn about computers at a public school filled with high school kids. The classes were free. And, do you know what the condition was? I went to school when I finished with everything [at home], from 6 p.m. to 10 p.m. and I had to take the kids. The kids had to wait for me and that's how I studied for six months. And, thanks to that course, I found a job... So, when I told my husband that I was going to work, he told me

> that they wouldn't hire me, that how could I think of it if I didn't even know English. So, when I was hired, I was very pleased. Then my husband realized that I had power...

Luisa said that the police referred her to a women's shelter after being severely attacked by her husband. At the shelter, she learned about the cycle of the domestic violence and gained confidence in herself. This quote reflects how she stated she became empowered by learning about the abuse:

> Y estuve bastante, ah bastante tiempo en el shelter… terminé el curso de violencia doméstica con ellos. Yo en ese punto sabía que yo podía valerme por mí misma. Me sentía más tranquila, más segura yo ahí, tenía mi trabajo, yo sabía que podía ganar dinero para pagar mi renta y que podía salir adelante con mis hijos.
>
> And I was quite, ah quite a long time in the shelter... I ended the domestic violence course with them. I knew at that point that I could fend for myself. I felt calmer, safer there. I had my job, I knew I could make money to pay my rent and that I could get ahead with my children.

Receiving mental health services. Six participants mentioned that they had received some type of mental health services such as participation in a support group or individual therapy. Through therapy, participants described how they gained skills to manage their personal issues and deal with a history of child abuse. For one of the participants, the therapist helped her to get out of the abusive relationship. Martha said, "I was in therapy for probably three solid years of good, good therapy and while I was in therapy, I managed to get the strength to divorce him, to get my own place to have my children."

After an episode of severe abuse, Jade went to a shelter for domestic violence where she received counseling and advocacy services that helped her to put herself together again:

> I talked to [the counselor] every week. At one point, I went to her twice a week. And then, I started once a week.…So, after that year, I got myself together through [name of the shelter] and all that I went through. I got on Section 8, got my own apartment, got you know, working again. I got everything together going again.

Getting a U-visa. Five participants said they were granted the U-visa. This type of visa is given to women who can prove they have experienced extremely mental and physical abuse (Department of Homeland Security, 2017). The U-visa allows a woman to work and acquire a social security number good for up to four years. Then, the woman can apply for permanent residency and later for citizenship. In this study, the U-visa gave the women the opportunity to get a job legally. Alma shared what having a U-visa meant for her:

> ... Sentir más seguridad de saber que podía trabajar, porque en ese tiempo me estresaba mucho el pensar que en toda la relación no había trabajado y a uno lo hacen sentir dependiente…se te cierran las puertas o ves que no tienes a donde ir, donde voy a trabajar… y ya después el saber que te puedes valer por ti misma, que vas a poder trabajar para ti. Es una cosa muy bonita, se siente muy bien.
>
> .... Feeling more confident thinking that I would be able to work, because at that time I was so stressed out think that during the whole relationship, I did not work, and this makes one feel dependent [on him]… you feel that the doors are closed or you see that you don't have any place where to go or where to work… and then, after having the U-visa, you know that you can fend for yourself, that you're going to be able to work for yourself. It's a very nice thing. It feels really good.

For Carmen, the U-visa refers also to the ability to work. She said that at the shelter, they helped her to get her documents to work… "Mis papeles o sea mi permiso para trabajo" ["My documents. That is my permission to work"].

Receiving services in Spanish. For the women born in Mexico and even for a woman born in the United States with limited English ability, receiving services in Spanish was empowering. Participants said they felt that by being able to explain their feelings, needs, and concerns directly without the intervention of a third-party was empowering. The following are some quotes that reflect how those experiences were empowering:

Jimena said she experienced psychological and economic abuse and was considering a divorce. During this time, it happened that a lawyer did a presentation in Spanish for a group of people at her church on an issue other than abuse. She said she felt encouraged to ask him for

advice since he spoke Spanish: “yo sola iba con el señor ese, hablaba español o sea no había problema” [“I went alone to see that man. He spoke Spanish so there was no problem”].

María del Sol described she experienced physical and psychological abuse for which she had called the police on two occasions. The first time, she was almost taken to jail for defending herself. The second time, she had a different experience. Despite knowing that she would be at risk to go to jail and be deported, she called the police again assisted by a bilingual advocate. This time, the police who responded to María del Sol’s call was an officer who spoke Spanish and was familiar with the issue of IPA among Mexicans since he had lived in Mexico. The following quote shows how María del Sol described how she became empowered by receiving the information in Spanish:

> Entonces eso a mí me hizo, me quito un miedo, pero como el 80% de todo porque ese era su amenaza de siempre, decir tú estás deportada…Entonces a lo que me dijo el policía, y me lo dijo en mi idioma, a mí me quitó mucho miedo, mucho, mucho miedo y eso fue desde ahí fue como otro valor.
>
> That made me being less afraid, like 80% of my fear was taken away because that was his usual threat, to say you are going to be deported...Then what the police told me, and he told it in my language, it took away a lot of my fear and since then I felt like more brave.

Alma said she was seeking help to deal with the abuse she was experiencing. She said one time, she went to a community center for a service different than the abuse but there she felt brave to ask for help to deal with the abuse. She was referred to a shelter for domestic violence. At the organization for domestic violence, the person who initially talked to her spoke Spanish. Alma said “así que me dio más confianza que iba a poder comunicarme [en español]. Iba a decirle todo bien lo que estaba pasando” [“So it gave me more confidence that I was going to be able to communicate [in Spanish]. I was going to be able to express myself and tell her everything that was happening”].

Leilani also received legal advice from an immigration lawyer who spoke Spanish. Leilani revealed that she escaped from the severe abuse she was enduring and went to another state where she had relatives. In the meantime, her partner, the father of her children hired a private detective arguing that they were lost. Then, Leilani was instructed by the lawyer on how to manage the situation. Leilani expressed that the lawyer helped her a lot. "… La abogada me dijo, 'habla y dile que no estás perdida, que te viniste huyendo de la violencia de él.' Y que cualquier cosa, aquí estoy yo, tu abogada que te va a representar" ["The lawyer told me, 'Call and tell him that you're not lost, that you were escaping from his violence. And that I am here for anything [they might need]. I am your lawyer who is going to represent you'"].

Getting a job. Some participants said they felt that if they had some type of economic stability, they would be able to separate from their partners.

Alma Rosa and Luisa shared how they perceived that getting a job would help them if they decided to separate from their partners. They asserted that they would be able to provide for their children:

> Tener [in]dependencia económica, el dinero, saber que ya tenía un trabajo, saber que yo ya podía funcionar y que mis hijos ya no estaban chiquitos, ya todos iban a la escuela y yo podía yo moverme…sentí yo que podía zafarme, volar y empecé a tener dinero y ya dije, yo puedo mantener a mis hijos… (Alma Rosa)
>
> Being economically independent, money, knowing that I had a job, knowing that I could function and that my children who were no longer small. They all went to school. I could get around…I felt that could escape, fly and I started to have money and I said, I can support my children.
>
> Yo en ese punto sabía que yo podía valerme por mí misma. Me sentía más tranquila, más segura yo ahí, tenía mi trabajo, yo sabía que podía ganar dinero para pagar mi renta y que podía salir adelante con mis hijos. (Luisa)
>
> I knew at that point that I could fend for myself. I felt calmer, more secure there. I had my job, I knew I could make money to pay my rent and that I could move forward with my children.

Martha described how she regained her empowerment when she got prestigious jobs and had access to resources. This quote reflects how she became empowered and was able to stop the abuse:

> For me, just kept getting better jobs and getting better jobs and I got prestigious jobs and um, and so… I became… I was surrounded by powerful people. So, I think at some point he knew he had to back off. He knew he could not command me because I now had power. I now had some sense of power, and because of my positions and because of my status in the community, I regained some, much of my confidence. I regained so much of my, my strength, my empowerment came back.

Research Question 3. How do these women understand their experiences of recovery from the abuse by intimate partner at the physical, psychological and economic dimensions?

Ford-Gilboe and colleagues (2009) found that although women have been out of an abusive relationship, they continued to experience the negative impact of IPV on their physical and mental health on an average of 20 months after leaving the relationship. Similar to Ford-Gilboe and colleagues' (2009) study findings, in the present study women reported that their experiences of recovery from IPA have been gradual. Recovery in the physical, psychological and economic dimensions was similar for all participants, but in the psychological dimension, there were some differences for the participants who stayed with their partner and for the participants who left their partner.

Recovery from IPA is Gradual

In this study, recovery is considered the time after the abuse stopped or lessened. Three participants used the word "healing" rather than recovery for which such concepts are used interchangeably. Other researchers have used these concepts interchangeably (Senter & Cadwell, 2002). In this study, all participants, whether they stayed or left their partner shared how the recovery from abuse was more difficult in the first years.

Carmen stated that after “the tragedy” by which she was almost killed she was concerned about her physical and psychological health as well as not having any financial resources. The following quotes reflect Carmen’s recovery from IPA following the assault and then 15 years later:

> Cuando estaba yo lastimada yo lloraba mucho, que no me viera mi hija… herida del pulmón y de la garganta. Y entonces, yo me ponía llorar todas las noches abajo de la cobija que no me viera mi hija, me tapaba yo hasta la cabeza y me ponía yo a llorar, decía yo “¿Dios mío, que voy a hacer? ¿A dónde voy a ir? No tengo dinero. No tengo una salida. ¡Guíame Señor por donde puedo caminar!”
>
> When I was hurt, I cried a lot, trying not to have my daughter see me... My lung and throat were injured. And then, I would cry every night under the blanket so that my daughter didn't see me. I'd cover myself from head to toe and I would start crying. I would say, "Oh my God, what am I going to do? Where am I going to go? I have no money. I don't have a way out. Show me the way Lord!"

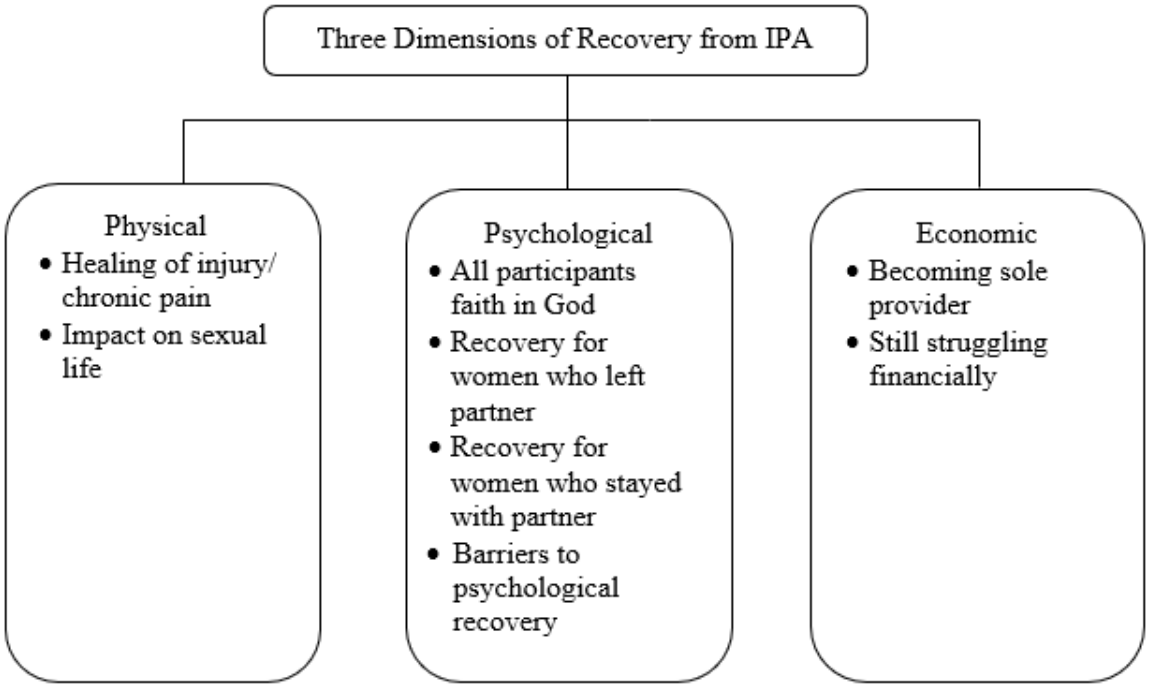
Fifteen years later Carmen said she is still healing psychologically but different from those years. Now, she feels she has more economic resources:

> Ha sido muy diferente para mí, que luego me pongo triste ¿verdad? Pero pues es normal, pero pues ahorita gracias a Dios tengo trabajo, aunque estoy trabajando muchas horas pero tengo trabajo gracias a Dios…no estoy en riqueza pero tampoco no me falta nada. Voy sacando mis gastos, aunque muy apretada ¿verdad? pero se va sacando para la comida y gracias a Dios y a nuestra madre santísima pues voy saliendo adelante porque no me falta el trabajo.
>
> It's been very different for me, though sometimes I get sad, right? But I guess, it is normal. But well, right now, thank God I have a job, although I am working many hours, but I have a job, thank God... I'm not wealthy, but I'm not missing anything either. I'm making enough money for my expenses, albeit very tight, right? But I am making money for food and thank God and our most holy mother; I am moving forward because I’m not without work [I have my job].

Dimensions of Recovery from IPA

The process of recovery from abuse may be multidimensional. Scholars have identified the physical, psychological (Farrell, 1996) and economical (King et al., 2017) dimensions. In this study, different dimensions of the recovery were identified. See Figure 4.

Figure 4. Three Dimensions of Recovery from IPA



Physical

Recovery is a time of healing physically. In this study, seven participants shared about their physical recovery. Participants reported having health problems that they identified as due to the severe physical abuse, working many hours when their partner left them, and worrying about the future. Four of those seven women experienced severe physical abuse to the extent of needing to be taken to the hospital and to a women's shelter for domestic abuse. The women who were severely injured said they were still living with chronic pain in the areas where they were injured such as hands, face, lungs, and head. For the participants who are living with chronic pain, recovery seemed to be more difficult since they said the pain was a constant reminder of the past abuse. The women who experienced less severe physical abuse said their health improved when they found a job. The following are quotes for two subcategories of physical recovery:

Healing of injury/chronic pain. Carmen said she suffered from chronic pain in her left lung as a resulted of being stabbed with a knife to near death. She said that in her work as a seamstress at a factory, the chronic pain seems to be bearable under normal working conditions. However, she said that when there is a demand for higher production and she is pressured to work faster, the pain in her lung is excruciating and becomes a physical reminder of the abuse. The experience of Carmen suggested that psychologically healing is more difficult when there are constant physical reminders of the abuse. This quote seems to show her challenges to heal:

> Cuando me duele mi pulmón, porque me duele, más cuando me presionan en el trabajo, porque soy costurera. Entonces me presionan y trabajo fuerte y mi pulmón no lo aguanto. Entonces ahí me viene el recuerdo, que si mi esposo no hubiera hecho eso, me hubiera dejado hacer mi vida, no con hombres sino sola, pero salir adelante sin estar herida porque a veces me acuerdo de lo que pasó, me pongo a llorar, me pongo triste este me llega… la depresión.
>
> When my lung hurts, because it hurts, especially when I get pressured at work. I'm a seamstress. Then, when they pressure me, I work harder and I cannot bear the pain in my lung. Then, this is where the memories come, that if my husband had not done this, if he would have let me live my life, I don't mean with other men but alone, to move forward without being stabbed, because sometimes I remember what happened [the pain causes her to remember]. I started crying. I get sad and depressed...

Gloria also described that she endured frequent episodes of severe physical abuse to the point of being sent to the hospital. In one of those episodes of being physically assaulted, she had a broken bone on the right side of her face. She said this condition has turned into arthritis that is aggravated with the cold weather, specifically during wintertime. She said, "My face is still like in the winter time… like it's like I got arthritis in there…cuz this bone, right here, it's all cracked, see right here?" (She showed how her fingers go in between the bone).

Physical recovery seems to be constrained by the lack of or limited health insurance. Some participants said that getting proper physical treatment was not an option because their health insurance was limited as in the case of Leilani:

> … me cortaron mi seguro médico. Y le dije yo a la trabajadora, “mira, yo soy diabética, yo necesito mi medicamente, necesito un seguro médico,” le digo “porque yo realmente no puedo pagar un seguro médico, yo mi trabajo no, no gano mucho.” Y entonces este bueno pues no, no, ya no califiqué…Y pues eso y como le digo, dicen “que no, que estoy ganando mucho dinero” pero pues a veces los trabajadores no entienden que a veces uno, yo a veces cuando se viene el trabajo pues tengo que trabajar a veces tiempo extra, entrar temprano y salir tarde pero eso no es todo el tiempo, eso no es todo el tiempo.
>
> … They cut off my health insurance. And I said to the worker, "Look, I'm diabetic, I need my medicine. I need health insurance," I told her, "because I can't really afford health insurance, in my job, I don't earn much." And then, I didn't qualify anymore... And as I said, they say that "no, that I'm making a lot of money" but sometimes workers don't understand that sometimes when there is a lot of work, I have to work overtime. I have to enter early and leave late but that is not all the time, that is not all the time.

Impact on sexual life. This type of the abuse was the least explored since few participants shared about this type of abuse and its impact on their health. The participants who did share about this type of abuse were brief. The following quote is taken from Alma Rosa, a woman who stayed with her partner. She shared how the sexual abuse impacted her sexual life:

> Si, [la violación sexual] me marcó mucho porque yo pienso que… soy una mujer de 55 años, soy sana y pienso que debería sentir algún tipo de deseo y no siento (llora). Me da tristeza a mi porque digo, somos un matrimonio que nos queremos, pero sin embargo yo ahora no, no me gusta que me toquen.
>
> Yes, [the sexual abuse] it really marked me because I think… I'm a 55-year-old healthy woman, and I think I should feel some kind of desire and I don't feel it (cries). It makes me sad because I say, we are a married couple, we love each other, but no, I do not like to be touched.

Psychological

In this study, similar to what other scholars have found (Campbell, Sullivan, & Davison, 1995), depression was found to be a common issue for all the women in their recovery from IPA. Albeit, there were some differences for the women who left their partner and for the women who stayed with the partner. Participants shared how they continue to experience fear of being abused again, fear of entering another abusive relationship, and how they feel misjudged and guilty after the abuse.

Another emergent theme was the social support women had. Flasch and colleagues (2015) stated that psychological problems seemed to diminish over time when women received social support and had access to resources. In this study, faith in God was a significant source of support that facilitated participants' psychological recovery from abuse. Other forms of social support identified in this study included attendance to church groups, receiving help from friends and family, and having access to mental health services.

Faith in God. Regardless of religious denomination or frequency of attendance to church services, for the participants in this study, believing in God seemed to help them move forward. The following quotes from two participants seem to show how they found strength in God:

> …le doy gloria a Dios y le doy gracias a Dios por eso, porque Él estuvo presente. Él que me ayudó a salir adelante, para poder sobrevivir y salir adelante y vivir lo que estoy viviendo en este momento, y como me ves ahora, es Dios porque regresé a la iglesia y nunca más lo dejé, nunca más me alejé. Nunca más me deje confundir ni guiar por los demás… (Blanca)

> I give glory to God and thank God for that, because He was present. He helped me get ahead, to be able to survive and get ahead and live what I'm living right. In the way you see me now, it has been God because I went back to church and never left him again. I never let myself get confused nor be guided by someone else…

> Me concentré en leer la biblia porque yo cuando llegué estaba llena de odio y rancor hacia el papá de mi hijo y hacia la otra pareja, la primera pareja que tenía…pero a mí me ayudó mucho leer la biblia…me concentré en asistir a las reuniones, en leer la biblia, en hablarle a otras personas de la biblia. ¿Verdad? Me enfoqué porque necesitaba algo, necesitaba aferrarme a algo para poder continuar adelante (llora) y eso es lo que me ayudó mucho como que fue…como una terapia. (Leilani)

> I focused on reading the bible because when I arrived, I was full of hatred and rancor towards the father of my son and towards my first partner, but it helped me a lot to read the bible... I focused on attending meetings, reading the bible, talking to others about the bible. Right? I focused [on God] because I needed something, I needed to hold on to something so I could move on (crying) and that's what helped me a lot… It was like a therapy.

Recovery for women who left partner. Twelve participants in this study separated or left their partners. Some participants said that in the first months or even years after separation

they were still afraid of going out, thinking that they might be seen by their partner. Other participants said they felt anxious, cried a lot, were worried about the future and did not feel confident to move on. The most common mental health issues reported by participants at the time of the interview were experiencing symptoms of depression, distrust for men, and fear of getting into another relationship.

Depression. Participants who left the relationship said they were still having symptoms of depression. The next quotes show how some women said they were still experiencing depression

For instance, after having experienced severe physical abuse, Carmen said she still remembers the pain and feels depressed. She said, "A veces me acuerdo de lo que pasó, me pongo a llorar, me pongo triste, me llega la depresión…" ["Sometimes when I remember what happened, I start crying. I get sad. I get depressed..."].

Jade said she was in and out of her relationship, until she and her partner engaged in an episode of severe physical abuse, her partner called the police and she was taken to jail. That ended the relationship but not the psychological pain. She said, "I was depressed at the beginning because of what I went through and I was facing jail time. I was depressed and worried about that…"

Gloria said that she lived with permanent damage to her face and that she had struggled with symptoms of depression for years. She stated that:

> To this day I still take medicine for… for psychological, I don't know, depression or… The pills make you don't feel anything. I've taking them for years now. And they make them stronger for me, the doctors, because after I get used to some percent, they give me more percentage.

Fear of entering another relationship. Leilani said that although she was free from her partner's abuse, she was still afraid of getting into another relationship. She said:

> Se me hizo difícil volver a empezar…pero no, no he vuelto a… (llora) no he vuelto a tener una pareja, tengo miedo de volver a sufrir lo mismo… A veces vienen recuerdos tristes y aunque yo no quiera acordarme, a veces sin querer empiezo a llorar cuando recuerdo cosas tristes, es difícil evitarlo pero trato de olvidarlo, trato de guardar eso, trato de desecharlo y me concentro en otras cosas y he tratado de enfocarme en mi trabajo y en la iglesia.
>
> It was difficult for me to start over, but no, I haven't had... (crying) I have not had a partner again. I am afraid. I am afraid to suffer the same thing again... Sometimes, sad memories come and even if I don't want to remember, sometimes, inadvertently I start crying when I remember sad things. It's hard to avoid it but I try to forget it. I try to put it out of my mind and I focus on other things. I have focused on my work and in my church.

Gloria said she was in a relationship, but she was afraid of getting into the sexual aspect. She stated:

> It's like I don't trust men. I do have a boyfriend but it's not a relationship like a boyfriend/girlfriend kind cuz we don't…, there is no relationship, you know, sexual relationship…somos amigos [like friends]… so but it's like a companion, aide, friend kind of thing. I don't care sexually because I was sexually abused badly…

Recovery for women who stayed with partner. In this study, five participants reported that they remained with their partners but that the abused stopped. Scholars who have worked with Latinas, including women of Mexican heritage have found that some Mexican women don't want to leave their partners but they want their partners to stop the violent behavior (Davies, 2009; Macias et al., 2013; Perilla, 2012). Although scarce research has been done on the recovery of women who stayed with their partner, Lowe and colleagues (2007) suggested that the recovery pathway for these women may be different than the recovery for women who have left their partner. However, it was observed that women who reported to stay with their partner were affected by issues of depression as well.

Depression. In the current study, participants who stayed with their partner said they have had symptoms of depression. They identified situations that contributed to the depression such as feeling unsupported by partner on issues of rising their children, living in fear thinking

that the abuse may happen again, sleeping problems, feeling guilty, and feeling misjudged for their decisions of staying with partner. For example, a participant said that she still felt guilty because she spoke out and defended herself against the abuse. It seemed that she was suggesting that she should have accepted the abuse without protesting. Another participant expressed that she felt misjudged by some people in the community who criticized her decision of staying with her partner after the abuse.

The following are some quotes of the identified subcategories of psychological recovery for women who stayed with their partners:

Fear of being abused again. Maria del Sol said that her partner had not physically abused her for over 10 years, but she lived with fear of being abused again. She stated that although the physical abuse had ceased, she was still resentful toward her partner because she never knew what triggered the abuse she endured. This quote seems to reflect her internal conflict with fear:

> Aunque él y yo estemos bien, llegan de repente,[recuerdos del abuso]. Yo no puedo evitarlo, ¿verdad? Y eso hace que estamos mal porque si estamos bien y llegan esos recuerdos o así, hace que yo tenga otra actitud hacia él y él se da cuenta que yo estoy enojada o así pero yo no sé cómo hacer para quitar eso.
>
> Even if he and I are fine, suddenly, they come to me [memories of the abuse]. I can't help it, can I? And that makes us feel bad because if we're okay and those memories come in, it makes me have another attitude towards him and he realizes that I'm angry or so, but I don't know what to do to remove those thoughts.

Conflicted feelings. Women who stayed with their partner seemed to have more difficulties in their recovery. A participant shared how she was still battling internal conflicts that emerged from their personal view on handling the abuse and what relatives told her about how to handle the abuse. Lupita said that her own biological father and her mother in-law told her that she was “hocicona” (mouthy) and that for this reason her husband abused her. Despite of what

she was told, Lupita said she protested against the abuse and was able to stop it. However, she said she still has self-doubts thinking that she was wrong, and the others were right in how a woman should handle the abuse. The following quote seems to reflect her internal conflict:

> … hemos tenido [pleitos y problemas] pero (llora) sí ha parado [abuso físico] o bueno, al menos eso quiero creer yo que ha parado. Le digo, no me ha vuelto a tocar desde esa vez. Él no me ha vuelto a tocar [pegado]. Sí discutimos, pero a veces sí pienso que es por eso porque yo soy muy [hocicona]. No sé, no me gusta dejarme y pues a veces yo también pienso que es por eso [que él me abusaba].
>
> …we've had [verbal disagreements and problems] but (crying) it has stopped [the physical abuse] well, at least that's what I want to believe that it has stopped. I told you, he hasn't touched me since that time. He hasn't touched me again [hit me]. We argue, but sometimes I think that it is because of that, because I'm very, [mouthy] I don't know. I don't like to be put down and because of that, sometimes I think that's why [I was abused].

Being misjudged. Maria del Sol said she decided to stay with her husband but living with this decision has been difficult in a community that knew about her past abuse. She shared that she felt judged by some people who may think of her as being foolish for staying with her partner. She said, I feel like "yo traigo como si alguien viera aquí (señalando su frente), !ay esta taruga! Que le hicieron esto y esto y ahí sigue, ¿entiende?" ["as if I have a sign here (pointing to her forehead), Oh this fool! They did this and that to her and she's hanging in there [with him]. Do you understand?"].

Barriers to psychological recovery from IPA. In addition, participants identified some barriers to continue their psychological healing including the lack of mental health services in Spanish and lack of health insurance to receive mental health services.

Lack of services in their own language. Although some participants received help after the abuse, some wish they could have received services in their language. Luisa said:

> En estos momentos yo no sabría decirle que es lo que yo hubiese necesitado porque en realidad yo recibía mucha ayuda de todas partes. Si, si hubiese ayudado el que hubiera un lugar donde hablaran mi idioma.

> At this time, I wouldn't know what I would have needed because really, I received a lot of help from uh, everywhere. Something that could have helped was if there was a place where they speak my language.

When Maria del Sol was asked if she would like to receive mental health services, she said that she felt limited because she did not speak English and because of issues with health insurance:

> Ellos [doctores] me han ofrecido que vaya a veces a terapias, a veces uno no les cubre la aseguranza, el mayor problema, todos hablan inglés… este, no hay esa información, de mira ve acá o sea te va a ayudar ¿verdad?
>
> They [doctors] have sometimes offered to send me to therapies. Sometimes, the insurance won't cover. The biggest problem, they all speak English... there is not that information of look you can go over there or that is going to help you, right?

Lupita also said she felt limited for not speaking English, which she perceived as a barrier to receive mental health services:

> …estaba yendo a psicología, se volvió a terminar este la piscología que tenía y para mi desfortuna y por flojera ¿verdad? porque nunca he aprendido el inglés pero ah, ya no hubo quien hablara español. Volví a buscar… si yo hablara inglés no tuviera limitaciones como las tengo.
>
> …I was going to psychology [therapy]. The psychology [therapy] ended and for my misfortune and because of my laziness, right? Because I've never learned English, there wasn't anyone who spoke Spanish. I looked for someone else… if I would speak English, I wouldn't have the limitations that I have now.

Economic Recovery

Participants described several economic difficulties they faced in the first years after separation. Specifically, the women who separated from partners when their children were small had to become the sole provider for the children and for the household's expenses. This was a major responsibility for the women. They said that to fulfill the new role, they had to work longer hours or work in two jobs, the most difficult part was that they had less time to spend with their children. In addition, some participants stated that the economic difficulties and the longer

hours of work affected their health. The impact of the financial struggles on women's health has been documented in the literature (Ford-Gilboe et al., 2009).

Becoming sole provider. Blanca said that working many hours affected her health. This quote seems to reflect how she felt in her new role of becoming sole provider for her children:

> Entonces como yo me llevé a mis hijos pues él se desapareció de nuestras vidas; por casi tres años él no estuvo presente. Entonces yo no recibía manutención ni de esposa ni de hijos, el cual me llevó al momento de que me empecé enfermar porque trabajaba demasiado, dormía poco y casi no comía. Entonces me empecé a enfermar mucho, mucho me empezaron a dar pre-ataques del corazón, perdí la vista ah, muchos nervios siempre y puro llorar, mucho llorar, llorar y llorar. Eso me hizo sentir muy mal y creo que fue lo más complicado que he vivido en mi vida, tener esos dos trabajos para poder mantener a mis hijos…
>
> Then, as I took the children, he disappeared from our lives, for almost three years he was not involved. Then, I did not receive child support or alimony which since then, led me to getting sick because I worked a lot, did not sleep much, and did not eat much. Then I started to get very sick, I started having symptoms of heart attack, I lost my sight ah, I felt always nervous always and I cried, cried and cried. That made me feel really bad, and I believe it has been the most complicated thing I have ever lived in my life, to have those two jobs to provide for my children….

According to the experiences of some participants, recovery in the economical aspect seemed more difficult for the participants who did not have any source of financial support. In the following quote, Renata described her struggle to provide economically for her children after partner abandoned her in Mexico:

> Entonces cuando él a mí me dejó sola con mis hijos a mí nadie me apoyó en nada…él no me daba ni un centavo de gasto para mis hijos. Entonces te digo ya cuando yo me quedé a criar a mis hijos yo sola, yo vivía donde podía vivir porque mi dinero no me alcanzaba para pagar lo que era comida de mis hijos y escuela y uniformes y todo lo que se paga en México. No me alcanzaba el gasto…
>
> So, when he abandoned me alone with my children, no one supported me at all. He didn't give me a penny for my children's expenses. So, as I tell you when I had to raise my children by myself, I lived where I could live because my money was not enough to pay for my children's food and school and [school] uniforms and everything that was needed in Mexico. There just wasn't enough to cover expenses.

Still struggling financially. Some participants said they are still having financial difficulties after separation. The following quotes seemed to capture the economic struggles experienced by two participants:

> Pues económicamente me es bien difícil, aparte de todo porque él dejó de darme dinero completamente. El año pasado todavía pagaba biles de la casa. Ahora no paga nada, o sea, "¿Estás trabajando? Tú veras, ¿verdad? Hasta ahorita con lo poquito que trabajo, con las pocas horas que gano pues he podido pagar los biles de la casa y mantenerme, ¿verdad? ¡No puedo hacer un ahorro, no! Pero estoy saliendo adelante.
>
> Well, economically, it's very difficult for me. Apart from everything else, he stopped giving me money completely. Last year, he still paid house bills. Now, he does not pay anything. It is like, "Are you working?" You take care of it. Right?... Until now, with the small number of hours I work, with what I earn working those limited number of hours, I've been able to pay the house expenses and support myself, right? I can't save money, no! But I'm getting ahead.

Leilani also said that she has had difficulties to move upward economically. She shared that her economical limitations may be aggravated by the lack of mastering the English language and her inability to drive. The following quote seems to reflect her struggle:

> Y ahorita si tengo ese trabajo fijo. Ya voy a cumplir ahí, yo creo como seis años, o siete. Yo he pedido aumento ¿verdad? pero no, no me han dado, y yo digo bueno, pues probablemente busque otra cosa pero lo que me ha detenido es como no sé manejar, no tengo un carro. Y pues sobre todo mi inglés no es muy bueno. En mi trabajo yo trato de practicarlo todos los días porque nadie habla español. Trato de practicarlo y trato de poner atención ¿verdad?…porque si se me ha hecho difícil. Eso es lo que se me ha hecho más difícil, el idioma.
>
> And right now, if I have a stable job. I have been there for about six years, or seven. I've asked for a raise, right? But no, they have not giving me anything and I told myself perhaps I should look for a different job. But what has stopped me is that I don't drive. I don't have a car. And on top of that, my English isn't especially good. At work, I've tried to practice it [English] daily because nobody speaks Spanish there. I try to practice and to pay attention, right?... because it has become difficult for me. It has been the most difficult, the language.

Carmen also shared that she was facing economic difficulties. She believed that those economic problems may be related to her inability to speak English and the language limitation may prevent her from getting a better paying job. This is an excerpt from what she said:

> La vida aquí en Estados Unidos está dura porque…por el idioma porque si como yo a veces digo, "si yo supiera el idioma que se habla aquí, yo no estuviera en la costura," que la costura es muy matado. Yo estuviera en otros trabajos y son mejores trabajos pagados que a donde estoy trabajando.
>
> Life here in the United States is hard because…of the language because sometimes, I said, "If I knew the language that is spoken here, I would not be working as a seamstress" because being a seamstress is a hard job. I would be working in other jobs and better paying jobs than where I am working now.

Leilani shared that marital status and work policies were interwoven in a way that impacted her health and prevented her from economic upward mobility:

> Y luego como ve que no estoy casada, no tengo ya hijos menores de edad, me cortaron mi seguro médico. Y le dije yo a la trabajadora, "mira, yo soy diabética, yo necesito mi medicamente. Necesito un seguro médico," le digo "porque yo realmente no puedo pagar un seguro médico, yo mi trabajo no, no gano mucho." Y entonces este bueno pues no, no, ya no califiqué… Y pues eso y como le digo, dicen "que no, que estoy ganando mucho dinero" pero pues a veces los trabajadores no entienden que a veces uno, yo a veces cuando se viene el trabajo pues tengo que trabajar a veces tiempo extra, entrar temprano y salir tarde pero eso no es todo el tiempo, eso no es todo el tiempo pero bueno, está bien.
>
> And then she sees that I'm not married. I don't have underage children. They cut off my health insurance. And, I said to the worker, "Look, I'm diabetic. I need my medicine, I need health insurance," I told her, "because I can't really afford health insurance. In my job, I don't earn much." And then, I didn't qualify anymore...And as I said, they say that "No, that I'm making a lot of money" but sometimes workers don't understand that sometimes when there is a lot of work, I have to work overtime. I have to enter early and leave late but that is not all the time. That is not all the time, but anyways it is ok.

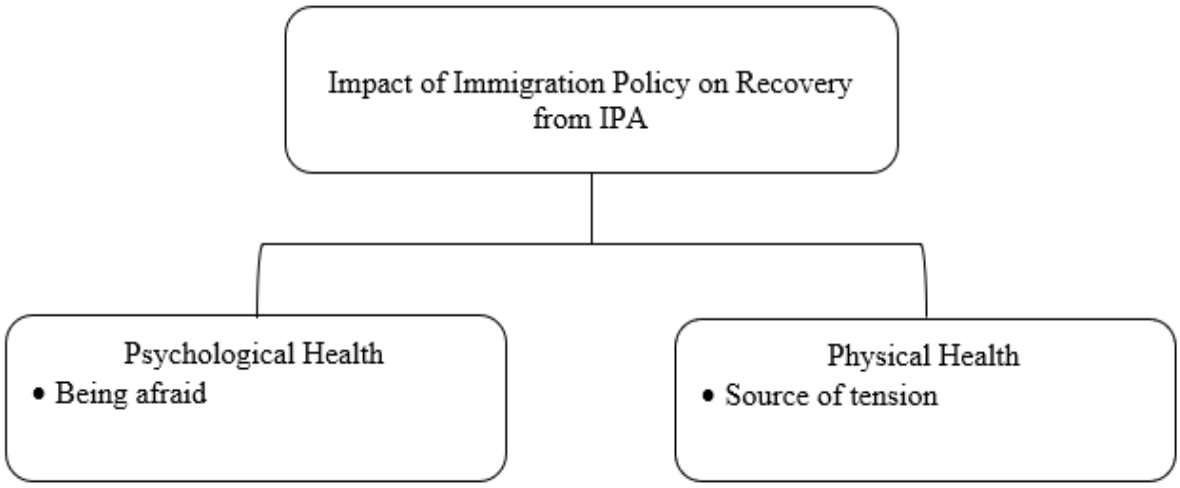
Research Question 4. **How do these women experience the impact of the immigration policy on their recovery from abuse by an intimate partner?**

Impact of Immigration Policy

Five out of ten participants born in Mexico said they were aware that the current immigration environment of mass deportation posed major risks for women who were in abusive relationships and for the women who were in the recovery from IPA. According to Gee and Ford (2011), immigration laws are a form of structural racism. Structural racism refers to the social forces, institutions, ideologies, and process that interact with one another to generate and

reinforce inequities among racial and ethnic groups" (p. 116). Some participants felt that the current immigration policy impacted their psychological and physical health. Two categories emerged under the impact of immigration laws on the recovery from IPA: being afraid and source of tension. See Figure 5.

Figure 5. Impact of Immigration Policy on Recovery from IPA



Impact of Immigration Policy on Psychological Health

Being afraid. Although most of the participants born in Mexico have acquired a legal status in the U.S., some participants who didn't hold citizenship reported being afraid of deportation and of applying for government services. These fears were aggravated by the inability to speak English that, some participants connected to the physical abuse they endured in their relationship.

***Fear of deportation*.** Carmen shared that she was afraid of being deported. She said that although she acquired legal residency through a U-visa, she was still afraid of deportation. She described how she wanted to apply for citizenship, but she has refrained from it because she did not speak English. She shared that learning English has been very difficult for her. She believes that her inability to learn English is connected to the physical abuse she endured. For her, the

current anti-immigration environment was a constant reminder of her vulnerability. Carmen shared that when she witnessed an immigration raid in which some men were handcuffed and put in the Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) van, she was worried and afraid thinking of her own situation:

> A mí se me vino a la mente, así con este presidente que tenemos, yo nomas soy residente, no soy ciudadana. Llevamos la de perder. Si me echan a México, ¿Qué va a hacer de mí? Porque yo no tengo a donde llegar. Yo he estado queriendo aplicar para la ciudadanía, no sé el inglés, de tantos golpes que me dieron en la cabeza no se me pega.
>
> It came to my mind, so with this president that we have, I'm only a resident. I'm not a citizen. I am screwed. If I get deported to Mexico, what is going to happen to me? Because I have nowhere to go. I've wanted to apply for citizenship. I don't know the English. With so many blows to the head that he gave me, I just can't learn.

Fear of applying for government services. A participant expressed a fear of being deported if applying for government services. Her fears emerged from the rumors about passing of a potential immigration law by which if passed, even legal green-card holders could be deported if they have received federal benefits (Kilgore, 2018). The following quote seems to reflect her fear:

> En realidad nunca he salido allá afuera a pedir algo con el sistema, pero hace no mucho pensé, 'fíjate yo soy residente legal.' Nunca me he hecho ciudadana y digo, si ahora que necesito algún tipo de ayuda la voy a pedir, pero por el sistema que amenaza, el presidente ahora, que aun los residentes legales no tenemos derecho de pedir ningún tipo de ayuda, ahora me pongo a pensar ¿vale la pena que yo vaya y me arriesgue y luego me corran y me digan váyase para su casa? A México. Entonces sí lo he pensado. Sí lo he pensado de que sí está afectando y me pongo a pensar cuántas mujeres ahora, si sufrían antes un tipo de abuso y se lo habían callado, ahora con mayor razón se lo van a callar por esta situación tan amenazante.
>
> I've never actually gone out to ask the system for anything. But, not long ago I thought, 'Look I'm a legal resident.' I've never become a citizen and I say, if now that I need some kind of help, I'm going to ask for it. However, the way we're threatened by the system and now, the president that even as legal residents, we don't have any rights to ask for any type of help. Now, I start to think, 'Is it worth for me to apply to receive help and take the risk that they tell me to leave and go back home? To Mexico.' So, yes, I've thought about it. Yes, I have thought that it's affecting folks and I start thinking, now,

how many women, if they suffered any type of abuse before and remained quiet, with more reason they are going to be quiet now because of this threatening situation.

Impact of Immigration Policy on Physical Health

Participants born in Mexico described that they were concerned about the possible impact of the immigration policies on their loved ones. In turn, these concerns affected the participants' physical health.

Source of tension. Leilani said she was worried about her son's legal status and this concern has affected her physical and mental health:

> …Mi hijo mayor pues yo me lo traje de México y él no tiene documentos ¿verdad? pero gracia a Dios se casó y esa mujer le metió una aplicación ya para poder arreglar su situación, pero ahorita como están las leyes, mi hijo está triste porque no sabe, el abogado dijo que a lo mejor tiene que salir para México… Entonces pues todo eso, todo eso a mí me ha preocupado y he estado tensa, nerviosa por lo que puede pasar. Sí, sí afecta mucho, a uno le afecta mucho.
>
> My eldest son, I brought him from Mexico, and he doesn't have any documents, right? But thank God he got married and that woman put an application so that he could fix his situation, but right now in the way the laws are, my son is sad because he does not know, the lawyer said that maybe he has to leave for Mexico... So, all that, all that has worried me, and I've been tense, nervous about what may happen. Yes, it does affect me. One is very affected by those laws.

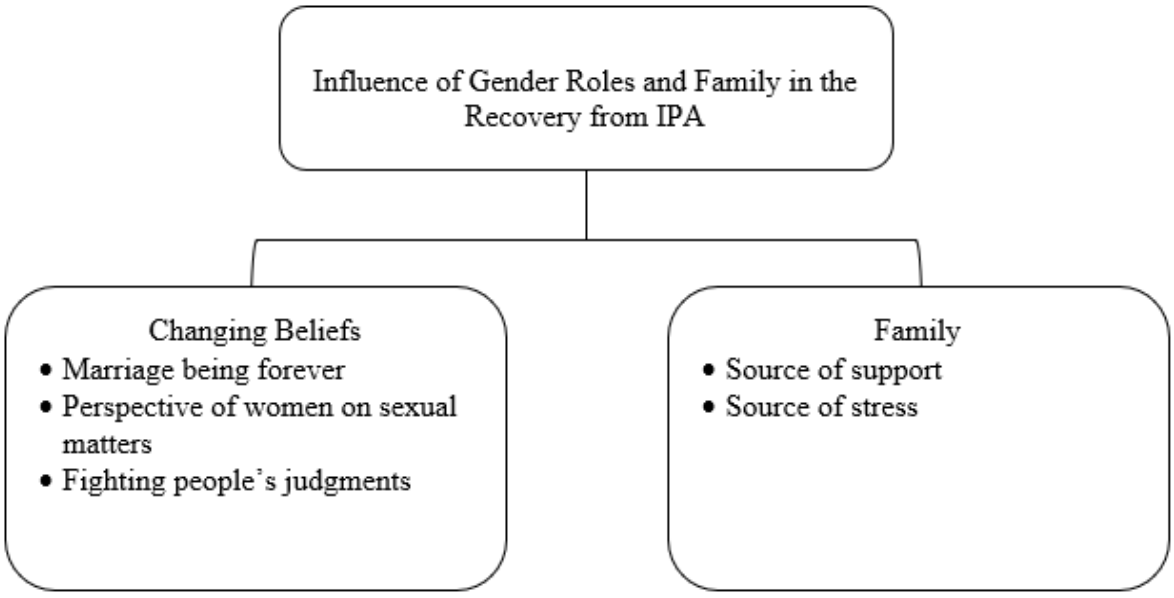
Research Question 5. How do these women understand the influence of gender roles and support from family in their recovery?

Participants seemed to understand that they had to modify some beliefs about gender roles for women and men during their recovery from abuse. In the social and cultural context of the participants, women were supposed to be quiet, prioritize family needs before their own needs, stay with a partner forever, and have less sexual freedom. The stories of the participants suggested that in the recovery from abuse, women underwent an internal struggle trying to break with the teachings learned from their parents about the gender roles and their own perspectives about divorce, separation and the role of women in marriage. For example, a participant said that

she learned the importance of the sacrament of marriage by watching her parents who were a loving couple and very involved in church. Then, when she had trouble in her marriage and got a divorce, she felt she betrayed her parents and the sacredness of the marriage. She said that although, she is in a new relationship, she still struggles thinking that marriage should be forever and feels guilty.

In regard to the role of the family during the recovery from IPA, the experiences of the participants vary according to what they define as family. For example, some participants referred to their children as their family while others referred to family as parents and siblings. Regardless of the definition of family, the role of the family was to provide emotional and economic support. However, for some participants, family relationships were stressful during the recovery from the abuse. See Figure 6.

Figure 6. Influence of Gender Roles Beliefs and Family in Recovery from Abuse



Changing Beliefs

Participants' stories suggested that since childhood, they were educated in a Mexican culture with delineated gender roles for women and men. Participants in this study challenged

those family and social expectations, especially about marriage when they separated from their partner or took action to stop the abuse. However, deviating from social expectations made some participants self-doubt about their decisions. Those doubts were exacerbated by misunderstandings and misjudgments even from their own family members and of the community people. Following are some of the subcategories under changing beliefs:

Marriage being forever. Some participants shared that they were taught that marriage was forever so getting a divorce was a difficult decision to make. Following are two quotes that seemed to reflect the struggle and pain the participants endured when they decided to get a divorce:

Jimena said she is in a new relationship and she is content, but she is still questioning her decision of having gotten a divorce.

> Yo nomas sé que estoy más mejor ahora, yo digo que estoy bien. Estoy contenta y todo porque vivo en otra etapa. Estoy en otra etapa de vida. Este, pero a veces sí me regreso pa' tras como que… pienso que el divorcio no debía de ser, no debía de ser porque …Yo creo que el divorcio no debía existir… o sea como que es que yo tengo mi mente antigua.
>
> The only thing I know now is that I'm better. Now, I think I'm fine. I'm happy because I live in another stage. I'm in another stage of life. However, sometimes I think in the past and... I think divorce shouldn't have been, it shouldn't be because... I don't think divorce should exist... I mean, it's like I have my old mind.

Martha said she felt pain for her father's lack of understanding toward the issue of abuse when she communicated that she was going to get a divorce. The following quote seems to reflect her pain:

> So, I remember when I told my mom and dad, les dije, me voy a divorciar de mi esposo. Papi puso la cabeza pa bajo y he shook his head and he said, "¿Pero por qué? ¡No te pega!" And to me, that was kind of all that mattered to dad, like pues si no te pega what is the problem? you know. If he is not hitting you what is the problem? Mami siendo mujer, ella sabía los sufrimientos de mujer y los sufrimientos de esposa y este, she didn't judge me or anything like that.

> So, I remember when I told my mom and dad, I told them, I am going to get a divorce. Dad put his head down and he shook his head and said, but "Why? He does not hit you." And to me, that was kind of all that mattered to dad, like if he is not hitting you, what is the problem? You know. Mom being a woman, knew about the sufferings women and wives endured and she did not judge me or anything like that.

Perspective of women on sexual matters. It seems that the experiences of sexual abuse by a partner influence how some participants see the issue of marriage and sexuality toward their daughters. For example, Alma Rosa shared that she is supportive of her daughters' decision about getting married or having sexual relationships before marriage:

> Entonces pues si digo lo que yo he aprendido es que estoy contenta y bien…acepto lo que mis hijas digan, mis hijas sí se quieren casar, si no se quieren casar, si quieren tener las relaciones antes de casarse, si tuvieran también, no, no me opongo. Me gustarían que se casaran por supuesto pero, pero sí tiene que saber cómo es esa persona como pareja sexual.
> So, what I said that I've learned, it's that I'm happy and well...I accept my daughters' decisions, if my daughters want to get married, or if they don't want to get married, if they want to have sexual relationships before they get married, I don't oppose to that. Of course, I would like them to get married, but they need to know how the partner is in matters of sexuality.

Fighting people's judgments. Some participants said they felt misjudged by others for their decisions of whether getting a divorce, separating from an abusive partner, or remaining with a partner who abused them. Being judged may have made them believe that they had made a wrong decision and continue questioning their choices, however they are still fighting to find validation in their decisions. For example, Lupita said that at times she felt conflicted because people blamed her for the abuse she endured. She stated, "Pues todo mundo me decía, y me dicen, que yo tengo la culpa o sea digo él no tuvo la culpa, yo lo provocaba" ["Everyone told me and even today, people tell me that I provoked the abuse, that I provoked him"]. However, at the same time through therapy she is realizing that in the marriage both partners are equally responsible for the good marriage. She said, "pero en las terapias que yo he ido me he dado cuenta que eso es de dos" ["but in therapy, I have realized that both partners are responsible for

the marriage"]. Thus, women seem to be struggling to come to terms with people's misjudgments.

Family

In this study, some women define family as their children and others define family as children, parents and siblings. By defining children as family, six participants shared how their children supported or did not support their decision of stopping the abuse. Some participants shared how other family members treated them.

Source of support. The data suggest that participants received different levels of support from their children and other family members. Some participants shared how their grown-up children encouraged them to leave the abusive relationship and after the women separated from their partners, the women were able to reconnect with children and grandchildren. Some participants shared that their children provided shelter at a time when they were homeless.

Here is a quote that seems to reflect how Jade reconnected with her children and grandchildren:

> Of course, they support me right away. They gave me the support right away when they saw I was serious about staying away because they thought I was going to go back so no one believed me. No, nobody believed me, cuz it had been happening all the time. So now, yes, I have all the support. They weren't allowed first of all, anywhere [near] me [the grandchildren]. Now, I have a relationship. My grandchildren actually come over. I go over there. It's a family thing.

Luisa said that after she separated from her partner and was homeless, her children provided shelter for her. Later, one of her children bought her a house. By realizing the love and support from her children, she felt at peace. She said, "Estoy contenta. Tengo paz. Tengo gozo. Ya no estoy deprimida. Yo disfruto mucho mi familia en México…y entonces este sí, son muchas cosas hermosas porqué disfrutar de la vida, mi casa que mi hijo me compró" ["I am content. I have peace. I have joy. I am no longer depressed. I enjoy my family in Mexico

greatly... and then, yes, there are many beautiful reasons to enjoy life, my house that my son bought me"].

One participant shared that a sister and brother in-law were very supportive after separation from her partner. She said they opened their house for her and her son where she lived for about six years.

Lack of support. Two participants shared how they did not feel the support of their children because of their decision to not tolerate the abuse. This quote seems to reflect how Maria felt about her children's lack of understanding:

> ¡Ay mis hijos! (suspira profundo y permanece en silencio) Me ha dolido tanto (llorando). Ellos han apoyado a su papá. Dicen que es mi culpa, que yo soy, que ¿Qué me cuesta seguir obedeciendo? ¿Que qué me cuesta seguir haciendo lo que a él no le molesta, con lo que él es feliz si lo he hecho toda la vida, por qué no sigo con lo mismo? Uno de ellos le prohibió a su esposa que me llevara a los niños, que me visitara…(llorando) por las decisiones que yo he tomado de ya no apoyar a…ya no aceptar el abuso.
>
> Oh, my children! (took a deep breath and stayed in silence) It hurts me so much (crying). They've supported their dad. They say it's my fault, that it's me [the one responsible]. What does it cost for me to keep obeying him? What? What does it cost for me to keep doing what doesn't bother him, so long as he is happy since I done it my whole life, why stop now. One of them forbade his wife to take the children to visit me... (crying) because of the decisions I have made of no longer supporting... no longer accepting the abuse.

Jimena reported she also had a similar experience of lack of support of her children after she got a divorce:

> Luego otra de las cosas, mis hijos se voltearon contra mí, o sea mis hijos también se... …Ya están grandes mis hijos, pero mis hijos no me hablaron. Mis hijos se voltearon contra mí, o sea no querían nada conmigo. Este que doble sufrimiento ¿no?…yo no sé ni como salí de todo eso, pero si fue como un mes que estuve sola.
>
> Then another thing, my children turned against me, my children were also...My children are already grown up, but they didn't talk to me. My children turned against me or that is they didn't want anything to do with me. It's double suffering, right?...I don't even know how I got through everything, but it was like a month that I was alone.

Source of stress. For some of the participants who defined family as including parents and siblings, family was a source of stress for which they preferred to stay away from their extended family. Blanca described her lack of family support in this way:

> Entonces cuando la familia, le pido ayuda lo único que me dicen, "búscate un pendejo que te mantenga, ahí cásate, júntate con cualquier estúpido ahí, ahí hay tantos que quieren contigo. Júntate con alguien." Entonces yo nunca ya. Me alejé, nunca acepté sus consejos y me alejé, me alejé, me alejé. Hasta este momento yo no le hablo a nadie de esas personas que son mi propia familia, mis hermanas, mis primas, mi hermano, mis primos, mi misma madre. Tiene años que no hablo con ellos porque no me gustaba lo que yo oía de ellos.
>
> Well, when I ask my family for help, the only thing they tell me is "find another stupid asshole who can provide for you. Get married. Get with some other stupid guy. There are so many that want to be with you. Shack up with someone." Well, I never again…I stayed away. I never accepted their advice and I stayed away, I stayed away, I stayed away. Up to now, I haven't spoken with anyone about these people that are my own family, my sisters, cousins [female], my brother, cousins [male] and my very own mother. It has been years since I have not spoken with them because I didn't like what I was hearing from them.

Defining family as parents, five participants said their parents did not support their decision of divorce or separation and even the father of a participant blamed her for the divorce.

Although family has been found to be central for Latinos, and specifically for Mexicans, in matters of intimate partner abuse and recovery from the abuse, the role of the family remains unclear since family was identified in this study as being a source of support or a source of stress.

In Chapter Five, the findings related to the recovery from abuse were presented. Chapter Six will discuss findings of the study, provide implications for service providers, identify limitations and strengths of the study and suggest direction for future research.

CHAPTER SIX

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

This study aimed to understand the experiences of recovery from abuse by an intimate partner of women of Mexican heritage in a mid-size urban city in Michigan. Participants were seventeen women of Mexican heritage, ten were born in Mexico and seven were born in the U.S.

This chapter includes the discussion of the findings related to the study sample, to the reported experiences of abuse and to the reported experiences of recovery from IPA.

Study Sample

Data revealed that participants' experiences of abuse were similar. Perhaps this similarity was based on their upbringing in a similar Mexican culture. However, it seemed that women's reported experiences were also different based on their country of birth.

Similarities. There were some similarities among all participants regardless of whether they were born in Mexico or in the United States, or whether they remained with a partner or left the partner. Some of the similarities were faith in God, love of their children, and early socialization into gender roles of women and men.

Differences. Of the participants in this study, 12 women separated from their partner and 5 stayed with partner. The decision of women staying with a partner has been noted in other studies. For instance, Lowe and colleagues (2007) stated, regardless of race and ethnicity, some women decide to remain with their partners. The literature suggests that healing post-abuse follows a different recovery pathway for women who stay with a partner than for the women who leave their partner. However, the literature on the recovery from abuse of the women who stay with a partner is limited. The finding from this study supports what other researchers who have worked with women of Mexican heritage have found. For example, Macias and colleagues

(2013) and Perilla (2012) found that many women of Mexican heritage stayed with their partners for many reasons including lack of legal status, lack of family in the United States, not speaking the language, expectations about gender roles, cultural beliefs about marriage being forever, and or because the women wanted their children to have a father in their life. Perilla and colleagues (2012) found that many women of Mexican origin did not want to separate from their partner, but they wanted the abuse to stop. Thus, findings from this study challenge the pervasive assumption that women in abusive relationships have to leave their partners (Davies, 2008). Davies (2008) also encourages services providers to advocate for the abused women who are in contact with a partner. Based on the findings from this study, this type of advocacy is necessary when working with women of Mexican heritage.

Level of education. In this study, women born in Mexico (10) had a lower education level than the women born in the U.S. Seven of the ten women born in Mexico have an educational range of between 5th grade to 8th grades that corresponds to *secundaria* or middle school level in the educational system of Mexico and three women reported having high school education or more. On the other hand, seven women born in the United States reported an education level ranging from 10th grade to some college education. Findings in this study agreed with what other scholars have found, a lower educational attainment for Latinos, and specifically for women born in Mexico (Vidales, 2010). The educational level is connected to the economic aspect. A lower level of education may prevent upward economic mobility making getting out of an abusive relationship more difficult for a woman in an abusive relationship (Vidales, 2010).

Legal status and language. Sixteen participants reported having a legal status either by being U.S. born citizens, naturalized or being granted a U-visa through VAWA. Women who are in abusive relationships or who are recovering from the abuse may face several limitations. For

example, six participants who were not born in the United States but who had a U-visa reported feeling limited because they lacked proficiency in English. This reality of the women showed how for some women getting out of the abuse might be difficult. For the participants in this study, having a legal status helped them to get a job but lacking proficiency in the English language limited their jobs opportunities to low-paying jobs. The findings from this study suggested that women with no English skills or no legal status are often trapped in jobs with long hours impeding efforts to continue an education. Equally, the diversity of women's experiences in regard to legal status and language speaks of the diversity of this specific Latino subgroup for which future research on this issue should continue studying Latinos by their specific subgroup rather than treating them as one general group.

Reported Experiences of Abuse

Although there was a small variation on the prevalence of the different types of abuse reported by participants in the demographic information form and on what they shared in their interviews, the psychological abuse was the most prevalent. In the demographic form, the prevalent type of abuse was psychological (17) followed by physical (14), sexual (11) and coercion (9). From the interviews, the types of abuse identified were psychological (14), economic (12), physical (10), sexual (8), stalking (7), and coercion (4). Stalking was not an option given on the demographic information form. The type of abuse that showed major discrepancy between the reported in the demographic form (9) and the reported in the interviews (4) was coercion. The difference can be explained by the lack of a word in Spanish equivalent to the meaning of coercion in English. Thus, more research is needed on this type of abuse as Stark (2012) has noted that coercion is "an ongoing pattern of domination by which male abusive partner primarily interweave repeated acts of abuse including physical and sexual violence with

intimidation, sexual degradation, isolation and control" (p.7). Thus, having a better understanding on the coercion as a type of abuse may lead to more accurate information on the prevalence of IPA.

Women of Mexican heritage in a mid-size urban city in Michigan seemed to understand that their experiences of abuse in their relationships with a partner were strongly influenced by their social and cultural upbringing in which women were educated for domesticity roles while men had more liberties and privileges in their social life (Perilla, 1999; Perilla et al., 2012). Previous research had identified that the societal behavioral expectations for boys and girls are different and that the expectations for girls. For example, boys are expected to be machos in the negative sense and use violence to settle disputes while girls are expected to be obedient, deference and loyal (Sugarman & Frankel, 1996). Thus, the behavioral expectations for girls may be a risk for IPA.

The experiences of the participants suggested that women felt less valuable than men, felt that they had no voice, had less opportunities to get an education, and were taught about their domesticity role. In addition, women were taught that once they got married, marriage was forever. Some participants born in Mexico stated that they were educated about the domesticity role through physical abuse, in this way they learned to conform to that role and embrace it without protest. The internalization of beliefs about women and men's roles placed women in a vulnerable position for abuse in an intimate relationship.

Participants also recognized that having experienced childhood abuse and having witnessed their mother being abused increased their risk for being abused in their adult relationships. Theories of socialization contend that women in abusive relationships learned to tolerate the abuse because they saw their mothers being abused (Stith et al., 2000). Although the

connection between a history of child abuse and IPA has been well documented among women in general, limited research has done with Latinas on this issue. A study with 291 predominantly Mexican American women found that women who report childhood physical abuse were approximately nine times more likely to report adult victimization (Hazen & Soriano, 2007).

Findings from this study suggest that, despite participants enduring several and concurrent types of abuse, they were brave and courageous to search for ways to stop the abuse. The participants' stories of the abuse suggested that enduring the abuse and complying with the authority of their partners were survival strategies rather than simple acts of submission. For instance, one of the participants said that she felt very limited due to the lack of legal status for which she often submitted to her husband. She said her husband often threatened to deport her if she protested the abuse. Then, having more information of the social and cultural context of the women who are being abused may help to get a more accurate interpretation of the women's behavior in abusive relationships.

The perspective of women of Mexican heritage as resistant to the abuse, differs from the Marianismo perspective that portray women as submissive and dependent on their partner (Ahrens et al., 2010; Stevens, 1973). Julia Perilla, a scholar and co-founder of *Caminar Latino,* an organization in Atlanta, Georgia with a comprehensive intervention for Latino families affected by domestic violence also supports the idea of women being strong and independent. She said, "the image of the women as subservient, passive, dependent, obviously [is] not the image of the nearly 2,000 women with whom I have had the privilege of working in the past 17 years" (Ootman, 2006, p. 5). In this study, participants demonstrate strength and power in their efforts to stop the abuse. Perilla (2012)'s insights about women of Mexican heritage and the

findings from this study are an invitation to change the image of the Mexican woman as submissive and dependent on her partner.

In this study, participants also identified the lack of sexual education as a risk factor for IPA. The literature in the area of sexual education for Latinas is limited. In a study with 43 Latinas, mostly Mexican women, participants identified that the topic of sex was considered cultural taboo and noted that inadequate sexual education was associated with lack of preparation for sex and other negative repercussions (Cashman, Eng, Siman, & Rhodes, 2011). Similar to Cashman and colleagues' (2011) study some participants in this study suggested that talking about sexual matters was not allowed in their homes for which they felt that talking about their experiences of sexual abuse was a private issue not to be discussed with anybody. Even more, the lack of knowledge on human sexuality prevented some participants from identifying situations of sexual abuse. The areas of sexual education and sexual abuse are two specific areas in which further investigation is needed among this specific group of women of Mexican heritage.

Finally, participants also recognized the influence of the migrant environment on their experiences of IPA. Most of the women born in the U.S. grew up in a migrant community that posed risks for child sexual abuse and women abuse. Although limited information exists on the issue of child sexual abuse in migrant communities, a report from the Michigan Civil Rights Commission (2010) found that migrant workers were subject to sexual assault. Thus, more research is needed on the influences of the migrant environment to prevent abuse against children and women in migrant communities.

The housing for women born in Mexico in the U.S. often includes multifamily arrangements where relatives or affiliated people all live together. This increased the likelihood

of those women experiencing abuse. The housing arrangements seemed to respond to mainly financial limitations and to the desire to remain close to their culture.

Reported Experiences of Recovery from IPA

Believing in God. During the recovery from IPA, all participants said they believed in God and acknowledge God as a source of strength, hope, healing and direction to continue moving on. This finding may be explained by the fact that most people were affiliated with some form of religion. Thirteen out of seventeen participants stated they were Catholic and 14 women including all Catholics and one non-Catholic attended church at least once a week. In addition, several participants were recruited from churches and some interviews were conducted at a church. One of the major empowering experiences was the centrality of God, faith and spirituality as sources of strength to provide them with a purpose and a direction to continue moving forward in their lives. This finding supports what other researchers (Cummings, González-Guarda, & Sandoval, 2013; Lown & Vega, 2001) have found, that religious involvement may buffer the deleterious effects of the abuse with a positive effect on the emotional and physical well-being of the women. However, other scholars also have noted that religion may promote subjugation of the women in abusive relationships (Fortune, 1991).

Considering that minority women relied on religious and spiritual strategies to move on after the abuse, scholars (Pyles, 2007; Tedder & Smith, 2018) have stressed the need to explore the response of the faith-based organizations in matters of abuse. The faith-based organizations in this study refer to religious congregations and their leaders. The response of the religious leaders in issues of abuse has been defined as paradoxical and controversial (Fortune, 2000; Pyles, 2007). Some survivors believed that the church aided in their recovery (Popescu et al., 2009) while others have reported negative interactions and outcomes (Bowker, 1982; Popescu et

al., 2009; Postmus, McMahon, Silva-Martinez & Warrener, 2014). Furthermore, researchers have found that women who are experiencing abuse or who have survived the abuse, often disclose their experiences of abuse with religious leaders, yet some leaders lack proper training in the subject (Pyles, 2007). For instance, a study with six Black clergy leaders (five males and one female), Tedder and Smith (2018) found that although the clergy leaders acknowledged the prevalence of intimate partner abuse within their communities and provided pastoral counseling, they lacked knowledge and training to respond to intimate partner violence.

In response to the identified need for training of the clergy on matters of IPV, Wolff, Burleigh, Tripp and Gadomski, (2001) suggested some specific goals for a training curriculum for the clergy including: 1) to understand the nature and dynamics of domestic violence; 2) to develop assessment skills in identifying victims; 3) to discuss potential overt and covert messages that contribute to domestic violence; 4) to discuss collaboration with health care and mental health works and advocates for victims of domestic violence; 5) to become acquainted with available community resources; and 6) to describe how the faith community can bring healing to victims of domestic violence and their families (as cited in Pyles, 2007, p. 289).

Providing services in Spanish. From the data in this study, participants born in Mexico identified being able to express their needs and receive services in Spanish as an empowering experience. Thus, being able to speak for themselves appeared to give them a sense of control over their decisions and actions. Communication in Spanish was chosen even for participants who knew English and had been in the U.S. longer than 10 years. This finding agreed with what Echeverry (1997) stated, that even bilingual Latinos and Latinas in the United States who are proficient in English, prefer communicating in Spanish when they talk about personal issues laden with emotions. On the same line, Bernal and Saenz-Santiago, (2006) added that language

is the expression of emotional experiences. Being able to communicate in Spanish was identified as a powerful experience for the bilingual participants. Then, offering services in Spanish for bilingual women who are affected by issues of IPA should be recommended for organizations that serve women of Mexican heritage.

Support from family. Scholars have identified that having the support from family and friends aid in the recovery from abuse of women (Flasch et al., 2015). Although for Latinos, the family has been identified as a strong source of interdependence and support (Falicov, 1996; Garcia Prieto, 1996; Sabogal et al., 1987), the role of the family in situations of abuse seems to be unpredictable since family can express support at one time and withdraw the support at another time. Even more, in instances of abuse and family support, identifying the relationship of the family member who is supportive and to be more precise, the role of the family member during the recovery seems to be important. For example, in this study, a participant who said that her family was supportive referred to a sister. She said her sister allowed her to live with her for about six years, and even her brother in-law offered to pick up her child from school when she was at work. However, the same participant expressed certain resentment toward her father because he blamed her for having divorced. The situation of this participant shows the complexity in determining the role of the family in the recovery from abuse and at the same time, it reveals the need to continue researching the role of the family in issues of IPA. Family can be supportive yet can be a barrier to stop the abuse for some women of Mexican heritage.

Implications for Services Providers

Early interventions for children. The findings on childhood physical and sexual abuse as risk factors for IPA suggested the need for early identification and interventions for children who have been exposed to intimate partner violence and/or any type of abuse or maltreatment.

Researchers have found that child sexual abuse (CSA) encompasses different degrees of abuse and its impact "may vary from essentially asymptomatic to lifelong, disabling, behavioral, and health consequences" (Olafson, 2011, p. 12). However, even when sexually abused children do not experience long-standing psychological symptoms, they are at increased risk for future victimization; impaired adult functioning; and altered attitudes about self, others and the world (Berliner, 2011; Fargo, 2009; Olafson, 2011).

Despite the negative impact of the CSA, researchers have found that the presence of a supportive, protective, non-offending parent who believes the child following disclosure predicts better recovery from CSA (Cohen & Mannarino, 1998, 2000). A study found that female college students who had received school-based sexual abuse education programs were significantly less likely to have been sexually abused than girls who had not (Gibson & Leitenberg, 2000). However, this program did not reach preschool victims of CSA. Other programs that have been identified as helping to reduce all forms of child maltreatment include home visiting program and family services that strengthen and support mothers (MacLeod & Nelson, 2000).

Thus, considering the negative impact of any type of child abuse, Hazen and Soriano (2007) suggested the importance of working with Latino children who have been identified as victims of child abuse to prevent future victimization.

Providing comprehensive services. In this study, women who separated from their partners faced new demands as a single parent. Sometimes personal and institutional barriers such as language limitations seemed to compound those demands by the, lack of insurance for mental services, or access to a well-paid job. However, scholars have identified that receiving social support from family and friends and having access to resources may decrease the risk for abuse. Scholars have stressed the need to provide comprehensive services to women who are

recovering from the abuse. For instance, Sullivan and Bybee (1999) developed a community-based advocacy program for women who were at a shelter for intimate partner abuse. Participants in an experimental group received individualized assistance from a trained advocate over a period of 10 weeks. Findings indicated that women receiving advocacy services, support, and information of resources experienced less physical violence over time and reported high quality of life, higher social support, less depressive symptoms and increased effectiveness in obtaining resources.

Thus, advocacy is a key element in programs for women in abusive situations or in recovery from the abuse. In the Sullivan and Bybee (1999) study, the identified needs of the participants included education, legal assistance, employment, services for their children, housing, childcare, transportation, financial assistance, health care, and social support. These elements are important to consider when designing programs and services for women recovering from IPA.

For the women who are out of a relationship, Sullivan (2018) suggests working at the intrapersonal level by providing information about women's rights and services in the community, and to help to develop more coping skills. In addition, similar to Sullivan (2018), other scholars equally suggest that advocates should engage in community and social change through systems-level advocacy efforts, prevention activities, community education activities and collaborative community actions (Campbell & Lewandowski, 1997; Sullivan, 2018). These efforts are especially critical in the current social and political contexts of anti-immigration policies.

Support during recovery. Health providers who work with women of Mexican heritage who are in recovery from abuse should explore how women internalize their learned gender role

in childhood and adulthood. Despite women no longer living in abuse, women may still have a tendency to blame themselves about the past abuse. In situations where women think that the abuse was their personal problem, Perilla and colleagues (2012) suggest assisting women to relieve their feelings of guilt and blame by helping them understand that the abuse was not a personal issue but a societal problem.

Education at the community level. Molina and Abel (2010) suggest working on the education of the community on issue of gender inequality. Service providers may want to work more closely with agencies, clients and communities to alter the image of the gender roles learned especially during childhood by the women of Mexican heritage. Working on the education of the community is critical to support the work done at the individual level.

Understanding the importance of faith in God. Bernal and Saenz-Santiago (2006) has noted that although religion and spirituality are important dimensions among ethnic minorities, these aspects have not been included in formal mental health approaches. Thus, health providers who work with women of Mexican heritage living in an abusive relationship and exploring ways to deal with the abuse should include a religious or spiritual component to facilitate the recovery and healing of women.

Providing mental health services in Spanish. The findings in this study show how women's experiences of abuse were filled with emotions of anger, sadness, and pain. In addition to those emotions, participants who had limited English skills said they were frightened about asking for help and expressing their needs to services providers. Participants in this study identified the lack of bilingual therapists as a constraint to their efforts to stop the abuse and in their recovery from abuse. Valencia-Garcia and Montoya (2018) raise a concern on the need for bilingual therapist to serve the predominately Spanish-speaking populations. They contended

that providing therapy in Spanish is more complex than simply "translating" (p. 143) English into Spanish. They added that "for many bilingual therapists, simply knowing another language does not automatically equate to language competence in therapy or to cultural competence" (p. 143).

In addition, Valencia-Garcia and Montoya (2018) stressed the need to provide adequate training and clinical supervision to bilingual students. In order to decrease the shortage of bilingual therapists, the scholars give some recommendations for general academic training, academic curriculum and clinical supervision. The recommendations cited here seemed to be more connected to the findings in this study, including: 1) recruit and retain racial and ethnic minority students with language-specific competence in order to meet the increasing needs of our multicultural and bilingual society; 2) recruit and retain racial and ethnic minority faculty with language-specific competence for teaching and supervision; 3) cease the practice of allowing and/or expecting graduate students to provide services in Spanish without an appropriate clinical supervisor who does not speak Spanish; 4) build community collaborations with agencies who serve ethnic and racial minority populations in order to recruit bilingual supervisors who can oversee and mentor young bilingual clinicians, and 5) create a formal support group for students who are offering therapy in Spanish to share the unique challenges and rewards of conducting therapy in Spanish.

Thus, providing mental health services in Spanish to women of Mexican heritage who are experiencing abuse or who are healing may help to reduce the risk for entering another abusive relationship and empower them to make informed decisions regarding their relationship (Postmus et al., 2014).

Comprehensive interventions for the whole family. In agreement with what other researchers have found (Perilla et al., 2012), in this study, 29. 4 % (5 out of 17) of the participants stayed with their partners for different reasons. This finding challenges service providers who work with women of Mexican heritage to think "outside the box" and to develop comprehensive interventions that include children and partners (Perilla et al., 2012). For example, at Caminar Latino, a center for domestic violence that has served Latinos for about 30 years, offers programs for women, men, and children. Often, the participants in these programs are members of the same family, which has been successful to reduce instances of abuse (J. Nunan, personal communication, August 3, 2018).

At Caminar Latino, women who initially participated in a program for women who had been abused asked program staff to create a youth program for their children that would help the children to understand their experience and learn non-violent ways of behaving. Two years later, the women requested that the staff offer services for their violent partners with whom many of them continued to live. They argued that their partners needed help in learning new ways to behave non-violently and that the women's newly acquired understanding of the nature and dynamics of domestic violence needed to be understood by the men as well. In this way, Caminar Latino incorporated a program for men (Caminar Latino, 2018). The response of Caminar Latino to the needs of the women and Latino families may be considered what Perilla called "thinking outside of the box" (Perilla et al., 2012).

Implications for Policy

Although five participants in this study reported that obtaining a U-visa made them feel empowered, as they were able to become economically stable, they also said that the application process was long and difficult. María del Sol said, "Es un proceso muy, muy largo de muchos

años…fue muy difícil porque hay que redactar palabra por palabra de todos los abusos verbales, de todos y hacer hojas y hojas, escribiendo historia por historia…" ["It is a very, very long process that take many years...it was very difficult because you have to write word by word of all the verbal abuses, of all and make sheets and sheets, writing abusive episode by abusive episode"]. According to an organization that provides legal services to victims of IPA, the process to get the U-visa may take up to 5 years (Women'slaw.org, 2019). One of the reasons for the delay is that the US Citizenship and Immigration Service (USCIS, 2018) only grant 10,000 U-visas per year for which one of the implications for policy is to increase the U-visa cap (Rajaram et al., 2015).

A second policy implication is related to the training of the mental health practitioners. Students who are in the mental health area and that are considering working with Latinas, including women of Mexican heritage should be required to learn the language and the culture as a way to be more sensitive to the needs of this specific population. Valencia-Garcia and Montoya (2018) provided some specific ideas that were previously described.

Limitations of the Study

One of the limitations of this study was the participants' different length of time after the abuse stopped. In this study, women have been living with no physical abuse ranging from 1 year to 38 years. In addition, some women are still living with their partners. The stories of the recovery from abuse of women who have been out of the abuse for a longer period of time may be different from the experiences of the women who have been out of the abuse for only one year. This factor may have impacted the results. For example, Sullivan (2008) found that in the first months after separation women face more struggles and symptoms of depression. Then, the variation in the recovery time of the women was a limitation.

A second limitation is related to the retrospective data collection method. The study relied on the participants' memories. There is evidence that people' memories are fallible. In this specific study, participants may have forgotten important details, or the meaning of the experiences may have changed over time. As one of the participants stated during the interview, "aquí se oye bien facilito pero fue un…fue algo bien difícil" ["Here it sounds like it was really easy, but it was…it was something very difficult"]. In contrast, there is also evidence that individuals tend to remember events that produce a strong emotional response with a reasonable degree of accuracy (Simons, Wu, Johnson, & Conger, 1995). In this study, relying on people's memory could be a limitation.

A third limitation was related to language. As it was discussed before, some words in English when translated to Spanish cannot capture the whole meaning. For example, the word "coercion" can be translated in Spanish as 'coercion" however, this word was not familiar to the participants. In the same way, some participants used expressions such as "sentirse aplastada" sentirse como lazo de puerco" that when translated in English did not capture the feelings participants tried to convey. Although efforts were made to ensure a close translation of the meaning participants tried to convey, there was always the possibility that some information was lost in the translation.

Strengths of the Study

Strengths of this study are its focuses on the specific Latino subgroup of women of Mexican heritage and women who speak Spanish. Scholars have identified the need to conduct studies by specific Latino subgroups, this study responded to that need. In addition, the experiences of IPA of Spanish-speaking women frequently are excluded from the research agenda (Runner et al., 2009) yet this study included this specific population of women.

By using a feminist theory, women's experiences of abuse and recovery from abuse were listened to and validated as sources of knowledge. By using an intersectionality perspective, the study explored the different barriers women of Mexican heritage have in their struggle to live a life free of abuse or with less abuse. By taking into account the social context of the women who are struggling to heal from the abuse, we saw that women face personal, family, cultural and institutional challenges to overcome recovery specific to women of Mexican heritage. Then we saw women as women of power, strength, courage, and women of change.

Another strength of this study is the interviewer's familiarity with the language, the community and the Mexican culture, which facilitated the collection and analysis of the data. For instance, participants often said in the sharing of their stories "Como usted sabe en México" ["as you know, in Mexico"] suggesting that the researcher understood the situational context to which they were referring. In agreement with the constructivist grounded approach of Charmaz (2006), the experience of the researcher was a critical part in the building knowledge.

Implications for Future Research

The diversity of the sample for this study of the women of Mexican heritage in itself was diverse. Although participants were from the same ethnic subgroup, there were many differences in their contextual upbringing, legal status, marital status and use of services. Only four women had received specific services for domestic abuse. The identified differences suggest the need to conduct studies by specific Latino subgroup when referring to issues of abuse by an intimate partner. Otherwise, applying the general label of "Latinas" may lead to inaccurate conclusions that in turn may lead to inappropriate interventions.

The relationship of childhood abuse to abuse as an adult. An area that needs further investigation is the impact of child abuse on women of Mexican heritage. Although studies have

shown the connection of witnessing and being a victim of child abuse to the experiences of intimate partner abuse as an adult (Moylan, 2010; Widom, Czaja, & Dutton, 2014), little is known about these experiences of childhood abuse and intimate partner abuse as an adult among women of Mexican heritage (Romero et al., 1999).

More research is needed on the experiences of recovery and healing of women of Mexican heritage who chose to remain with their partner. Although little research has been done on the recovery of women who stayed with their partner, Lowe and colleagues (2007) suggest that their recovery pathway may be different for women who leave their partner. Since there is documentation that some women of Mexican heritage decide to stay with their partner, further investigation is needed to provide appropriate services for the women and their families.

Machismo. Among the literature of IPA with Latinos, machismo is identified as a risk factor for abuse specifically among Mexican, and Mexican American populations (Gutmann, 2000). However, in this study, only three participants referred to men's controlling and abusive behavior as machista. The difference could be explained by the fact that people are refraining from using those concepts that perpetuate racial stereotypes of Mexicans. Gutmann (2000) argues that the definition of machismo in the United States reflects racism toward men of this population. The general view of a machista man is the one who hits his wife. However, machista behaviors have been found in men from other races as well (Neff, 2001). Gutmann, (2000) contends that there is not consensus on the definition of machismo, and this is demonstrated in the different point of view about machismo. Some scholars contend that machismo has a positive dimension of caring and supporting for one's family (Comas-Diaz, 1995) while others see machismo attitudes as a risk factor for abuse. Further research is needed on the gender roles of

women and men and IPA to understand the positive and negative dimensions of machismo keeping what is worthwhile and leaving aside what is noxious and harmful (Perilla, 2006).

Conclusion

Recovering from IPA for women of Mexican heritage has reportedly been a difficult and unique experience for each one of the participants. Participants said they feel that they are dragging emotional and psychological problems since childhood. Although participants faced several limitations such as economic difficulties, lack of English, lack of legal status, and a hostile anti-immigration environment while living in an abusive relationship, those limitations did not prevent them from acting to stop the abuse.

Women in this study are seen as women of power and courage to change their living conditions. Their faith in God and love for their children gave them strength to stop living in abuse and moving on. Some women left the abusive relationship while others stayed. Nonetheless, all of them said they are healing and recovering. Despite the many personal, social and structural limitations and struggles women have faced, they also reported that they feel content, happy, accomplished and are open to receive services to continue healing.

This study contributes to increase our knowledge on the experiences of recovery from abuse by an intimate partner of mostly Spanish speaking women of Mexican heritage. The findings of recovery and healing for the participants in this Michigan study may be used to inform the services provided to other women of Mexican heritage in similar conditions.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

Recruitment Flyer English

Looking for Latinas to Participate in a Research Study

If you are a woman who experienced past abuse by an intimate partner and moved forward or are trying to move forward, we would like to hear your story in a private and confidential place.

To participate you should:

1. Be at least 18 years old
2. Have experienced any type of physical, sexual, psychological abuse or coercion by an intimate partner at some point in your life
3. Be at least 6 months out of the abusive relationship or have lived without being abused for at least 6 months
4. Speak English and/or Spanish
5. Live in Michigan and be of Mexican heritage (born in Mexico or in the United States) or an immigrant Latina from another Spanish speaking country.

This research study consists of interviewing women to talk about their experience of abuse and how they are trying to move forward. There may be a risk of some psychological discomfort from participating. The personal information you share will be confidential. Participants may do up to two interviews that will take approximately 60 minutes. Interviews will be in a private and confidential place.

Participants will receive a $10 gift card to a grocery store for each interview.

For more information, please call or text
Eva Palma at 517-488-9349

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APPENDIX B

Recruitment Flyer Spanish

¡Se buscan participantes Latinas para un estudio de investigación!

Si eres una mujer que ha experimentado abuso por parte de una pareja íntima, y que has salido o estas saliendo adelante, nos gustaría escuchar tu historia en un lugar privado y confidencial.

Para participar pedimos que:

1. Tengas mínimo 18 años de edad
2. Hayas vivido en algún momento de tu vida algún tipo de abuso por parte de una pareja íntima sea físico, sexual, psicológico o coerción (haber sido obligada a hacer algo en contra de tu voluntad)
3. Estés fuera de la relación de abuso por un mínimo de 6 meses o que no hayas sufrido abuso en los últimos 6 meses antes de la entrevista.
4. Hables inglés o español
5. Que vivas en Michigan y que seas de origen mexicano (haber nacido en México o en Estados Unidos) o que seas inmigrante Latina de algún otro país de habla hispana.

Este estudio consiste en entrevistar a mujeres Latinas sobre su experiencia de abuso y de cómo están tratando de salir adelante después del abuso. Existe el riesgo de cierta incomodidad psicológica por participar. La información que compartan será completamente confidencial. Las participantes pueden tener hasta dos entrevistas que tardarán alrededor de 60 minutos y serán en un lugar privado y confidencial.

Las participantes recibirán una tarjeta de $10.00 para una tienda de comestibles por entrevista.

Para más información, llame o envíe un mensaje a Eva Palma al 517-488-9349

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APPENDIX C

Informed Consent English

Consent Form for Participation of Human Subjects in Research
Michigan State University

Project Title: Experiences of intimate partner violence (IPV) and trying to move forward after the abuse of Latinas in Michigan, United States
Principal Investigator: Eric Gonzalez Juenke, PhD
Secondary Investigator: Evangelina Palma-Ramírez, MSW
Department: Chicano/Latino Studies Program
What is this study about?
The purpose of this explorative qualitative research study is to interview a group of approximately 50 women of Mexican heritage (born in Mexico or USA) or immigrant women of other Spanish-speaking countries, who have experienced any type of abuse (physical, sexual, psychological or coercion) by an intimate partner at some point in their lives to collect their stories of abuse and how they moved forward or are trying to move forward after the abuse.

The study will focus on: 1) women's experiences of abuse by an intimate partner identifying the social and cultural factors that contributed to the abuse; and 2) women's experiences of moving forward or trying to move forward after the abuse identifying the factors that fostered or hindered such process. The findings of the study may inform the development of culturally sensitive interventions for Latinas in the United States who have experienced IPV and are trying to move on with their lives.

What is involved in taking part in this study?
Your participation in this study is completely voluntary; you may choose whether or not you would like to participate. Your decision whether or not to participate will not affect your relationship and services received at the community organizations where you are participating (Ingham County Health Department, Cristo Rey Church, CACS, Inc. Head Start Program, Cristo Rey Community Center, etc.). If you do agree to participate, you will choose a pseudonym (a different name) to be used during the interview. The interviewer (Evangelina Palma Ramirez) will ask you to complete a form asking for non-identifiable personal information. This information will allow her to have a better understanding of your personal experience. Afterwards, the interviewer will do a face-to-face interview that will take approximately 60 minutes. With your permission, the interview will be tape-recorded to ensure accuracy.

You will be asked questions about your experience of abuse by an intimate partner and the factors that contributed to the abuse; and about your experience of trying to move forward after the abuse. With your consent, the interview will be transcribed word for word. Parts of the transcriptions will be translated into English by trained translators. Transcriptions and translations will be de-identified, meaning your name or any identifying information will not be included. If necessary, you will be asked to participate in a second interview to obtain more details about your experience. You decide whether you would like to participate in a second interview.

You will receive a $10.00 gift card to a grocery store for each interview.

What about privacy and confidentiality?
If you agree to participate in the study, your responses during the interview will be private and confidential. You will choose a different name to be used during the interview. You will be asked to avoid mentioning any particular person by name. For example, instead of using a partner's name, you will use the word husband or boyfriend. In the event that you accidentally use the specific person's name during the interview, the interviewer will stop the recorder, rewind, erase the name, and continue with the interview. In this way, your confidentiality will be protected to the maximum extent allowable by law. The researchers will keep your data for at least three years after the project closes at MSU and the MSU HRPP will have access to the data.

What are the potential risks and benefits of participating?
Although there are no expected risks for participating in this study, there is a possibility for psychological discomfort given the nature of the interview questions. The study involves talking about your experience of abuse by an intimate partner and about how you have moved forward or how you are trying to move forward after the abuse. To reduce the likelihood of psychological discomfort, you will able to take a break at any point during the interview; refuse to answer any question that makes you uncomfortable; or stop the interview at any point you wish. Even if you decide to terminate the interview early you will still receive the compensation indicated. You will receive a list of community resources in case you need further mental health services after the interview.

There are no direct benefits for participating in this study.

Who can be contacted with questions about the study or my participation?
If you have any concerns or questions about this study or your participation such as scientific issues, how to do any part of it, or to report an injury contact Eric Juenke, 517-353-8685 or Evangelina Palma-Ramirez, Chicano/Latino Studies Program, Michigan State University, 368 Farm Lane, Room 200 S. Kedzie Hall, East Lansing, Michigan, 48824, email palmaram@msu.edu, telephone 517-488-9349.

If you have questions or concerns about your role and rights as a research participant, would like to obtain more 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, e-mail irb@msu.edu or regular mail at 4000 Collins Rd., Suite 136, Lansing, MI 48910.

If you wish, you will receive a copy of this consent form to keep for your records.

Consent to participate:

- ❑ You voluntarily agree to participate in a one-on-one interview.
- ❑ You voluntarily agree to participate in a second interview if necessary.
- ❑ You voluntarily agree to have your interview audiotape recorded and transcribed.
- ❑ You agree to the use of your information for research purposes.

APPENDIX D

Informed Consent Spanish

Formulario de Consentimiento para la Participación de Sujetos Humanos en Investigación de la Universidad Estatal de Michigan (MSU)

Título del proyecto: Experiencias de abuso por una pareja íntima y de tratar de salir adelante después del abuso de mujeres Latinas en Michigan, Estados Unidos.
Investigador Principal: Eric Gonzalez Juenke, PhD
Investigador Secundario: Evangelina Palma-Ramírez, MSW

¿**De qué se trata este estudio?**

El propósito de este estudio exploratorio de investigación cualitativa es entrevistar a un grupo de aproximadamente 50 mujeres de origen mexicano, (que hayan nacido en México o Estados Unidos) o mujeres inmigrantes de países de habla Hispana, que hayan experimentado algún tipo de abuso (físico, sexual, psicológico, o coerción) por parte de una pareja en algún momento de su vida para recolectar sus experiencias de abuso y de cómo han tratado de salir adelante después del abuso.

El estudio se centra en: 1) la experiencia de abuso de las mujeres por parte de una pareja íntima identificando los factores sociales y culturales que contribuyeron a ello; y 2) la experiencia de tratar de salir adelante después del abuso identificando los factores que fomentaron u obstaculizaron dicho proceso. Los resultados de este estudio pueden informar el desarrollo de intervenciones culturalmente relevante para mujeres Latinas en los Estados Unidos, que han experimentado abuso para ayudarles en la transición de continuar adelante con sus vidas.

¿En qué consiste mi participación en este estudio?
Su participación en este estudio es completamente voluntaria, usted decide si desea participar. Su decisión de participar o no, no afectará su relación y los servicios que recibe en la organización a donde usted va (Ingham County Health Department, Cristo Rey Church, CACS, Inc. Head Start Program, Cristo Rey Community Center, etc.). Si usted acepta participar, elegirá un seudónimo (otro nombre) para ser utilizado durante la entrevista. La entrevistadora (Evangelina Palma Ramírez) le pedirá que complete una forma sobre información personal que no la identifique, para que pueda entender mejor su experiencia personal. Después hará la entrevista que tardará aproximadamente 60 minutos. Si lo autoriza, se grabará su entrevista para mayor exactitud.

En la entrevista se le preguntará sobre su experiencia de abuso por parte de una pareja íntima y los factores que contribuyeron a ello; y sobre su experiencia de salir adelante después del abuso. Con su consentimiento, la entrevista se transcribir palabra por palabra. Parte de las transcripciones serán traducidas en inglés por traductores entrenados. Para proteger su identidad, las transcripciones y traducciones serán anónimas, es decir, no incluirán información personal que la pueda identificar. Si es necesario, se le pedirá que participe en una segunda entrevista para obtener más detalles de su experiencia. Usted decide si participa en la segunda entrevista.

Por participar en cada entrevista, recibirá una tarjeta de $10.00 dólares para una tienda de comestibles.

¿Cómo será protegida mi privacidad y confidencialidad?
Si usted decide participar en este estudio, sus respuestas en la entrevista serán privadas y confidenciales. Usted escogerá otro nombre o seudónimo para ser usado en la entrevista. Durante la entrevista, se le pedirá que evite mencionar nombres específicos de personas, en su lugar puede usar palabras generales como esposo o novio. En caso de que mencione algún nombre la entrevistadora parará la grabación, la regresará, borrará el nombre y continuará con la entrevista. De esta manera su confidencialidad será protegida a la máxima medida permitida por la ley. Los investigadores mantendrán sus datos durante tres años después de que el proyecto se cierre en MSU y el Comité Examinador Institucional (HRPP por sus siglas en inglés) de MSU tendrá acceso a los datos.

¿Cuáles son los riesgos y beneficios de participar?
Aunque no se anticipan riesgos por participar en este estudio, existe la posibilidad de incomodidad psicológica dada la naturaleza de las preguntas. Para reducir le probabilidad de incomodidad psicológica usted podrá tomar un descanso en el momento que desee durante la entrevista; negarse a responder alguna pregunta que le incomode; o terminar la entrevista en el momento que desee. Si decide terminar la entrevista antes de lo previsto, igualmente recibirá el incentivo indicado por su participación. Usted recibirá una lista de recursos de salud mental disponibles en la comunidad en caso de que necesite ayuda psicológica después de la entrevista.

No hay beneficios directos por participar en esta entrevista.

¿A quién puedo contactar si tengo preguntas sobre mi participación en este estudio?
Si tiene alguna duda o pregunta sobre este estudio o sobre su participación, por favor pregúntele a la entrevistadora. Si más tarde tiene alguna pregunta, contacte a Eric Juenke, 517-353-8685 o Evangelina Palma- Ramírez, Chicano/Latino Studies Program, Michigan State University, 368 Farm Lane, Room 200 S. Kedzie Hall, East Lansing, Michigan, 48824, correo electrónico palmaram@msu.edu, o llámele al teléfono 517-488-9349.

Si tiene preguntas o preocupaciones sobre su función y sus derechos como participante en esta investigación, desea obtener más información, o poner una queja sobre este estudio, puede contactar, anónimamente, si así lo desea, a Michigan State University al Programa de Protección de Humanos en Investigación, teléfono 517-355-2180, Fax 517-432-4503, correo electrónico irb@msu.edu o correo regular 4000 Collins Rd., Suite 136, Lansing, MI 48910.

Si lo desea, recibirá una copia de este formulario de consentimiento para su archivo personal.

Consentimiento para participar:

- ❑ Usted voluntariamente acepta participar en la entrevista
- ❑ Usted voluntariamente acepta participar en una segunda entrevista si es necesario.
- ❑ Usted voluntariamente acepta que se grabe la entrevista y se transcriba,
- ❑ Usted está de acuerdo que se use su información para fines de investigación.

APPENDIX E

Questions for interviews English

Thank you for agreeing to participate in this study. I am going to ask you about your experiences of abuse and moving forward after the abuse (whether it ended or ceased). Remember that you have control of what you want to share with me.

1. Tell me a little about yourself.

   Probes:

   Place where you were born

   Number of siblings

   A memory from your childhood

2. Tell me about your experience of growing up and learning in your family. What did they tell you about marriage and about the education of women and men?

   Probes:

   Religious context

   Machismo

   Marianismo

3. Tell me about your experience of being abused by your partner.

   Probes:

   When did abuse start?

   Type and severity of abuse

   What made the abuse end (or cease)?

   Any kind of help you have received to deal with and to end the abuse

4. Tell me how your life was after the abuse ended (or after the abused ceased). Was your life different in the first years of separation?

   Probes

Psychological aspect: self-esteem, depression

Physical aspect: any physical disease

Financial recovery: ability to find or keep a job, debt, getting a house, paying bills

Strategies that have enabled you to recover: prayer, exercise, talking, support from family and/or friends

Difficulties you found to move forward

How is your life now?

5. If you were born in Mexico, tell me if the immigration situation in the United States has affected you in some way? Tell me how.

   Probes:

   Ideas about immigrants

   Not speaking the language

6. Tell me what could have helped you to make the transition less difficult in the first years. What could help you now?

   Probes:

   Support from family and friends

   More housing options

   Having knowledge of the resources

7. By looking at the experience of abuse you lived and how you moved forward, what do you think of yourself? What can you tell me about yourself living in the abuse and yourself, the person you are now?

8. What have you learned from these experiences of abuse and the experience of moving forward after the abuse?

APPENDIX F

Questions for Interviews Spanish

Gracias por aceptar participar en este estudio. Le voy a preguntar sobre sus experiencias de abuso y de cómo ha salido adelante después del abuso (ya sea que terminó o disminuyó). Recuerde que usted tiene control de lo que quiere compartir.

1. Dígame un poco sobre usted.

   Áreas de exploración:

   Lugar donde nació

   Número de hermanos

   Algún recuerdo de su niñez

2. Cuénteme sobre su experiencia de crecer y ser educada en su familia. ¿Qué le dijeron sus papás sobre el matrimonio y sobre la educación de los hombres y las mujeres?

   Áreas de exploración:

   Contexto religioso

   Machismo

   Marianismo

3. Platícame de su experiencia de abuso/violencia por parte de su pareja

   Áreas de exploración:

   ¿Cuándo empezó?

   Tipo y severidad de abuso/violencia

   ¿Qué hizo que terminara o disminuyera el abuso?

   Cualquier ayuda que recibió para lidiar y terminar con el abuso

4. Platíqueme cómo ha sido su vida después de que el abuso terminó (o disminuyó). ¿Cómo fue su vida en los primeros años de la separación?

   Áreas de exploración:

   Aspecto psicológico: autoestima, depresión

   Aspecto físico: alguna enfermedad

   Aspecto financiero: habilidad para encontrar o mantener un trabajo, deudas, vivienda, pagar/cubrir gastos de la casa

   Estrategias que le ayudaron a recuperarse o salir adelante: orar, hacer ejercicio, hablar con alguien, apoyo de su familia o de amigos

   Dificultades que encontró para salir adelante

   ¿Cómo es su vida ahora?

5. Dígame si la situación de inmigración actual en los Estados Unidos ha afectado su vida de alguna manera. ¿Cómo le ha afectado?

   Áreas de exploración:

   Ideas acerca de los inmigrantes

   No hablar el idioma

6. Dígame que podría haberle ayudado a hacer la situación menos difícil en los primeros años. ¿Y ahora que le podría ayudar?

   Áreas de exploración:

   El apoyo de familiares y amigos

   Más opciones para conseguir vivienda

   Tener conocimiento de los recursos

7. Mirando la experiencia de abuso que vivió y como ha salido adelante, ¿qué piensa de usted misma? ¿Qué puede decir de la persona que vivió el abuso y de la persona que es ahora?
8. ¿Qué ha aprendido de la experiencia de abuso y de salir adelante después del abuso?

APPENDIX G

Demographic Information English

Participant's pseudonym: _____ Date: _____

1. Age: _____ 2. Highest level of education:_____
3. Birthplace (State/Country): _____
4. Country where you received most of your education: _____
5. Language(s) you speak: English _____ Spanish _____
6. Current marital status: Married (living with partner who inflicted pain):Yes ____ No____

   Living with a different partner _____ Divorced _____ Separated_____
7. Do you have children? Yes _____ No _____ If yes, how many? _____
8. Are you currently working? Yes _____ No _____
9. Approximately, what is your annual income? Circle your answer.

   a. Under $15,000 b. Between $16,000-$30,000 c. $31,000-$60,000 d. More than $61,000
10. How long did you live in an abusive relationship? _____
11. How long have you been out of the abusive relationship? _____
12. Number of years living in the United States: _____
13. What is your religion? _____
14. How often do you go to your church?

    a. I don't go _____ b. Once a week _____ c. More than 1 a week _____
15. What type of abuse did you experience? Mark all that apply.
    a. ___ Physical: punches, slaps, kicks, pushes, bites, and strangling
    b. ___ Sexual: forced sexual activity, forced or coerced use of pornographic films, photos or both
    c. ___ Emotional: insults and humiliation, isolation from friends and family, impeded decision making, economic abandonment, verbal threats, intimidating phone calls.
    d. ___ Coercive control: using threats to force you do things you don't want

APPENDIX H

Demographic Information Spanish

Seudónimo: _____ Fecha: _____

1. Edad: _____ 2. Nivel más alto de educación: _____
3. Estado y país donde nació:_____
4. País donde recibió la mayoría de su educación: _____
5. Idiomas que habla: Ingles _____ Español _____
6. Estado civil actual: Casada (viviendo con la pareja que le causó daño): Si _____ No_____

   Vive con otra pareja _____ Divorciada _____ Separada de su pareja_____
7. ¿Tiene hijos? Sí _____ No _____ Si contesto que sí, ¿cuántos? _____
8. ¿Está trabajando? Sí _____ No _____
9. ¿Aproximadamente cuál es su ingreso anual? Marque una respuesta.

   a. Menos de $15,000 b. Entre $16,000-$30,000 c. $31,000- $60,000 d. Más de $61,000
10. ¿Cuánto tiempo vivió en la relación de abuso?_____
11. ¿Cuánto tiempo hace que esta fuera de esa relación? _____
12. ¿Cuántos años ha vivido en los Estados Unidos?_____
13. ¿Cuál es su religión?_____
14. ¿Con que frecuencia asiste a su iglesia?

    a. No asisto _____ b. Una vez por semana _____ c. Más de una vez por semana_____
15. ¿Qué tipo de violencia o abuso vivió? Marque todas las respuestas que apliquen.

    a.____Físico: puñetazos, bofetadas, patadas, empujones, mordeduras y estrangulamiento

    b.____Sexual: actividad sexual forzada, forzarla a ver películas pornográficas o fotos o ambas cosas.

c.____Psicológico: insultos, humillaciones, aislar de amigos y familiares, no permitirle tomar decisiones, abandono económico, amenazas verbales, o llamadas telefónicas que la intimidaban.

d.____Chantajes: Amenazarla y forzarla a hacer cosas en contra de su voluntad

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