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**CALLADITAS NO NOS VEMOS MÁS BONITAS: TESTIMONIOS OF MEXICAN
MIGRANT CATHOLIC MOTHERS' RESISTANCE TO MARIANISMO**

In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree

MASTER IN MIGRATION STUDIES

By: **Jessica Guadalupe Ornelas**

May 2023

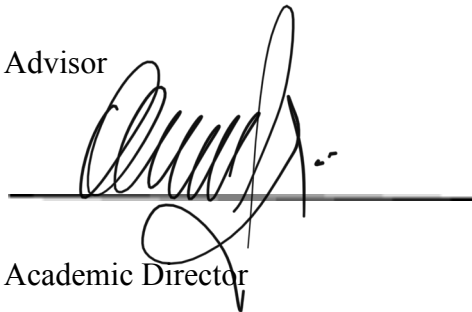
UNIVERSITY OF SAN FRANCISCO

Under the guidance and approval of the committee, and approval by all the members, this thesis project has been accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree.

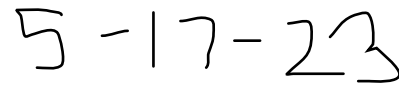
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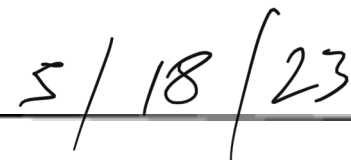
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Date



Date

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DEDICATION

I would like to dedicate this thesis to all of the women and girls who have experienced gender based violence and femicide throughout the years. Especially to Marisela Escobedo and her daughter Rubí who truly inspired and guided me to undertake this research. As well as, more recently, Debanhi Escobar. No son y nunca serán olvidadas! Justicia ahora! NI UNA MENOS!

Cuánto silencio en la casa

Sigo sin saber de ti

Nada es lo mismo, mi vida

Cómo me haces falta

Sigue tu olor en el aire

Tus cosas intactas

Sigo mirando tus fotos

Y sigo también sin perder la esperanza

Ha sido un infierno este tiempo, no sé

No me sabe vivir, si tú no estás

No voy a rendirme, te lo prometí

No pierdo la fe, quiero estar en paz

Te sigo buscando, no descansaré

Lo juro por ti

Te voy a encontrar

Te extraño, mi amor

Y cuando volvamos a vernos los dos

Vamos a descansar

Sigue tu olor en el aire

Tus cosas intactas

Sigo mirando tus fotos

Y sigo también sin perder la esperanza

Ha sido un infierno este tiempo, no sé

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Te voy a encontrar

Te extraño, mi amor

Y cuando volvamos a vernos los dos

Vamos a descansar

- [Te Voy a Encontrar](#), Edén Muñoz (2022)

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to first profusely thank mi Madre Chingona, who inspired me to pursue my Master's degree and was my reason to write about this topic. She taught me how to resist, to be a confident, badass woman, and not let anyone or anything diminish mi voz, luz, y poder. Te amo mami, con todo mi ser y corazon! <3

I would like to incredibly thank mi amiga Chingona, Melissa Covarrubias, quien me enseñó todo lo que se sobre la violencia contra las mujeres y niñas. Tu fuiste la primera persona que me motivó continuamente para aprender sobre este tema y conducir una investigación profunda. Tu eres mi inspiracion diariamente para seguir adelante y informarme sobre las injusticias contra las mujeres y aprender sobre las mejores maneras para educar y terminar la violencia contra las mujeres y niñas, el machismo, y el marianismo. Las palabras no son suficientes para darte las gracias por todo el apoyo y consejería que me has brindado estos pasados años. Esta tesis es para ti, para la comunidad que sirves, y para todos las mujeres, niñas, y sus familiares que han sido sobrevivientes, víctimas, y impactadxs por el feminicidio y violencia. Seguimos proclamando sus voces, historias, y gritamos justicia para todxs!

I would like to thank my Mount Saint Mary's girl gang, Lilit Denise, Natalie, and my boo Melanie. Thank y'all for checking up on me. Thank you Denise for the random calls making sure I ate and am doing mentally okay. Thank you for making me laugh in the early hours of the day, for sending me Golden Retriever memes, and hearing me out when I had tough days. Natalie, thank you for inspiring me to write about marianismo and sharing your story with me. I immensely cherish getting to know you, all our deep and beautiful phone calls, and am continually in awe and admiration of how strong, powerful, and poderosa que eres. Gracias por ser mi hermana grande, cuidarme a todos momentos, listening to my long rants, and helping me

process my thoughts, providing endless, loving, encouraging support. Thank you Melanie (boo) for holding me up and being my bestie since Freshman year at MSMU. It has been a beautiful 8 years of friendship. Thank you for always hyping me up, teaching and reminding me of my worth, potential, and power as a mujer.

To Ale, Mujer, tu sabes que te miro como una hermana cercana. Desde el primer dia that I walked into the Immigration Resource Center, SGV, I knew that we would be close. I was so nervous that day, but seeing your beautiful smile and loving aura made me feel at home. Gracias por todos los días que me has escuchado, gracias por compartir tu hermoso ser conmigo y por las veces que hemos llorado juntas. Gracias por todas las veces que hemos comido juntas y por las veces que nos regresamos a Los Angeles juntas. I cherish esos viajes que nos fuimos juntas porque aprendí lo chingona que eres y tu hermosa historia de resiliencia. Mujer, lo hicimos. Nos graduamos y estoy tan emocionada y agradecida de ser tu bridesmaid soon! Te aprecio tanto y SI SE PUDO!!! Te amo!

Gracias a mi familia, por venir a visitarme y traerme comida, comprarme mis cosas en Costco, y hacerme reír diariamente por teléfono. Gracias por preocuparse por mi y hacerme reír durante momentos difíciles. Gracias Jony por tus lindos abrazos y por toda la comida que me compraste en casa. Gracias por darme tu amor y querer lo mejor de mi. I am constantly so proud of the man you are becoming and the hard business man you are transforming into.

Gracias a mi linda, hermosa comunidad de Santa Inés. Gracias por darme la bienvenida hace un año con los brazos abiertos y hacerme sentir en casa. Gracias por darme de comer después de misa, cuando algunas veces no había comido nada, y por las lindas conversaciones y risas que compartimos. Gracias a mi segunda mamá, Mimi, gracias por abrazarme el primer día que llegué a Santa Inés. Estaba pasando por momentos muy difíciles pero su amor de mamá me

ayudó a sobresalir y perseverar. Gracias por sus oraciones, su afecto, y su amor cada Domingo. La quiero, estimo, y la aprecio mucho!

Quisiera especialmente agradecer al Padre Edwin que me acompañó mucho este año durante momentos muy difíciles. Gracias por continuamente apoyarme en todos mis trabajos, por los muchos momentos de risa que compartimos, y por siempre recordarme que Dios, La Virgencita de Guadalupe, y el Espíritu Santo siempre están conmigo. ¡Lo aprecio y admiro mucho!

I would also like to thank the USF community faculty who guided, encouraged, and provided support every step of the way. Including Amy Argenal, Kique Bazan, Didem Ekici, and Wendy Arce. Most importantly, Rev. Dr. Ronné Wingate Sims who taught me that we as women “are the gift” and to never settle for less. Thank you all for being mentors for me and encouraging me to continue going when I felt like giving up. Thank you for teaching me the importance of community centered healing, fighting against imposter syndrome, and showing myself cariño y amor. Additionally, I would like to thank the USF staff including the domestic workers in Fromm hall and the cooks in the USF cafeteria who checked on me and made sure I was doing okay. Thank you for reminding me of my family and making me smile.

A big thank you to my advisor, Christina Garcia Lopez! Thank you for being there for me since day 1! Thank you for believing in my crazy ideas at times and supporting me every step of the way. Thank you for your unconditional love y apoyo in the past 2 years and reminding me to show grace, love, and kindness myself during the writing process.

Thank you to La Casa de Las Madres for opening their door to me as a volunteer and teaching me what domestic violence looks like for women of color. Thank you for allowing me to be a part of the 40 hour domestic violence training and be part of the outreach and education

team. I will eternally cherish my time as a volunteer and all of the amazing, powerful cohort members and women I met.

Gracias to my MIMS cohort members who continually guided and cheered me on, every step of the way. It has been an absolute privilege getting to know each and every one of your stories, passions, and seeing your projects/theses come to fruition! SI SE PUDO!

Gracias to ALAS! It was an absolute privilege and honor partnering with you and working alongside you for over a year for the online tutoring program. It was beautiful to spend time with the kids and get to know each and every one of them through tutoring. Thank you for reminding us to feel proud of our cultura y darnos amor incondicionalmente en nuestras comunidades Latinas. Los quiero mucho a todos y siempre los llevaré dentro de mi corazón.

Muchas gracias de todo corazón a mis participantes, mujeres chingonas que me enseñaron lo que verdaderamente es el amor y que es la resistencia contra la violencia y sistemas de poder. Llevó sus palabras dentro mi corazón y muchísimas gracias por compartir sus testimonios conmigo. Las quiero y aprecio demasiado!!! <3

Gracias a Dios y La Virgencita de Guadalupe who inspire me daily to keep on going. Especialmente gracias a Santo Toribio who fuels my passion for immigrant rights and propels me to stand in solidarity with my immigrant community. Los amo con todo mi corazón y gracias por sostenerme, protegerme, y abrazarme todos los días.

Gracias a mi dog puppy, who continually gave me joy and happiness through countless photos and facetimes shared through my family. Thank you for your beautiful smile, warmth, spirit, and for helping me persevere through the darkest of times while being away from home. Te quiero mi niño hermoso!

Last but certainly not least, I would like to thank myself, for not giving up on myself, for accompanying myself, for motivating me to continue going and reminding me to celebrate myself every damn day. For holding myself together, through the countless blood, sweat, tears, sadness and anxiety I faced. Thank you for reminding me that everything will be okay y que soy una Chingona y poderosa mujer!

ABSTRACT

The purposeful killing of women due to their gender (femicide) is an atrocious global act that has been ascending at an alarming rate, over the past couple of years. Specifically, last year in México and in the duration of six months, there were close to 3,000 victims of gender based killings in México, which is about 10 casualties daily (ONU Mujeres, 2022). While most studies have centered their attention on systemic causes that lead to gender based violence, the amount of research that closely analyzes the ways these causes are interwoven with womens' everyday lived experiences of social and personal notions of love is few. By utilizing Mujerista Theology this study aims to fill this gap by assessing how systemic causes of violence against women are interwoven with women's everyday lived experiences, specifically looking through the lens of marianismo (self-sacrificial love). The purpose is to understand whether marianismo leads to violence in the home for Mexican migrant, Catholic mothers, as it is the place where women are socialized to be proper caretakers. This study also seeks to comprehend the ways marianismo influences their notions of womanhood, familial and romantic relationships, self-esteem, and whether it changes before and after migrating to the United States.

CHAPTER I

Mi Testimonio

“Mija, cierra las piernas, las mujeres no nos podemos sentar con las piernas abiertas”

This is what my mother would continuously reiterate to me my whole life when I attended church and family gatherings. She would continuously tell me we should not provoke men and must always cover up. I later learned this belief was passed down from my abuelita (grandmother) to my mother, and all of the women in my family.

I absolutely love my faith, but there are certain aspects I do not agree with

I am the daughter of immigrants from Mexico, and come from a traditional, Catholic household. La religión fue inculcada desde que nací (religion was ingrained since I was born). I remember going to church every Sunday, praying the rosary every day, going to mass every Sunday, and having a deep devotion to all of the saints, primarily Saint Toribio Romo (Patron Saint of Migrants) and La Virgen De Guadalupe (Our Lady of Guadalupe). I am still devoted to them. My mother named me Guadalupe as my middle name and entrusted me to her, after suffering some complications during my birth. I have been deeply devoted to her my whole life, asking for her care and protection wherever I go. However, growing up, I was taught a stricter side of my faith. I was educated to be a good Catholic, well-behaved woman in the household and not speak out, stir the pot, or cause trouble if conflict arose. This meant saving myself until marriage, not openly talking about sexuality, covering myself from my neck to my toes, and abiding by intergenerational cultural, gender norms.

As a result, mi cultura y religión (culture and religion) played a fundamental role in how I perceived the world, heavily influencing me to not disappoint my family. Although I love my culture and my faith, they also prevented me from speaking out and believing I am not worthy.

In order to be accepted by my Catholic faith and Mexican cultura, I could not openly give my opinion or I faced rejection

As a young girl, I would hear the young girls in my family told, “calladita te ves mas bonita” (stay quiet, you look more pretty). I was instructed to allow the men in the family to make the decisions because they are the “protectors”. In my family, my father was the protector. However, his “protector” role turned mentally damaging. As the only girl in the family, he was very strict in determining what hour I needed to come home by, not allowing me to wear anything shorter than my knee, or have a partner until adulthood. He was extremely doubtful of men and proclaimed men “take advantage of women and treat them badly”. Yet, he never internally reflected how he exhibited the same behaviors. His need to protect me from harm, created fear within me, and instead pushed me away.

“Machismo es una cadena plantada de una generación a otra”

I recognize how hard of a worker my father is, working in construction for over 40 years, crossing the desert and tunnels at 17 years of age from Mexico, wanting to help his family overcome poverty back home. He never learned English in order to work over 40 hours a week, at times through the night, to put food on the table and give us everything he never had growing up. Coming home with blistered hands, bloody knees from bending over all day to put concrete on the floor. Since he immigrated at a young age, he had to always fend on his own. In his household, his father never demonstrated love, never gave him hugs, never said words of love or affirmation. Instead he shook my father’s hand, and that acknowledged he was doing a good job. As a result, my father was never taught what love was, only sacrifice, and inevitably passed it to my mother and my whole family.

I love my dad, but I do not always like him

For 30 years, my mother believed she could change my dad. When she married my dad, she noticed he would get angry easily and lose his temper. However, she told his family that she had the ability to change him. For 30 years, she took on the caretaker role believing that if she spoke to him nicely, had the food ready on the table by the time he got home, said the right thing, wore the right thing, his attitude would change. Due to my dad's temper and machismo, he also pushed both my younger and older brother away from him. Both of them inevitably became him, yet now want very little to do with him. They are both stoic, unable to show emotion and act out in anger as they do not know how to process their emotions, emulating my father. In our household, we have limited communication as my father never taught us how to demonstrate healthy communication or love. Instead we had to be subservient at all times to authority figures, which ultimately led to normalization of anger for men in my family.

Her hope in changing my dad was the fuel that keep her going for so many years

My mother self-sacrificed for my dad, and due to her deep devotion to her Catholic faith, did not believe in divorce. My mother's anxiety and continuous desire to keep the peace and not make him angry detrimentally and physiologically manifested itself into vitiligo, as well as creating a deep sadness in her eyes. This is one of the deepest pains a daughter can feel her mother endure. Seeing my mother not only feel insecure mentally but physically, me ha *rompido el alma* (has broken my soul).

My father's machista behavior and my mother a reinforcer of machismo (marianismo) at times, led to my quiet, and doubtful persona. I became conditioned to not speak out to keep the peace in my family.

However, growing up, my mother influenced me to be a self sacrificing woman in order to have men respect me. I saw my mother as the mediator and peacemaker person in my family, and I thought I had to do the same. Her inability to say “no,” in order to not disappoint others and to keep the peace, was passed down to me. I grew up with the wrong idea of love, and I inevitably sought the wrong kind of love from the world. I ended up looking for a father figure in a partner (as I never actually felt love from my father) and an older brother in a partner since my father also pushed my older brother away.

Throughout my entire life, I have had social anxiety and constantly worried about what people thought of me. Their thoughts, their looks, their perceptions of me. Si me miro bien, si responde bien, si saludo bien (if I look good, if I respond well, if I greet others well). I grew up and still struggle with una baja autoestima (low self-esteem), dudando de mi voz (doubting my voice) and fighting the negative voice inside of me, that says no puedes (you cannot achieve it).

However, now I am on a journey towards mental, emotional and spiritual healing. I do not blame anyone in my family for their actions. To the contrary, I understand this is all my parents and extended family knew, growing up, and were socialized to replicate this behavior to survive and keep the peace. However, they transferred these beliefs to the next generation.

I provide mi testimonio to understand other women's experiences of machismo and specifically marianismo. Further, I aim to unravel how Catholic faith and Mexican culture have impacted a mujer's sense of womanhood. I want to understand how women interpret love and specifically, self-sacrificial love, as well as how they resist after experiencing violence in their

home. I ultimately want women to live, and not only live to survive but know they are powerful
Chingonas!

Introduction

Statement of the Problem

A cada minuto, de cada semana
 Nos roban amigas, nos matan hermanas
 Destrozan sus cuerpos, los desaparecen
 No olviden sus nombres, por favor, señor presidente

Cantamos sin miedo, pedimos justicia
 Gritamos por cada desaparecida
 Que resuene fuerte: ¡Nos queremos vivas!
 ¡Que caiga con fuerza el feminicida!

[-Canción Sin Miedo](#), Vivir Quintana (2020)

In 2021, it was estimated 81,000 women and girls globally were killed intentionally and more than half of the feminicides were committed by an intimate partner or other family member (United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime [UNODC], 2022). This means that more than five women and girls were killed every hour by those closest to them (UNODC, 2022). In 2020, there were “4,091 cases of femicide found in 26 countries in Latin America and the Caribbean”(Comisión Económica para América Latina y el Caribe [CEPAL], 2021). Specifically in México, “From January to September of 2022, there were 2,847 victims of femicide which equals 10 killings of women on average a day” (ONU Mujeres, 2022). Ultimately one must ask: Why is there not enough attention being given to this atrocity? Why are the people who are supposed to care and love you the most taking your life away?

The situation has become gravely serious that even a new word, femicide, was introduced by Diana Russell in the 1970’s to describe the phenomenon. It expresses the “mysogynistic killing of women by men” and the “killing of females by males because they are female”

(Russell, 2008, as cited in Saccomano, 2015). However, Mexican feminist advocate, Marcela Lagarde, was the first to adapt the term to *feminicidio* to include the vital core components of “impunity, institutional violence, and lack of due diligence by Latin America toward women” (Lagarde, 2006, as cited in, Saccomano, 2015). For the purposes of this paper, the term femicide will be utilized throughout to center the focus on Latin American women’s violence and their suffering that has become normalized and upheld by corrupt, patriarchal institutional systems that go unpunished.

Further, the United Nations General Assembly describes (2012)

Impunity for violence against women compounds the effects of such violence as a mechanism of control. When the state fails to hold the perpetrators accountable, impunity not only intensifies the subordination and powerlessness of the targets of violence, but also sends a message to society that male violence against women is both acceptable and inevitable. As a result, patterns of violent behaviour are normalized (p.5).

This demonstrates the states’ pivotal role in socializing both men and women into accepting this atrocious behavior, inevitably leading to victim blaming and brainwashing women into normalizing violence.

Essentially, one must ask: where does this culminating violence stem from? ONU Mujeres (2021) calls for researchers in academia to “analyze phenomenons such as interpersonal, intimate partner, and intrafamilial violence... and how they can become risk factors for femicide” (p. 53). Additionally, researchers are called to interrogate unequal relationships between men and women including “gender roles, prejudices, and social expectations to understand the significance of what it means to be a woman or man in a patriarchal society” (p. 49). It is vital to look beyond the surface, at the intricate nuances that can be detrimentally

contributing to violence. Fundamentally, “There are many threads that occur in a woman’s life before culminating to a violent act. It is vital to understand where these threads stem from by looking at the quieter cultural influences” (C. Garcia Lopez, personal communication, January 30th, 2023). In order to understand the numerous events that happen in a woman’s lifetime before violence ensues, it is imperative to deeply analyze how these behaviors are replicated or manifested in a woman’s home, as it is known as the primary place for women to learn how to act as a proper caregiver or mother. Essentially, there is an engrained system that is created culturally and transmitted intergenerationally that oppresses women’s voices by reinforcing the creation of silenced spaces in the home. I approach this project as a Latina woman who has witnessed interpersonal violence in her Mexican, migrant home and never understood that it could become a risk factor for femicide; unless we take action now and assess the impact of machismo, gender roles, and social expectations on women, *la cadena de la violencia* (chain of violence) will inevitably continue to occur.

Background and Need

According to the United Nations General Assembly (2012)

Institutional violence against women and their families is present in all aspects of States’ responses to the killings of women. This can include: tolerance, the blaming of victims, lack of access to justice and effective remedies, negligence, threats, corruption and abuse by officials. Under this scenario, femicide/femicide is a State crime tolerated by public institutions and officials, due to the inability to prevent, protect and guarantee the lives of women, who have consequently experienced multiple forms of discrimination and violence throughout their lifetime (p.7).

As presented, systemic violence at the international level has become sanctioned and accepted by society due to governments' widespread intimidation tactics, marginalizing those most vulnerable. The structures of the Mexican government punish all women's behavior, intentionally preventing them from speaking up. It has further diminished women's voices through gaslighting, returning the fault to them, making them guilty of the crime, ultimately ingraining a culture of silence.

This blaming of victims, corruption, and abuse by authorities is highlighted in the Chilean feminist song and performance, "Un Violador En Tu Camino", a cultural manifestation which calls out a patriarchal and oppressive Chilean government, which continually abuses women:

El patriarcado es un juez
que nos juzga por nacer
y nuestro castigo es la violencia que no ves

Es feminicidio
Impunidad para el asesino
Es la desaparición
Es la violación

Y la culpa no era mía,
ni dónde estaba ,
ni cómo vestía
El violador eras tú
El violador eres tú

Son los pacos (policías)
Los jueces
El estado
El presidente

El estado opresor
es un macho violador
El estado opresor
es un macho violador

El violador eras tú
El violador eres tú

-Las Tesis, [Un Violador En Tu Camino](#),
(2019)

In the song, the artists denounce the oppressive Chilean government through both lyric and movement, describing the continuous violence women face by the Chilean dictatorship and the state's perpetual violence against its citizens (Pais, 2019, para. 24). The artists describe that when women denounce assault to the authorities, they are asked "how were [you] dressed" trying to blame the victim (para. 34). Further, the song's assertion, "And it wasn't my fault", is meant to "free yourself from that which contains you morally and blames you for why a man, for example, in your family or a friend abused you" (para. 39). This song accurately presents the systemic violence against women vastly prevalent in Latin America and perpetual impunity granted to those meant to "protect", leaving audiences pensive when they question, "So who protects you in the end?" (para. 35).

ONU Mujeres (2021) add the causes that sustain and produce femicide include "the patriarchal, hierarchical, social organization of supremacy and inferiority that creates gender inequality between women and men" (p.13). This system is demonstrated in the song above where the patriarchy governs women's every move and is literally their shadow, following to "protect them" yet meticulously planning their attack.

While most research has focused on institutional causes that lead to gender based violence, the number of studies that analyze the ways these causes are interconnected with women's everyday lived experiences is limited. This study aims to close this gap by focusing on women's experiences, specifically looking at social and intimate notions of love. It is imperative to question how institutional violence grows from social gendered expectations of love and presents itself in a woman's home, as it is the primary place women are instructed to be "good women".

Mexican anthropologist and feminist activist Marcela Largarde (2001) describes the traditional philosophy of love, stating, “The patriarchal culture has lavished itself on creating a loving morality for women” which “assigns women love as their existential identity. It makes women the specialists of love, it educates them to specialize in loving and living in pursuit of love” (p.19). Women are conditioned to care for others and have no other option. This can cause them to believe that to love is to serve, neglecting their own needs to survive in a society dictated by men; collectively, these beliefs are known as *marianismo* (Gil & Inoa Vasquez, 1996). This conditioning demonstrates the fundamental role culture has in either creating a healthy form of love or a harmful mentality. It educates women that to love is to cater to men, neglecting their own personhood.

Moreover, ONU Mujeres (2021) describes the casualties that can occur if one adopts this mindset: “The belief that love can conquer all would lead them [women] to wrongly consider that it is possible to overcome any difficulty in the relationship and/or change their partner (even if he/she is an unrelenting abuser), which would lead them to remain in the violent relationship” (p.52). This mentality can potentially keep women in a never ending cycle of violence, excusing the abuser’s behaviors and seeing them as normal. Essentially, there is a need to further understand how women are socialized to love, in order to comprehend how they can equate love with violence.

Further, in a study conducted by Martín-Salvador et al. (2021) where they analyzed the misconceptions of love in relationships for Spanish youth, 16-19 years of age, they found violence was embedded from a young age and religion upheld and supported women’s submission towards men (para. 24). They concluded these notions may cause adolescent women to equate love with adhering to all of their partners’ commands (para. 6). Similarly, the presence

of romantic myths in a relationship “may easily lead to episodes of gender violence which, however may be understood as acts of love” (para. 6). Although this proves the presence of religious beliefs and attitudes can lead to violence in a relationship, the study’s demographic only focused on young participants from Spain. While Spain, like Mexico, has a Catholic background, there is need to conduct such research in Mexico, in order to understand whether responses would be similar, and if so, to what extent that might correlate to the country's high rate of feminicidio. The present study will focus on Mexican migrant mothers with a Catholic background to understand how myths of love connect to notions of patriarchy and how this can lead to violence.

Similarly, in a study that explored the impact of “education and religiosity on sexist attitudes towards women and rape myth acceptance,” focused on Italy and the United States, Pina & Schatz-Stevens (2021) describe that “active adherence to religion in a Catholic country such as Italy includes a certain extent of scriptural literalism, which has been found to be linked to sexism (para 40). Specifically, in the United States, both religion and education affect rape myth acceptance (RMA), while religion was the main contributor to sexism (para. 40). One must ultimately question, to what extent is religion an indicator of violence against women? Similarly, although researchers found a correlation between religious attitudes and violence against women, their population of study was 90% white in Italy and 80% white in the United States. Additionally, even though over 50% of participants identified as Christian in both Italy and the United States, researchers did not specify if they belonged to a specific religious denomination, such as Catholicism. Again, there is a need to analyze participants from Latin America, particularly Mexico and migrants to understand if their experiences differentiate from those on the other side of the globe who have not migrated.

As presented, there is limited empirical research on the correlation between love and violence for this specific demographic: Mexican migrant, Catholic women, specifically mothers. There is a need to conduct further research on this specific demographic's interpretation of love as it "would contribute to identify...the causes that lead to women to either break or not break the cycle of violence; the reasons why they remain in a violent relationship; the strength they require to confront and put an end to it" (ONU Mujeres, 2021, p.52). There is a need to focus on mothers' voices and lived experiences, which have not been widely discussed in previous studies to understand whether beliefs of love and sacrifice (marianismo) may be propagating violence in the home today. The aim of this study is to attack structural violence at the core with hope of preventing femicide or the "end of a continuum of violence against women" from occurring (UNHCR, 2012a, as cited in Saccomano, 2015).

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this qualitative, testimonio study is to understand how Mexican migrant, Catholic mothers interpret love and sacrifice (marianismo) pre- and post-migration, particularly as rooted in religion and culture in México, and how this shapes their home life in the United States. The study aims to understand how these ideas influence: 1. their self perceptions of womanhood, 2. their understanding and experience of familial and romantic relationships, and 3. their expression and view of self-esteem/love. Further, this study considers whether the learned ideals of marianismo lead to violence in the home presently and may be transmitted from one generation to the next. The study also intends to explore mothers' interpretation of self-sacrificial love to comprehend if their perceptions on these three ideas evolve after having children and to discover the best ways to ethically and humanely work with and for Latina women to provide greater psycho-social and culturally responsive resources, as well as humane support.

Research Questions

This study aims to answer the following questions:

1. How do Mexican, migrant mothers interpret self-sacrificial love and is it aligned with their Catholic faith?
2. How do women express their relationship to ideals of what it means to be a good woman in relation to their Catholic faith, their upbringing within Mexican families, and romantic relationships? Did it change after having children?
3. To what extent do the Mexican Catholic ideals of womanhood relate to the experiences of domestic violence/abuse/oppression in women's lives?
4. What are the ways Mexican migrant, Catholic mothers resist authority? Have they used silence as resistance?

Theoretical Framework

Mujerista Theology is based on freedom for Latina women against systemic control and views Hispanic women as “agents of their own history” (Isasi-Díaz, 1996, p.107). It arose as Hispanic women tried to involve themselves in the feminist “Anglo-European movement in the United States” but did not feel accepted as Latina, women of color (Isasi-Díaz, 1996, p.60). In response, Mujerista Theology creates a space for Latina women to build something on their “own terms not in the shadow cast by the Anglo” (p.59). It is not exclusively for Latina women but a “theology *from* the perspective of Latinas” (p.2). It is a liberative praxis, which focuses on reflection and action, working towards Hispanic women's freedom, as well as acknowledging the presence of Christ all around as you work towards carrying out the biblical message of “justice and peace” (p.33). It specifically brings Latina women's voices to the forefront, who have been frequently marginalized, by focusing on their daily lived experiences or *lo cotidiano* (Isasi-Díaz, 1996; Isasi-Díaz, 2002). *Lo cotidiano* works towards “changing the social order by taking into consideration the way Latinas see and understand reality”, validating their experiences. Finally, Mujerista Theology focuses on interrogating “truth” imposed by those deemed to have authority to enforce their beliefs as “normative” (Isasi-Díaz, 2002, p.70).

The purpose of this research study is to bring attention to Latina religious voices to highlight their daily, lived experiences (*lo cotidiano*) which have not been frequently captured in previous empirical studies. It aims to create solidarity amongst Mexican migrant, Catholic women and mothers in order to work towards collective healing, self-love, and celebration of their identities.

Limitations of the Study

This study has various limitations including the sample size, demographics, religious background, age range, and time constraints. The sample size was 5 participants which can lower the ability of applying the findings to a larger sample. However, the purposeful focus on a small number of participants enables the study to capture the richness and detail of their words. Additionally, participants identified as Mexican migrant, Catholic mothers which reflects the target focus of this project; however, for researchers interested in other demographics, this may be a limiting factor. Similarly, participants selected were between 25-65 years of age. The study did not focus on participants younger than 25 or older than 65. As a result, participants' responses may differ from those younger or older than them. Additionally, the recruitment method was conducted via snowball sampling which limited the diversity of experiences from other women who were a part of other communities the researcher did not know. Additionally, time constraints limited the ability to capture more women's experiences who have been affected by these issues. The researcher also intended to interview two additional participants, but was unable to do so due to time constraints. Similarly, due to the researcher's pre-existing relationship with two of the participants, those participants felt hesitant to answer questions fully or repeated "is that enough" or "is that what you were looking for?", potentially limiting the findings. There

is an immense need to conduct further research that will capture more diverse migrant womens' voices who are impacted daily by gender based violence and marianismo.

Researcher Positionality

I acknowledge my privilege, being born in this country and personally not having one hundred percent direct contact with marianismo, as my relatives, friends, and community members who have endured it in México and continue to endure it in the United States. Although I identify as a Catholic woman, *hija de immigrants* (daughter of immigrants), I am not a mother or a migrant from Mexico. I also recognize I have a college education and may see the world differently than my community members that have been affected. Similarly, I affirm that I am in my mid twenties and interviewed participants that were older than 40 years of age and have my own personal beliefs and experiences that may differ from my participants. I, in no way, shape, or form, intend to speak for women affected by machismo and marianismo. However, I did my best to bring these womens' stories of *sacrificio* (sacrifice) and *amor* (love) to the forefront and the violence that surfaced as a result of their socialization process and intergenerational trauma that was passed on.

As Abrego (2021) describes, we must “aim to be in accompaniment” and remember “intellectualizing is not the end goal” (p.3). Abrego taught me the importance of engaging in critical self-awareness “center[ing] the well-being of participants” first (González-López, 2011, as cited in, Abrego, 2021). During the interview process, I strove to be in solidarity with each mother, listening wholeheartedly to each word they said, walking with them in their journeys to understand their source of pain and resiliency. I aimed to continually care for the whole person, making sure they felt human, not othered. I did my best to provide a safe space for them to feel comfortable to share their authentic stories and truth, ultimately striving to create ethical,

humane, collaborative, and holistic research with my participants. This was my primary objective in this research and an endeavor I intended to uphold.

Significance

By conducting this study, I aimed to fill a gap in the present literature related to Catholic Mexican, migrant mothers' interpretations of marianismo before and after migrating to the United States. This study is relevant to researchers interested in understanding cultural contexts and backgrounds of migrant women who experience violence both in the United States and in their home countries to comprehend the complexity of domestic violence and how cultural ideologies create violence in the home. Additionally, it is of interest to community, non-profit organizations who support survivors of domestic violence to understand the harmful effects culture and faith also have in migrant women's daily lives and how it can lead to violence in the home. Further, this research may help foster greater awareness, communication, prevention, and solution based responses in society, but most importantly amongst family members in the home.

Definition of Terms

- **Machismo**: A “socially learned and reinforced set of behaviors in Latino society which men are expected to follow...about masculinity or what it is to be a man.” This set of behaviors “includes attitudinal beliefs that consider it appropriate for women to remain in traditional roles, and thus encourages male dominance over women” (Gil & Inoa Vasquez, 1996; Nuñez et al., 2016).
- **Marianismo**: This collection of beliefs “defines the ideal role of a woman” and “tak[es] as its model of perfection the Virgin Mary herself” thereby “portray[ing] the woman as semi-divine, morally superior, and spiritually stronger than her master [husband] because

of her ability to endure pain and sorrow” (Gil & Inoa Vasquez, 1996; Pineda-Madrid, 2011).

- Socialization: A process which begins at birth and continues throughout an entire life where social interaction leads people to internalize morals, principles, and behaviors dominant in the society they are born in (Ferrer Perez & Bosch Fiol, 2013).
- Femicide: “Misogynistic killing of women by men” and the “killing of females by males because they are female” (Russell, 2008). This concept also refers to the “impunity, institutional violence, and lack of due diligence by Latin America toward women” (Lagarde, 2006).

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Overview

The intentional killing of women and girls due to their gender is increasing at an exceedingly alarming rate, especially across Latin America. In 2020, there were over four thousand gender based killings of women in over half of Latin American countries, including the Caribbean (CEPAL, 2021). Specifically, a year ago and in the span of nine months, there were almost three thousand deaths of femicide, equating to 10 casualties of women daily (ONU Mujeres, 2022). This inhumanity calls us to immediately stop and question, where is this increasing atrociousness originating from?

In order to unravel the source of violence against women, we must dig deeper; pull out the roots to understand what is festering underneath. Although most studies have assessed institutional causes that lead to gender based violence, they have captured younger women's experiences who are non-migrants and non-mothers. There is a gap in studies for Mexican migrant, Catholic mothers who are older and may have distinct views. This study aims to understand the ways systemic causes are interconnected with women's everyday lived experiences, analyzing their beliefs on love and sacrifice (marianismo) to comprehend whether they are leading to violence in the home. This is particularly important, as the home is where women learn to take care of others and where violence is institutionalized. Additionally, the objective is to understand how marianismo impacts their sense of womanhood, familial and romantic relationships, and self-esteem.

The claim of fact for this literature review is that there is a need to study Catholic Mexican, migrant mothers' interpretations of marianismo pre- and post-migration to understand

if marianismo may be creating or leading to violence in their home today. In relation to this claim, I will discuss (a) Mujerista Theology which provides a rationale for centering migrant womens' voices (b) the history of machismo and marianismo, in order to comprehend the prevalence of the ideology currently (c) culture and faith as socializers of marianismo (d) the influence of marianismo on migrant women and (e) migrant mothers' acts of resistance.

Theoretical Framework

This framework was selected for my study to center and bring Latina religious voices and lived experiences to the forefront; aiming to create solidarity amongst Mexican Migrant, Catholic mothers. While I have previously introduced my theoretical framework, here I present a more in-depth overview of its major works and themes.

Mujerista Theology

Mujerista Theology works towards eliminating "injustice to create spaces for justice to flourish for the kingdom of God to become reality" (p.107). It emerged during the end of the 1970's when a former nun who strove to "overcome poverty as a missionary in Peru" met Yolanda Tarango "a Chicana nun...at a Catholic Bishops Conference in 1976" (Hernandez-Díaz, 2011, p. 46). Two years later, they created the following tenants for Mujerista Theology:

1. Working for women's justice in the church constitutes an effective way of working for justice for the poor (since most Hispanas are poor); and 2. There is a great need to listen to the voices of grassroots Hispanas/Latinas and bring their voices to justice-seeking organizations and spaces (Hernandez-Díaz, 2011, p.46).

Both Isasi-Diaz and Tarango advocated for women's voices to be at the center and no longer in the shadows; establishing the heart of Mujerista Theology (Isasi-Díaz, 1996. p.2). Similarly, instead of only focusing on institutional religion, which frequently omits Hispanic women's

voices, this framework focuses on “theology in the making” or the “actual embodiment of the Christian understandings...in the religious practices of Latinas” (Pui-lan, 2011, p. 37).

By grounding religious experiences in Latinas’ everyday lives, it presents the cornerstone of Mujerista Theology: *lo cotidiano*. *Lo cotidiano* focuses on Latina and grassroots womens’ lived experiences; striving for new stories to be developed that are created by those most marginalized “who take care of reality” (Isasi-Díaz, 2002, pp.6-11). This framework was selected for this study because there is a need for “women’s voices to be heard and recognized as important” and their lived experiences “valued” (Isasi-Díaz, 2002; Isherwood, 2011). Policymakers who work towards combating gender based violence, must center migrant mothers’ voices and their daily struggles, whose stories have not been frequently captured in decision making processes. It is imperative we listen to their testimonios closely and attentively, as these women are key to dismantling marianismo. They are the ones who directly experienced and currently experience multiple forms of violence influenced by culture and faith, and have learned to survive nonetheless.

Additionally, by engaging in a self-reflective process and sharing their realities, it leads to conscientization, where they comprehend the world they live in and the future they strive for. Ultimately, Mujerista Theology focuses upon “undermining the present oppressive world while building the liberative future [they] desire” (Isasi-Díaz, 2004; Segovia, 2011). This study engages in conscientization by not only creating an open space for women to share their stories and engage in self-examination, but also provides a space for both the researcher and readers to grow in their reflexivity, understanding, and awareness of the topic. Women’s lived experiences not only educate others on how culture and faith may be propagators of violence in the home, but it is also through their stories that “we learn to know ourselves as well as our lives” (Isasi-Díaz,

2002, p.11). It is through recounting their personal narratives that we as Latina mujeres y Mexicanas (Latina Mexican women) begin to comprehend, process, and dismantle the cultural and religious nuances that we have seen and experienced but were unable to openly express or process fully due to our strict upbringing and socialized taboos.

Finally, for myself as a researcher, Mujerista Theology aligns with my objectives for this project because I view Mexican migrant, Catholic mothers as mujeres poderosas (powerful women) who have endured great pain due to the ingrained patriarchal system they were born into, yet acquired immense resiliency y fuerza (strength). It is time we stop and listen to them, before we continue bleeding more violence onto future generations.

History of Machismo and Marianismo

In order to comprehend the corrosive toll machismo and marianismo have taken on Latin American women and men, their origin stories must be presented. The roots of machismo and marianismo stem from the impact of colonization on Latin American men (Mirandé, 1997), and the resulting effects on Latin American women (Inoa Vazquez, 1996; Pineda-Madrid, 2011). It is crucial to understand the causes of machismo and marianismo when examining their pervasiveness today, because it puts into context the relationship between the two cultural trends.

Machismo

“Men are not born macho, they are made macho.” Ana Castillo (1994)

Mirandé (1997) describes the traumatic effect of colonization in Latin America. He states the sect of machismo arose as Mexican men struggled to guard their women from colonization’s “plunder, pillage, and rape” (p.36). As a result, indigenous men created hyper-masculine and damaging reactions as coping mechanisms for feelings of fragility and inferiority (p.36).

Ultimately, machismo was seen as a survival mechanism for indigenous men to regain a sense of control after everything was taken away.

Similarly, Quiñones Mayo and Resnick (1996) describe how the patriarchal system was reinforced when Latin America declared independence from Spain in the nineteenth century (p. 259). As men became involved in military service during the struggle for freedom, it led to the creation of the caudillo, or military chieftain, who controlled others through coercion, and was thus considered “macho” or the “essence of masculinity” in Latin America; such men applied discreet but apparent domination over men and more over women (Wolf & Hansen, 1972).

Ultimately, these historical developments created the patriarchal archetype for all men to follow in Latin America if they wanted to be accepted by society.

Further, the caudillo was considered the “head of the national household” and supported by the government and church doctrine (Wells, 1968). The caudillo not only reinforced gender norms but was sustained by religious institutions, thus, further sanctioning and normalizing hypermasculinity throughout homes in Latin America. All in all, this demonstrates that when men are placed in survival mode and their manhood is taken or threatened, their coping mechanism is a heightened masculinity or machismo. After analyzing the history of machismo in Latin America and the institutions that sustained it, it is vital to comprehend the grave impact it had on its women.

Marianismo

Gil and Inoa Vazquez (1996) describe marianismo as the other half of machismo. They state machismo describes a man’s role and marianismo presents the “ideal role of a woman” (p.7). Marianismo specifically looks at the Virgin Mary, in Catholicism, as the ideal model to follow and encourages women to focus on “sacred duty, self-sacrifice, and chastity” (p.7).

Similarly, the marianista woman is described as “Semi-divine, morally superior, and spiritually stronger than her master because of [their] ability to endure pain and sorrow (Pineda-Madrid, 2011; Stevens & Soler, 1974). Marianista culture ultimately indoctrinated women that self-sacrifice is an embedded part of their being.

Similarly, marianismo is reinforced and transmitted to further generations by the women it directly affects and harms. For instance, it promotes “female subjugation” and is “... handed down as written in stone by our mothers, grandmothers, and aunts” (p. 8). Castañeda-Liles (2018) adds that the mother or grandmother is usually the one who teaches the children about Catholic teachings. She is the one who teaches young ones that Our Lady of Guadalupe gives solace through difficult times (pp.56-63). This demonstrates that notions of self-sacrifice and religious archetypes are embedded at a young age and normalized for women to adhere to and not question. However, what are the consequences that can inevitably develop as a result of this detrimental belief?

Likewise, Pineda-Madrid (2011) builds upon this concept by presenting the dangers of marianismo and the loss of self. She describes women as motivated to give of themselves to the point where their identity is marked by the “service others expect them to perform” (p.89). She adds this establishes itself as a form of “surrogacy” where the demands of humanity, husband, family and not women’s personal goals and aspirations “defines the human ideal” (p.89). Due to this belief, the woman believes she must cater to these social expectations if she wants to be accepted. This can all detrimentally lower her self-esteem, feelings of self-love, and change the respect she thinks she deserves.

Gil and Inoa Vazquez (1996) elaborate that “accepting one’s place in life con resignación [with resignation] y pasividad [and passivity] is the ultimate virtue of la mujer perfecta [perfect

woman]” (p.50). Women’s self-worth is intertwined with approval, as they come to believe subservience is a requirement in life (p.82). This mentality can lead to damaging effects. Gil and Inoa Vazquez (1996) add that Latinas who think they are not worthy of respect and gratitude are often drawn to violent or unsettling partners and “end up feeling worse about themselves” (p.129). These patterns further compound psychological and emotional trauma.

As presented, there is a need to further examine where Latinas’ notions of self-sacrifice (marianismo) arise from, in order to understand whether their cultural and religious upbringing may be unconsciously propagating and intergenerationally transmitting these ideologies onto others in their home and community.

Culture and Faith as Socializers of Marianismo

In order to address how love and sacrifice (marianismo) are influencers of violence against women, it is imperative to comprehend the immense role culture and religion hold in perpetuating abuse in Latin America.

Latin American Culture

Cabrera (2014) first describes the origins of socialization for Brazilian culture and the stronghold it has in shaping people’s behavior. They elaborate on how socialization begins at birth and lasts a lifetime, where interacting with others influences people to adopt society’s ethics, ideals, and conducts that are prevalent in the community they grew up in (p.106).

Through social interaction, individuals learn to adapt to communal norms to avoid being othered and ostracized. Additionally, not only is socialization taught through friendships, it is also reinforced through social institutions including schools and churches (p.106). These sectors further condition individuals to potentially accept a false but indoctrinated belief because it is widely shared. Yet, once socialization becomes internalized and normalized, it can lead to a

denial of violence for both genders and specifically affect women mentally, emotionally, and physically (p.106). Ultimately, it is vital to understand the detrimental impact socialization has on women internally and how it creates self-sacrificial beliefs for Latin American women.

Further, research demonstrates how socialization of love and sacrifice normalizes women's acceptance of violence. Through socialization, women end up making the desires of others their own and believe in the false presumption that love and violence are synonymous and certain behaviors are proof of love (Ferrer Pérez & Bosch Fiol, 2013, pp.111-114). This false belief that love can conquer all delays the decision to leave the relationship or ask for help (Ferrer Pérez & Bosch Fiol, 2013, p.114). Socialization essentially normalizes abusive behavior for women and conditions them to believe that to love is to accept violence. This can lead women to "fall into a cycle of violence in which the aggressor has the power to degrade and manipulate the woman's actions" (Cabrera, 2014, p.10). Ultimately, this socialization has the effect of taking away the woman's voice and making her subject to gaslighting.

Similarly, anthropologist and Mexican activist, Lagarde (2001), proclaims "Society and culture transform women to exist to love others. Women have been forbidden self-love. It is the greatest perversion of patriarchal culture" (p. 30). This further creates a connection between learned patterns of love and the self-sacrificial marianista woman. Essentially, culture can deny women's autonomy and make them believe their mission in life is to serve others. This ideology reinforces the cycle of violence and "interrupts the breakage" of that cycle, which will cease to end because "Culture is humanity's way of surviving" (Cabrera, 2014; Gil & Inoa Vazquez, 1996). Intrinsicly, customs and traditions uphold and normalize patriarchal ideologies, erasing women's identity and denying them the opportunity to fall in love with themselves first.

Cabrera (2014) calls for “healing and empowerment for women who have and are experiencing violence” and greater “dialogue created around macho culture, attacked at its root” (p.30). Although the author explains the impact of culture as a socializing factor for violence against women, they only capture the Brazilian community’s perspective. They do not critically analyze the experiences of women who may have children or are from another part of Latin America, such as Mexico, which is rooted in machismo and marianismo. There is a need to highlight Mexican mothers’ testimonies to further understand the nuances of how Mexican culture can create violence in the home for migrant women, as they may have different socializers contributing to violence in the home, due to Mexico’s cultural traditions.

Catholic Religion

Cabrera (2014) describes the role of the Catholic church in placing women in subservient positions and keeping them silent. The author explains the church supports gender roles for women in the home and idealizes the perfect family. Due to its teachings, this leads to a normalization of abuse in the home by women who believe they have to agree to this behavior to be accepted by priests and the community (pp.18-19). This exemplifies how women carry both societal and religious expectations on their back in order to be considered “good women”. Further research must be conducted to understand the extent of violence in the home and the Catholic faith. While marianismo has been historically tied to and influenced by the Catholic faith, the present study aims to understand whether Mexican migrant mothers experiencing marianismo contemporarily correlate that to pressures from the church specifically or whether it is tied to a broader pressure from Mexican culture. Ultimately, the study is interested in how marianismo manifests itself in the homes of Mexican migrant, Catholic mothers.

Furthermore, Catholic religion drastically shapes how love and sacrifice are interpreted for Latina women, leading to normalization of harmful ideologies. Isasi-Díaz (1996) describes how Christianity has largely supported a type of “masochism” that has reinforced and influenced discussion around suffering and its place in Latinas’ lives (p.132). Pineda-Madrid (2011) builds upon this concept by presenting the Ideology of Sacrifice and Idealization of Suffering. She states “If a Latina bears her suffering in silence, then she somehow becomes morally and spiritually superior. It is as if this is her calling by virtue of her sex and God’s design” (p.58). She describes how some Latina women, due to marianista beliefs, feel called by God to be submissive and believe this increases their devotion to their faith. The author adds “Accepting one’s cross like Jesus...accentuates the victimization of women and encourages them in domestic and familial martyrdom”(p.88). This leads to a “‘*Que ajuante*’ or “What endurance” belief which is seen as a “sense of admiration” for “they have borne their cross well and long” (p.88). Latina women who interpret the Bible literally, misinterpret God’s true message. They proudly equate salvation with enduring all suffering that comes their way, especially in the home, believing that is what they are religiously called to do.

However, this mentality leads to perilous consequences. Pineda-Madrid (2011) adds, “with victimization and passivity comes a loss of self, which does not lead to an experience of God” (Pineda-Madrid, 2011, p.88). This mindset ultimately distances women from the Catholic faith, where they lose not only God but themselves: “As a person grows and develops a healthy sense of self, a person concurrently develops in their experience of God. Conversely, a loss of self-identity means a loss in the experience of God” (Rahner, 1975, as cited in Pineda-Madrid, 2011). As women accept these self-sacrificing beliefs, they negate the essence of who they are,

believing it will bring them closer to the divine, yet may actually push them away from the creator.

All in all, gender roles transmitted from the Catholic church have led women to develop and accept detrimental ideologies. They have created internal violence within women, robbing them of their agency and voice. They have demonstrated that “For men, heroism for one’s country is a must, while for women it is heroism for the home” (Gebara, 2002, as cited in Pineda-Madrid, 2011). Ultimately, there is an imminent need to explore if and how notions of love and sacrifice are inexplicably tied to the Catholic faith and whether they are leading to violence in a Mexican migrant, Catholic mothers’ homes today.

Impact of Marianismo on Migrant Women

Latina immigrant woman with your own invisible borders,
 You crossed the desert with thorns that scarred you
 You had to walk so far, facing life’s dangers to persevere
 You, the example of a courageous migrant woman

Latina immigrant woman, with defiance, you crossed over
 With your inspiring smile you continue in the constant struggle
 Example of a woman, you got up and kept going
 Warrior of life, now you fight for other immigrants

Latina immigrant who lives in a suffocating cage
 With your strong voice you sing to free yourself
 Because you are brave, because you are strong, because you are
 Light
 Because you, Luz.

Luz
 By Neira Ortega (Mujeres Mágicas, 2019)

Migrant Women

Moreover, it is vital to present the impact of marianismo on migrant women, as they may have different experiences of love, sacrifice, and violence after crossing borders and moving to a

completely new and unfamiliar place. First, it is vital to present the impact of migration on Hispanic men and the resulting effect on their wives.

Gil and Inoa Vazquez (1996) describe “Economic constraints, role expectations, and a desire to maintain the traditional values of marianismo and machismo augment the level of stress in families, and contribute to potential violence” (p. 158). They specifically describe that when Hispanic men migrate to the United States, they portray immense “sexual power” to hide feelings of doubt and low self-worth (p.143). Additionally, if men feel they cannot control their lives after migrating, they resort to controlling “women’s sexuality and behavior” which transforms into a “symbolic demonstration of orderliness and continuity and gives the feeling not all traditions are lost” (Espin, 1999, p.129). Similarly, Castillo (1994) describes that when men feel they have not succeeded in U.S. mainstream culture, they react violently and justify violence towards their wives by proclaiming their wives’ infidelity (p.59). Instead of men healthily dealing with insecure emotions, they create false assumptions to hide all feelings of vulnerability and weakness, turning to machismo as a coping mechanism. They utilize it as a facade to convince themselves that everything is going to be fine and self-regulate during fight or flight. Ultimately, this reinforces the machista ideology and continues the cycle of violence.

Men’s need to control also translates to greater violence and dominance against migrant women seeking job opportunities. For instance, Espin (1999) describes that when women find jobs in the United States, husbands “resent their wives seeking new independence that challenges their patriarchal authority” (p.24). Instead of being supportive of their partners, their egotistical nature prevails. Similarly, if they feel their patriarchal authority is lessened as the provider and breadwinner of the home, they can become greatly controlling (p.121). This causes husbands to transfer their anger to their wives and children by hitting or committing sexual

assault (p.121). This demonstrates that when women defy gender roles after migration, they are met with greater violence in the home, which was thought to be a safe place. This adds to the need to analyze marianista ideologies of migrant women who also identify as Mexican and Catholic to understand if these intersections lead to greater violence in their home.

Migrant Mothers' Acts of Resistance

Lastly, it is imperative to comprehend the impact of marianismo on migrant mothers as they may hold different perceptions and have different lived experiences from women who have not had children. It is vital to bring migrant mothers' voices to the forefront by presenting the ways they have talked back to the patriarchy and resisted. The following section will include both testimonios and a cultural manifestation of marianismo, specifically a film, to illustrate the detrimental impact self-sacrificial love had on Mexican migrant mothers' self esteem, but also how they resisted and became empowered women.

First, the film *Santitos* by Springall (1999) presents a cultural manifestation and symbolic representation of how a Mexican migrant, Catholic mother resisted marianista culture and became an empowered woman to find her missing daughter. At the start of the film, Esperanza is a devoted Catholic, who prays to all of the saints and abides by all church doctrine. She lives a quiet life and does not call attention to herself. She receives news that her daughter, Blanca, unexpectedly passed away, and is unable to say goodbye one last time. When she believes all hope is lost, St. Jude miraculously appears and informs Esperanza that Blanca is alive and to look for her in the United states.

When Esperanza travels to the United States, she is convinced Blanca is trapped at a brothel and believes the only way to save her is to work there herself. Ultimately, she defies notions of being a good Catholic woman, yet she grows in her sense of agency and courage. She

endures immense emotional abuse, in different brothels, trying to find Blanca. However, towards the end of the film, when the brothel owner refuses to stop being abusive, she finally stands up for herself by proclaiming “aquí tampoco hay niñas (there are no little girls here)” and immediately leaves. Although Esperanza did not find Blanca at the brothels, she recognizes she is no longer a little girl but now an empowered woman, who has a voice, no longer fearful but determined to not allow anyone to mistreat her. In the end, even though Esperanza continues to receive messages from St. Jude, she reinterprets their meaning and realizes that Blanca is not alive but is spiritually within her. Esperanza discovers the value of embodied religion which can be subject to interpretation and does not need to only be practiced institutionally to have meaning and strength. Through her migration journey, her faith and love for Blanca gives her the courage to see events in a different perspective, pushing her to become a liberated woman and transforming the way she practices and relates to her Catholic faith. Ultimately, her journey empowers her to find her voice.

Further considering the impact of sacrificial gender norms for immigrant Latina mothers, Coll (2010) elaborates on the ways they have resisted and found their voice at the non-profit organization, *Mujeres Unidas y Activas*. She describes their narratives’ focus on how they “came to believe in the potential for community change, valuing their own interests and those of their children over connections to men and other family members, gaining trust in others” (p.101). She centers the concept of *autoestima* (self-esteem) which “women developed to encompass personal transformational processes, collective identities as immigrant Latinas, and community social and political concerns such as domestic violence and immigrant rights” (p.101).

The author specifically describes the story of Tomasa, a migrant from Chapala, Jalisco, mother of six who migrated to California when she was a teenager. Tomasa’s husband was an

alcoholic who abused her “emotionally and physically” proclaiming, “It’s just that you are so ugly. Who would love you?” and even “threatened to kill her with a baseball bat” (p. 107).

Tomasa did not understand why he demonstrated this behavior when she was taught from a young age that “it would be enough to care for her children, husband, and home” (p.108). Yet, “no matter how clean her home, how well-groomed her children, and how good her meals were, she was unable to win her husband’s affection and regard” (p.108). However, through MUA’s educational and leadership training on building *autoestima*, Tomasa learned to assert herself as “an immigrant, a mother, and a woman”. Tomasa realized: “one has to value oneself before helping another person...I knew that I was a woman and that I was worth a lot” (pg.111). Through self-reflection and by attending MUA’s support groups, Tomasa reclaimed her voice and agency after experiencing immense violence in her home.

This testimony adds to previous literature which demonstrates the relationship between socialized childhood self-sacrificial notions of being the “perfect woman and mother” and its correlation to violence later exhibited in the home. Although Latin American culture has been widely studied, further research must be conducted on Mexican migrant mothers and their connections to Catholicism to understand if faith simultaneously leads to violence in the home today. It is imperative to look at the intersection of these concepts to understand whether one influences the other and the ways migrant mothers interpret them before and after migrating, as well as, how they resist authority.

Summary

This literature review presents a need to analyze what love and sacrifice (*marianismo*) means for Mexican migrant, Catholic mothers to understand if it leads to violence in the home. Supporting this claim, I have focused on (a) *Mujerista* Theology which presents the importance

of focusing on migrant women's testimonios (b) the history of machismo and marianismo to understand its normalization today (c) how culture and faith are indicators of marianismo (d) the influence of marianismo on migrant women and (e) migrant mothers' acts of resistance. While previous literature has critically analyzed systemic causes of femicide, the number of studies that closely assess how these causes intersect with women's everyday lived experiences and their socialization regarding love is limited. This study aims to fill this gap by assessing how institutional violence grows from social gendered expectations of love and sacrifice (marianismo) for Mexican migrant, Catholic mothers. Specifically, I focus on how it grows in their home, as this is the primary place where they are instructed to "live for others".

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

Research Methodology

In order to highlight stories that have not been widely told in previous research, this study centers the testimonios of Mexican migrant, Catholic mothers' perceptions on marianismo pre- and post-migration, and whether they evolve after having children. Delgado et. al (2012) states testimonios uncover violence, interject quietness, and create community and cohesiveness "among women of color". They allow women to come together by sharing similar life stories of "marginalization, oppression or resistance" as well as respond to and counter hegemonic "culture, laws and policies" (p.364). Additionally, they centralize the autonomy of individuals who are drastically affected by these systems by creating a story that transmits "personal, political, and social realities" (p. 367). This study aimed for women to share and reflect on their formation of womanhood, from childhood through adulthood, and the ways Mexican culture and Catholic faith have either positively or negatively shaped their perceptions of being a "good woman". By women speaking aloud the impact social systems and ideologies had on their self-esteem, they are actively countering marianista and machista narratives to remain silent, contributing towards putting an end to the intergenerational cycle of violence.

Further, Hernandez-Arriaga (2017) describes "*testimonio* gets to the *corazón* of their stories, and allows them to share their *historias*, *emociones*, and *pensamientos* in raw form" (p.71). Additionally, it "fosters a safe space for participants to share their story rather than answering a questionnaire or being a part of a guided testing process" (p. 72). By utilizing this methodology, the researcher intended to provide an open and non-judgemental space for participants to come as they are and share as much or as little as they wanted to. Similarly,

“Testimonio is an exercise of agency: the very insistence on storytelling is an act of resistance against the silencing and subordination of the Latino/a experience” (Yosso, 2005, as cited in, Hernandez-Arriaga, 2017). It was vital to use testimonio for this research design in order to capture the essence and totality of Mexican migrant, Catholic mothers’ stories of self-sacrificial love and the ways they have been compounded by culture and faith; this was particularly important as these voices have not been commonly included in academic and higher education spaces.

Ultimately, the purpose of this study was for the participants to guide and educate the researcher on ways to build collective advocacy, resistance, and solidarity regarding violence against women. Additionally, this study aims for grassroots community members to discover additional ways to work ethically and humanely with and for Latina, migrant women and mothers with these specific backgrounds. Essentially, this project strives for women to realize they are not alone on their self-empowerment, healing journey but alongside powerful *mújeres* (women)!

Through interviews, the researcher aimed to answer the following research questions:

1. How do Mexican migrant mothers interpret self sacrificial love and is it aligned with their Catholic faith?
2. How do women express their relationship to ideals of what it means to be a good woman in relation to their Catholic faith, their upbringing within Mexican families, and romantic relationships? Did it change after having children?
3. To what extent do the Mexican Catholic ideals of womanhood relate to the experiences of domestic violence/abuse/oppression in women’s lives?
4. What are the ways Mexican migrant, Catholic mothers resist authority? Do they use silence as resistance?

Recruitment Plan

This study was conducted at the University of San Francisco, San Francisco campus and via Zoom. The researcher conducted semi-structured interviews with five Mexican migrant,

Catholic mothers between the ages of 25-65, through snowball sampling. Participants could be based anywhere in the United States. Previous studies have focused on younger women's experiences who are non mothers. Therefore, the purpose of this study was to capture the experiences of women who are older and have children to understand if their perspectives differ. The researcher created a bilingual research flyer to increase recruitment and shared the flyer with her colleagues, previous co-workers, and friends who spread the word with family and extended networks across the country. Further, the researcher recruited two participants through an existing relationship, and the remaining three were referred by classmates. Additionally, the researcher aimed to have a small number of participants, five to eight, in order to capture the richness, and detail of all of their words instead of having a large participant group. In the end, the researcher was able to interview five participants, and unable to interview more due to time constraints.

Data Collection

For this study, the researcher engaged in testimonio qualitative research, one-on-one interviews with five participants. Four interviews were conducted in Spanish and one was conducted in both English and Spanish. Interview duration lasted between 40 minutes to two hours with previously written interview questions related to perceptions of marianismo before and after migration. Participants were asked questions to reflect upon and answer, tracing the trajectory of their lives from childhood through adulthood. Participants were provided with a bilingual informed consent form detailing the outline of the study and had a week to read and sign the form if they agreed to participate. At the beginning of the interview, the researcher reread the purpose of the study and what the participant would be asked to do, as well as, confirmed their consent to participate prior to starting. Additionally, the researcher provided a

brief background of who they were and why they created this research study. Participant interviews were recorded via Zoom and the researcher's iPhone voice recorder, for transcription purposes. The researcher transcribed interviews on her own and also used an online transcription software. After the interview finished, the transcription was saved on the researcher's laptop and coded under another name.

No specific demographic questions were asked of participants at the start of the interview, to ensure anonymity and confidentiality. Instead, the researcher allowed the participants to openly describe their background to the extent they felt comfortable.

Data Analysis

Participants' interviews were transcribed from the audio recording, coded with a different name, and analyzed one by one. First, the researcher immersed herself in the raw data several times to understand participants' tone of voice, pauses, and emotions shared. The researcher utilized the online software, Trint, to transcribe the five interviews. She listened to all of the interviews from start to end, correcting spelling and grammar, to ensure Trint captured accuracy of all responses, as four were in Spanish and one was both in English and Spanish. During the second phase of data review, the researcher looked for both pre-assigned codes and kept her eyes open for emergent themes across responses. The researcher highlighted recurring phrases with different colors across the five interviews. She also annotated the transcriptions on the side, making note of quotes that stood out amongst participants. On a google document, she placed all of the research questions, and below each question, provided each participant's response to that question. Then, she highlighted participants' responses in red if they repeated across research questions. Next, she compared the highlighted phrases on Trint with the highlighted phrases on the google document to ensure precision and that she captured all recurring phrases. After, she

grouped the highlighted phrases into categories, leading to the creation of themes and subthemes, placing them under each research question.

Plan for the protection of human subjects

In order to lessen risk and maintain anonymity and confidentiality, the researcher gave participants the option to select a location based on their level of comfort. Participants were given four options including 1. The University of San Francisco, San Francisco campus, 2. Zoom 3. Home and/or 4. Library room. Participants were provided with an informed consent form that described the purpose of the study, confidentiality, potential risks/discomforts, and benefits to participating in the study. Benefits for participants included: 1) the freedom to share their testimonio in an open, inclusive, judgment-free space, 2) a potentially increased self-awareness produced through the act of reflecting on personal experience and 3) the opportunity to educate others, through their stories, on this vital subject matter.

Participant Description

A description of each participant including their pseudo name, age, city of origin, age they migrated to the United States, and the number of children they have is included in the table below. As previously described, participants were given the freedom to describe their background to the extent they felt comfortable for privacy and confidentiality reasons. Spaces that are blank indicate information was not shared by that specific participant. In order to participate in this study, all identified as Mexican migrants, practicing or observing the Catholic faith, and mothers.

Table 1

Participant Description

Participant Name	Current Age	Age Migrated	City of Origin	Number of Children
Andrea	44	11	Mexico City	1
Sagrario	39		Jalisco	2
Lourdes			Town between Veracruz/Oaxaca	3
Martha	47		Mexico City	
Eva			Durango	2

“I will take up space, even when it hurts. I will stand with my head held high, even when I doubt myself. I will prove them wrong, even if I have to provide it all to myself first”

-Prisca Dorcas Mojica Rodriguez (*For Brown Girls with Sharp Edges and Tender Hearts*)

Chapter IV

RESULTS

Overview

The research study’s purpose was to comprehend how Mexican migrant, Catholic mothers understand love and sacrifice (marianismo) before and after migrating, and how the Catholic faith and Mexican culture influenced their home life in the United States. Specifically focusing on how these concepts influence their ideas of womanhood, experience of familial and romantic relationships, and how it impacts their development of self esteem/love.

To explore this purpose, the researcher selected a qualitative, testimonio methodology to provide an open and judgment free space for women of color to collectively share aloud their stories of “marginalization, oppression, and resistance” to marianista ideologies (Delgado et. al, 2012, p.364) . The following research questions guided this testimonio study:

1. How do Mexican migrant mothers interpret self sacrificial love and is it aligned with their Catholic faith?
2. How do women express their relationship to ideals of what it means to be a good woman in relation to their Catholic faith, their upbringing within Mexican families, and romantic relationships? Did it change after having children?
3. To what extent do the Mexican Catholic ideals of womanhood relate to the experiences of domestic violence/abuse/oppression in women’s lives?
4. What are the ways Mexican migrant, Catholic mothers resist authority? Do they use silence as resistance?

Data for this testimonio study was collected by interviewing five women who identified as Mexican migrant, Catholic mothers. The findings of the interviews were analyzed and

interpreted to find recurring and emerging themes across all participants. Once the interviews were completed the researcher took the time to intentionally sit with each participant's words, tone of voice, emotions and feelings; reflecting on their "strength as human beings" and as powerful women (Abrego, 2021, p. 12). At the conclusion of the interview process, the researcher contacted each participant to profusely, "da[r] gracias for their stories, palabras, and alma that all made for a sacred space in the room and in [my] heart" (Hernandez-Arriaga, 2017, p.88).

Several of the participants' responses overlapped across research questions, as all of the questions are interconnected. The following themes and subthemes emerged from the data below.

Themes

Research Question 1: How do Mexican migrant mothers interpret self sacrificial love and is it aligned with their Catholic faith?

The data collected in response to the first research question will be organized according to the following themes: (1) Freely given love, and (2) Imposed sacrifice. Freely given love includes subthemes of (a) Sacrifice as Cultural Responsibility, and (b) Love of being a Mother. Imposed sacrifice includes the subtheme of (c) Sacrifice socialized through family and Catholic Church. Interview questions 1, 4, and 6 (Appendix B) provided insight for research question one. The researcher searched amongst the participants' responses for words or statements around love, sacrifice, and Catholic faith. Two participants indicated in their responses that they saw love not as sacrifice but as a choice to take care of family and those close to them. Two different participants described self-sacrificial love as the love of being a mother and giving it their all for their children. Only one participant described self-sacrificial love as taught by family and specifically reinforced through the Catholic church.

Freely Given Love

(a) Love as Cultural Responsibility

Two participants, Andrea and Eva, described they saw love not as sacrifice, where you have to deny your needs, but as something freely chosen in order to take care of family and those you love. Andrea, 44 years old from Mexico City, explains love as providing comforting words and support to family and friends, wishing them health and well-being: “Querer el bienestar de la otra persona”. Specifically, she believes love is not only demonstrated through words but through actions, such as accompanying family during critical times without giving it a second thought:

“Nosotros en nuestra cultura, en nuestra comunidad, aunque no podamos hacer nada, el simple hecho de estar ahí en apoyo moral...Son cosas que no lo piensan, simplemente tenemos que estar ahí todos juntos y a ver qué es lo que sigue”

Andrea describes in her culture and community although she may not be able to do much, the simple act of providing moral support is enough. They are things you do not think about, but come automatically. There is a need to be united as a family and collectively decide the next step. For Andrea, she is rooted in a communal system by proclaiming “tenemos que estar ahí todos juntos” (“we must be all together”), one in which taking care of one another is not considered sacrifice, but is embedded within your being, an innate part of your soul. You are called to support in order to help one another persevere and survive. She elaborates when a family member is sick in the hospital: “los planes se cambian, pero pues cuando pasa algo así pues no son sacrificios para mí, al contrario, o sea, son simplemente las prioridades, se cambian, se acomodan y pues atender a lo primero”. Andrea describes that plans change but does not consider it a sacrifice. Instead she views it as a change of priorities and the need to take care of what comes first. She demonstrates that collectivity in family is a critical component of

everyone's well-being, love is synonymous with family, and sees herself in relation with others.

Similarly, Eva from Durango, presents a similar sentiment. She describes love as taking care and protecting those close to you. Unlike Andrea, Eva partially relates sacrifice with love. She explains: "Amor a las cosas es menos sacrificio" ("Love towards things is less sacrifice"). Eva recounts that when she first migrated to the United States with her ex-husband, she was very much in love and did not view leaving her home as much of a sacrifice, because she did it with love and hope of seeing her parents one day. She adds, "cualquier cosa que hagas. Si tú le pones amor, pues a veces se siente fuerte, pero con amor todo se puede" ("whatever you do. If you put love into it, it can sometimes feel hard, but with love everything is possible"). For Eva, love gives her the strength to keep on going, no matter what situation she is placed in. Love is what ultimately propelled her to make a difficult decision, lessening the pain of leaving her motherland, family, and all she was accustomed to.

(b) Love of Being a Mother

In contrast to Eva and Andrea above, Martha, 47 years old from Mexico City, accepts the notion of sacrifice but positions sacrifice as one she freely makes, based on love for her children. Martha describes: "Para mí ahorita el amor más grande es el amor de mis hijos y lo describo como el sacrificar. Intentar escuchar es darlo todo y amor para ellos" ("For me right now the greatest love is the love of my children and I describe it as sacrificing. Trying to listen by giving all of my love to them."). Her interpretation of sacrifice is showing up as her best self, in order to give her best to her children. Similarly, Lourdes who is from a small town between Veracruz and Oaxaca describes: "El amor más grande para mí es como el amor de madre, no se va y es un amor incondicional" ("The greatest love for me is a mother's love, it does not go away and it is unconditional love"). Lourdes also sees it as a reciprocal relationship where her children also

gave her the strength to persevere during difficult times: “amor hacia mis hijos fue lo que me dio la fuerza para salir adelante y para darles a ellos una mejor oportunidad de vida” (“Love for my children was what gave me the strength to move forward to give them a better chance at life”). Her children also gave her love and motivation to remain resilient, hoping to provide a better future for them.

Imposed Sacrifice

(c) Sacrifice learned through family and Catholic church

On the other hand, Sagrario, 39 years old from Jalisco, equates love with sacrifice. She explains this ideology was taught by her family in the home and enforced by the Catholic church. Sagrario describes her grandmother as the primary figure who instilled that “to be a good woman in the Catholic church, one must ‘serve man’”. As a young girl, Sagrario had to be attentive to men’s needs if she wanted to be accepted by her faith. Her grandmother also instructed her, “a good woman has to be prepared by age 15, knowing how to cook, how to clean, how to obey the husband or the men in the family”. Growing up, the emphasis was continually put on the man and Sagrario’s family equated her worth with successfully completing domestic duties.

Sagrario’s self-sacrificial experience will be further expanded upon in the next research question.

Research Question 2: How do women express their relationship to ideals of what it means to be a good woman in relation to their Catholic faith, their upbringing within Mexican families, and romantic relationships? Did it change after having children?

This research question was broken down into three parts during the interviews and the themes will be analyzed according to: 1. Catholic Faith, 2. Mexican Culture, and 3. Romantic relationships, to assess how these three concepts specifically influenced each participant’s understanding of womanhood. First, faith derived subthemes of (a) Purity and (b) Fear of God.

Culture produced (a) Socialization of Childhood Gender Roles which led to (i) Non-Harmful Effects (ii) Harmful Effects. Harmful effects led to (A) Future Harm in Marriage. Interview questions 2,3,5 (Appendix B) helped answer research question two. The researcher looked for words or phrases in relation to “good woman”, “Catholic faith”, “Mexican culture”, and “romantic relationships” to help answer this research question.

Catholic Faith

(a) Purity

For two participants, Catholicism shaped their understanding of sexuality at a young age. In the Catholic faith, women are instructed to wait to have sexual intercourse until marriage. Eva adds that her faith taught her “una relación limpia...sin llegar a la sexualidad” (“a chaste relationship...without reaching the act of sex”). She believes, in dating, it is more beautiful to demonstrate love through small acts such as writing love letters and buying each other gifts, without arriving at the act itself.

Similarly, Martha acknowledges her Catholic faith shaped the way she viewed marriage. She describes it is important for a man “que te saque de tu casa vestida de blanco” (“take you from your home celibate”). Martha describes that most young women today move in with their partners before marriage and never actually get married. Therefore, she strongly believes it is vital for a man to wait and fight for you because “el sacramento del matrimonio...te da el valor que te mereces...te da la pureza” (“the sacrament of marriage is important for a woman because it gives her the value and purity she deserves”). Although Martha was not able to abide by this teaching, she sees the aspirational value of educating her children to choose differently. She states:

“Me arrepiento mucho. Me hubiera gustado haberme casado de blanco, me hubiera

gustado hacer muchas cosas diferentes, pero ahora no se puede regresar. Pero puedo enseñar. Entonces eso es lo más importante enseñarlo, y lo que no, como mamá. Yo le hablo a mi hija como madre y como mujer”

“I regret a lot. I would have liked to have married in white (remained chaste until marriage), I would have liked to do a lot of different things, but now you can't go back. But I can teach. So that's the most important thing to teach, to teach what is good and bad, as a mom. I talk to my daughter as a mother and as a woman.”

She expresses sadness when reflecting on her own life, but believes it is important to have open conversations with her children, speaking to them as both mother and friend to help them be in healthy relationships.

(b) Fear of God

Contrary to the previous two participants, Sagrario recounts a different faith story, in which her grandmother’s voice would constantly follow and remind her to be a good woman. For example, she describes: “My grandma told me that in a clean house, *esta Dios*, God is there, in a dirty house is the devil”. If Sagrario wanted to be seen as a good Catholic in the eyes of the church, she had to comply with her role in the home. This ingrained belief from childhood still affects her to this day as she expresses: “So consciously, I still think that because if I see a mess and I'm just like, well, God is not going to be happy with me, but I know deep inside that it's not true. But I grew up with that when my parents brought me to the United States”.

Additionally, her grandmother continuously told her: “God is seeing you, God is going to punish you somehow. So there was always someone in my head like, *God te va castigar* God you cannot lie to God”. Ultimately this created a fear that if Sagrario did not live up to her family and the church’s expectations of womanhood, she would be punished.

Culture

Socialization of Childhood Gender Roles

(a) Non-Harmful Effects

Further, Mexican culture was manifested through family, and played a significant role in shaping almost all of the participants' understanding of womanhood. Two participants stated how Mexican culture taught them to perform responsibilities around the home but did not view it as harmful or forced. Andrea elaborates that her childhood responsibility was to take care of her younger sister, to ensure:

“que comiera bien, que esté el que no hiciera cualquier pequeña travesura o cualquier cosas así, y pues ya era estar al pendiente de ella, de cualquier pequeña cosita que fuera el baño y que no tuviera problemas”. (“eat well, that she did not get into any trouble or anything like that, keep an eye on her, make sure she went to the bathroom and she did not have any problems”).

Likewise for Eva, she recounts her responsibilities in Mexico: “siempre me tocaba era poner frijoles y lavar los trastes” (“It was always my responsibility to cook the beans and wash the dishes”). Although at times she and her siblings did not want to fulfill their duties, she describes “éramos muy obedientes con nuestros papás, aunque no quisiéramos, pues lo hacíamos, no, porque por respeto a ellos había mucho respeto” (“We were very respectful with our parents even if we did not want to do the chores, we completed them due to respect. There was a lot of respect for them”). Respect for her parents is an important cultural value and pushed her to complete her responsibilities even when she wanted to say no.

(b) Harmful Effects

In contrast to the two participants described above, both Lourdes and Martha had distinct experiences in Mexico. Lourdes describes that her mother was a single mother who had many sons and continually taught, “el hombre tenía mas derecho que la mujer” (“the man has more authority than the woman”). Her mother also instructed her that she had to “Atender a mis hermanos, porque ellos eran hombres y ellos no se podían ni servir de comer, ni siquiera un vaso de agua” (“To take care of my brothers, because they were men and they couldn't even serve themselves food, not even a glass of water”). If Lourdes did not perform her chores quickly, her mother would hit her. Similarly, her father educated Lourdes that her responsibility as a woman was to successfully complete all of the chores at home. Since Lourdes’ primary focus was her home, her parents immensely prevented her from leaving and having friends. Lourdes reflects that her parents treated her as “una muñequita que ellos protegían” (“a doll that they tried to protect”). She describes her parents limited her activities: “no puedes montar a caballo, no puedes salir a ningún lado, no puedes tener amigos” (“you can't ride horses, you can't go out anywhere, you can't have friends”). Although her parents were trying to protect her from getting hurt, they only compounded her pain for her to be the perfect caregiver at home.

Similarly, for Martha, she recalls her mother also preferred her brothers, dressing them nicer and giving them a better education. In terms of food, Martha describes:

“mi mamá siempre les daba la pedazo de carne más grande que por que siempre tenían hambre, que estaban desarrollando, que todo eso y pues casi nunca había carne, pero la carne más grande se la daban a ellos”. (“My mother always gave them the biggest piece of meat because they were always hungry, describing they were 'developing', there was almost never any meat, but the biggest meat was given to them”).

Due to the unequal treatment of genders in the home, Martha reflects women:

“De nacimiento si los tratan como sirvientas. Y desde chiquita nos van acomodando así. O sea, siempre...se va inculcando que tú tienes que hacer eso, que como barrer, como cocinar. A los diez años ya están las niñas cocinando” (“From birth, they are treated as servants. And since we are little, we are molded to be like that. It is always instilled in us that you have to do that, like sweeping, like cooking. At the age of ten, girls are already cooking”).

Martha concludes that women are socialized at a young age to be “little mothers” and maids based on these precarious beliefs. As a result, she proclaims “Mujeres son abusadas en estas dinámicas” (“Women are abused in these dynamics”).

(i) Future Harm in Marriage

Likewise, childhood socialization of gender roles led to violence for Sagrario later in her marriage. She explains, as a child, there were instances when her father would come home intoxicated and her mother would be waiting to take care of him. On a specific occasion, her father was so intoxicated that he physically attacked her mother. Sagrario immediately wanted to call 911 but her mother stopped her and proclaimed “we as women need to put up with everything”. As a result, Sagrario internalized this good woman mentality from her parents and became conditioned to tolerate abusive behavior from her ex-partner for 20 years. She reflects on her marriage: “For me, it was normal. Him cheating, beating me up, putting his friends first, not coming to home to sleep. So I thought it was normal because that's how I grew up seeing my parents”. Since witnessing violence in her home was all Sagrario knew, she did not question her husband’s abusive behavior for many years, believing she was fulfilling society’s and her family’s expectations. She ultimately minimized her voice and believed she was completing her

role as a married woman.

Research Question 3: To what extent do the Mexican Catholic ideals of womanhood relate to the experiences of domestic violence/abuse/oppression in women’s lives?

This question ties in with the previous question describing in greater detail how culture and faith lead to oppression and damaging behavior in women’s lives. The data gathered for this research question created the following themes and sub-themes: 1. No love shown between parents (Emotional Harm), (a) Fulfilling Basic Needs as Love, 2. La Cultura Mata (Culture as Psychological abuse), (b) Robbing of Education and 3. Church as Enforcer of Psychological Violence. Interview questions 3,4,5 (Appendix B) helped inform this research question. The researcher searched among the women’s responses for key words and repetition of statements around violence, abuse, harm, womanhood, and silenced voice. Two of the participants recounted how their parents were more focused on meeting the family’s basic needs as a demonstration of love, instead of providing affection or verbal communication. One of the participants described how she rarely saw love demonstrated in her grandparents and never in her parents. As a result, this led to emotional and psychological harm.

No Love Shown Between Parents or Family (Emotional Harm)

(a) Fulfilling Basic Needs as Love

For Martha, she specifically recalls that, growing up, no love was ever demonstrated from her mother towards her siblings. Martha rationalizes her mother's inability to express love by stating: “Siento que no había tiempo porque tenías que estar preocupando por la renta, por trabajar, por tus seis hijos” (“I felt like there was no time because you worried about paying rent, working, taking care of six kids”). She adds: “con todas sus cosas, sus adentros que tenía y entonces traumas. No podía” (“with all of her preoccupations she had and traumas. She could

not”). Marta describes how her mother prioritized fulfilling her family’s basic needs such as rent, in order to help her family survive. Likewise, Lourdes recounts a similar story. She recounts:

“Es triste recordarlo porque ellos nunca me dijeron te quiero. Ellos nunca me dieron un abrazo. Menos me iban a dar un beso, verdad? Porque si no me daban un abrazo. No me dieron un beso. Nunca. Nunca me dijeron te quiero, eh? Para mis padres, el darnos a nosotros todo lo necesario era lo más importante” (“It is sad to remember because they never said I love you to me. They never gave me a hug. Less a kiss. Because if they did not give me a hug. They never gave me a kiss. They never did. They never said I love you. For my parents, giving us everything we needed was the most important thing”).

For Lourdes, her parents never demonstrated love verbally or physically. They too believed giving everything a child needs to survive was enough, equating love with survival. She adds her parents never celebrated her birthday, allowed her to pick her own clothing, or choice of food. They also did not allow her to wear short sleeved shirts. Essentially, she never had any “gustos” or decision in what she wanted to do. As a result of her socialized upbringing, today she still feels limited in choosing clothing. Although Lourdes now has freedom, she still remembers the experiences she endured: “Pero quizás al final del tiempo, ahora que ya estoy grande, que ya soy independiente, creo que sí me afectó... hoy no puedo usar esas cosas” (“But maybe in the end, now that I’m older, now that I’m independent, I think it did affect me... today I can’t use those things”). Lourdes reflects this is now an ingrained mentality she cannot let go of.

Additionally, for Sagrario, she expresses that love has rarely been shown between her grandparents and even more rarely between her parents. She elaborates “Well, my grandparents, my grandma, I never saw my grandparents kiss or hold hands”. For her parents specifically, Sagrario adds:

“I’ve never saw love to this point. They sleep in different bedrooms. They forced them to marry to each other because my mom got pregnant with me. So I’m the reason they are together. I’ve never seen them kiss. I’ve never seen them hug. I’ve never seen them say, I love you”

In explaining that her grandparents forced her mother and father to marry, Sagrario clarifies why she never grew up seeing love demonstrated in her family. This absence of love is not only present in her grandparents, but is also an intergenerational pattern observed in her parents.

La Cultura Mata (Culture as Psychological Abuse)

(b) Robbing of Education

Two participants described how their Mexican culture led to psychological and physical abuse, as well as lowered self-esteem. Specifically, these instances of abuse related to participants’ aspiration to receive a higher education. Lourdes describes that her parents abruptly terminated her schooling at 6th grade and wanted her to help in domestic duties instead. When she tried standing up for herself and asked her father if she could at least enroll in stenography courses that her relative was teaching, her father became immediately abrasive. Lourdes describes “mi papá me regañó y me dijo vete a cocinar que eso es lo único que puedes hacer” (“my dad scolded me and told me to go cook, that’s the only thing you can do”). As a result of her father’s strict behavior, Lourdes expresses “mi autoestima se fue hasta los suelos” (“my self-esteem hit rock bottom”). This experience essentially robbed Lourdes of her voice and agency by taking away the last thing she truly loved and cared about, her education

Sagrario also mentioned a similar experience with her family when she expressed the desire to go to college. She explains that when she told her mother she wanted to receive a higher education, her mother became violent and put a “belt in her hands”. Sagrario adds:

“And I told her, I want to graduate. I want to go to school. I want to be someone. I told her that I didn't want to be like her, you know, like I wanted to have a career. I wanted to be someone. I didn't want to be depending on a man”.

Sagrario wanted to choose her own path, free from others' expectations and grow in her independence. She adds: “I remember telling her, you complain so much about my grandmother when she was with you. So strict. You're doing the same thing with me”. She elaborates, “I had different plans compared to my mom because my mom ran away with a boyfriend”. Sagrario reflected that she wanted to pursue a different life than her mother, aspiring to break free from being a marianista woman and find her voice, without a man. However, she was brutally scolded for trying to proclaim her core beliefs, just like Lourdes.

Church as Enforcer of Psychological Violence

One participant specifically detailed how the Catholic church led to harm at various times throughout her life. Sagarario elaborates that, when she was younger, she was part of a young adult church group where she continuously fulfilled all responsibilities and duties assigned to her. However, when she decided to go out with friends, a priest told her she was “not being a great example for the youth”. Similarly, years later when she wanted to separate from her abusive ex-husband, another priest replied, “‘No’. That's not what God wants. You need to give another chance and forgive. Forgive your husband. God forgives us. We need to forgive”. This demonstrates how the church has been continuously critical of the way Sagrario lives, subjecting her to further violence to maintain the marianista role in the home.

Research Question 4: What are the ways Mexican migrant, Catholic mothers resist authority? Do they use silence as resistance?

The information gathered in response to the fourth and final research question will be organized to the following themes and sub-themes: (1) Separation as Act of Self-Love, (2) Education, (3) Migration as Resistance and (4) Devotion to Catholic Faith. Education included subthemes of (a) Educating Children and Older Family on Gender Equality and, (b) Community Activism. Although the researcher was not initially looking for the themes of Separation as Act of Self-Love and Migration as Act of Resistance, they surfaced as prominent themes amongst all of the participants and as strong connections to the research question. Interview questions 7, 8, 9, 10, and 11 (Appendix B) helped answer research question four. The researcher looked for words or phrases around resistance, voice, self-love/self-esteem, journey, growth, and education. Almost all participants, four, stated leaving their partnerships cultivated self-love. None of the participants remained quiet and instead, they each intentionally spoke back to authority. Additionally, four participants described the value of education in resistance. Further, two participants migrated to the United States to counter gender norms in México. Almost all of the participants, 3, indicated a strong devotion to their Catholic faith which gave them strength to persevere during difficult times. Meanwhile, two participants described their relationship with their faith in the context of popular religion, which means they interpret and practice their faith in a way that makes sense for them.

Separation as Act of Self-Love

For a majority of the women, they saw leaving their ex-partners as an act of resistance, but most importantly self-love. For instance, Lourdes recalls her self-love arrived when she felt disappointment and betrayal from her ex-husband after she found him with another woman.

When she confronted him, she proclaimed, “Siempre yo primero soy madre y después mujer” (“I am always a mother first and a woman second”). Lourdes saw her role as a mother before her role as a wife. As mentioned earlier in this chapter, her love of being a mother gave her the strength to endure difficult obstacles. It overrode her desire to stay in a relationship that was no longer healthy, to provide a better life for her children realizing: “también valgo mucho y yo creo que para que mis hijos, mi familia, estén bien, yo tengo que estar bien y para eso yo tengo que darme a respetar y respetar a los demás” (“I am also worth a lot and I believe that in order for my children, my family, to be well, I have to be well and for that I have to respect myself and others”). She also expresses, “Yo soy una mujer que. Que puede dar mucho. Y si no me valora. Para mí el amor propio es primero” (“I am a woman who. Who can give a lot. And if you don't value me, for me self-love comes first”). In this moment, she fully realized her self-worth and acknowledged she would be fine without a partner because she placed her self-love first.

Likewise, Eva recounts a similar story with her ex-partner. She states that when she no longer felt loved or well, that is when she made the decision to leave and her self-love arrived. She describes: “Me salí de mi relación porque no me sentía amada, entonces yo sentía que yo no estaba bien. Entonces para mí el amor propio es estar bien” (“I left my relationship because I didn't feel loved, I felt that I was not well. So for me self-love is to be well”). Eva equates well-being with self-love but when she no longer felt well, she felt she did not have self-love. She describes that when she no longer felt valued in her relationship, that is when she grew in love for herself. She explains:

“Cuando sientes que no te valoran. Sí. Entonces llega tu amor propio. Entonces yo valgo. Por eso pienso que se llama amor propio. Es el hacerte sentir que tú vales. Y puedes salir adelante” (“When you feel you are not valued. Yes. Then your self-love arrives. That I

am worthy. That's why I think it's called self-love. It's making yourself feel like you're worth something. And you can persevere”).

Self-love was ultimately the driving force for her to leave her previous relationship and realize that she deserved better.

Similarly, Sagrario also coincides with the previous testimonios. When she was with her ex-husband, he would critique her every move, to the extent of heavily policing her physical appearance. She describes if she wore makeup he would reply “Who are you going to go see? Who are you trying to look good for?” As a result of his behavior, Sagrario describes “So I stopped doing that. I stopped doing my nails. I stopped taking care of myself”. She placed herself last in order to appease her ex-partner’s every move. However, when she experienced facial paralysis, she realized she needed to leave this abuse and choose herself. She recounts, “that's when I'm slowly like I need to start loving myself”. Like Lourdes, Sagrario also thought about her children’s well being when leaving this violence, as she explains: “I realized that in order for me to love my children and to be 100% for my children, I need to learn how to take care of myself, [and] love myself”. Like previous women, Sagrario sees her happiness and well-being in relation to her children. This means taking care of herself by putting her needs and wants first.

On the other hand, Martha describes that she too left her ex-partner but stayed for many years due to economic reasons. She recounts, “yo arrastré este matrimonio por muchos años por mis hijos, por el dinero, porque yo sabía que él no me iba a ayudar” (“I dragged out this marriage for many years for my children, due to finances, because I knew he wasn't going to help me”). She was hesitant to leave, worrying about her children’s perceptions but also afraid of taking care of the household on her own. However, during the 2020 pandemic, her ex-husband was left without work and Martha covered all expenses. This is when she realized she could persevere

without him. She describes: “en el 2021, le dije. Le pedí que se fuera. Fue lo más difícil porque le vi la cara a mis hijos. Lo querían y todo eso. Pero yo era infeliz. Yo no me quería” (“in 2021, I asked him to leave. It was the hardest thing because of what my children may think. They loved him and all that. But I was unhappy. I did not love myself”). Similar to Sagrario, Lourdes, and Eva, Martha no longer cared for herself with her ex-partner. However, after she separated, she grew in peace and tranquility. She reflects back on her story and proclaims: “el amor no hace daño, no lastima” (“love doesn't hurt, it doesn't cause pain”). Martha now realizes her interpretation of self-love and love for others has shifted from what she was initially taught by her mother, as a child, before migrating. She now describes that “she does not serve any man” and believes “women are worth more than men”.

Education

(a) Children and Older Family on Gender Equality

For both Sagrario and Lourdes describe the importance of educating their children and older family members to dismantle machista culture, marianismo, and promote greater gender equality. Sagrario expresses the need to educate her son and daughter differently than the way she was raised: “I'm teaching my son that he can clean, he can cook. And he can do things by himself. He can wash. And he doesn't need a woman. And I'm teaching my daughter...how men should be treating her like with respect”. As a result of Sagrario's teachings, it has led her children to also self-reflect. Her daughter proclaims: “I would never date a person like my dad and I will never let people put me down the way he grandma and everyone put you down”. It has also caused her son to realize he wants to be a better man, stating: “I don't want to be like my dad. I want to be a different person”. They both understand the importance of breaking out of

machista and marianista culture, aspiring to end the cycle of violence by educating the next generation.

Likewise, Lourdes also believes in the importance of educating her children on these vital topics. However, she openly expresses the difficulties of changing an ingrained mindset from childhood, especially because she was strictly taught about the consequences of gender roles not followed. She describes, “siempre es tan difícil porque para mí son cadenas que vamos arrastrando desde la infancia hasta hasta la vejez” (“It is always so difficult to break because for me they are chains we carry from childhood to old age”). Lourdes is aware of how arduous it is to break these “chains” that many times can last a lifetime. She elaborates, “es tan difícil de romperlo cuando viene mi hijo, porque yo quiero atenderlo, quiero darle de comer, quiero servirle de comer, quiero lavarle más” (“it is so hard to break them because when my son comes home, I want to take care of him, I want to feed him, I want to serve him food, I want to wash his clothes”). However, she describes her daughters bring this to her attention, proclaiming, “lo estás enseñando a ser machista” (“You are teaching him to be macho”). Lourdes replies, “se me olvida que todos son iguales? No, pero. Pero estoy consciente de que así es y así debe de ser...estoy totalmente de acuerdo que eso debe de cambiar” (“I forget that we are all the same, no? But I am aware that this is how it is and how it should be...I completely agree that this should change”). Lourdes is cognizant that “todos son iguales” and that her behavior towards her children needs to change in order to reflect that belief.

Additionally, Andrea stresses the vitality of not only educating her children, but grandparents who have more conservative views on marianismo since they are from an older generation in México. Andrea describes the importance of “desaprender las cosas” (“unlearning things”) which before were considered “normal” but now “ver la verdad de que ya estamos en

otros tiempos y que se puede ayudar tanto es beneficio para ellos, también para nosotras” (“see the truth, that we are in different times and that we can help them learn, which is not only beneficial for them, but also for us”). She understands that she may not be able to fully change her grandparents' perceptions but still attemptsto make them aware of gender equality. She acknowledges this is a difficult task to complete but states “Con amor y con respeto si se puede” (“With love and respect everything is possible”).

(b) Community Activism

Furthermore, two of the participants took direct action to help women in their communities overcome marianismo in their homes. Lourdes founded her own non-profit organization in the United States to specifically help Hispanic women who are victims of domestic violence. It was a dream for her to create her own organization in this country, and with the help of her community, she was able to educate and assist many Hispanic women for numerous years.

Similarly, Sagrario ran a self-esteem workshop, at her previous place of employment, for Latina immigrant mothers learning English, to cultivate self-esteem/love. She describes, “I gave them mirrors and I told them the person in front of you, look at yourself. I told them that they're strong” and “they need to believe in themselves”. She recalls that several mothers cried and one expressed they were tired of being a “sirvienta” (“maid”) in their home, who had to take care of children and her husband who did not allow her to work, controlling all her decisions. Upon hearing this, Sagrario connected her with community resources and proclaimed that many of the women felt “identificadas conmigo” (“identified with me”) because they both endured similar upbringings and life experiences. Sagrario self-reflects:

“This is my women and I don't want them suffering the way I suffered. I want to open their eyes and I want them to understand that they are gorgeous inside and outside and that I want them to believe themselves, no matter if they don't know the language, the second language that is English, they can become someone.”

Just as Sagrario stood up to her mother and proclaimed she wanted to “be someone”, she also sees herself in these women and believes they can break out of the self-sacrificial role by growing in self-love.

Migration as Act of Resistance

Additionally, two of the women described how migration to the United States was an act of resistance against gender roles and machismo in their home. Previously, Lourdes described her mother was physically abusive if she did not complete chores quickly and her father prevented her from finishing her education, making Lourdes believe her only role in life was to be a caretaker in the home. However, when she married her ex-husband in México and he asked her to migrate to the United States, she did not think about it twice. She describes: “cuando decidí venirme a este país, porque yo dije bueno, quiero que mi vida cambie y que mi hijo también tenga otra vida diferente” (“I decided to come to this country, because I said well I want my life to change and for my son to also have a different life”). Lourdes wanted to create a different path not only for her, but most importantly for her newly born child, free of imposed gender roles and strict surveillance. She adds “si yo no aceptaba venirme con el papá de ellos, eso significaba que tenía que seguir viviendo con mis papás” (“if I didn't agree to come with their dad, that meant I had to continue living with my parents”). Lourdes knew the life that awaited if she remained in Mexico and aspired to provide a life full of opportunity for her son. Lourdes also

aimed to have greater freedom and agency, recalling “yo no tenía lo que yo quería” (“I did not have what I wanted”) in Mexico.

Likewise, Martha also migrated to the United States not only to resist unequal treatment of genders in her home, but also to escape an arranged marriage. She explains: “Llegó el momento en donde ella me buscó marido. Por eso yo me vine para Estados Unidos. Porque me querían casar con alguien que yo no quería, ni siquiera conocía” (“the time came for my mother to find me a husband. That is why I came to the United States. She wanted me to marry someone I did not want, nor did I know”). She expands: “decidi a venirme para acá a Estados Unidos y aquí totalmente cambió todo. Vengo a hacer más independiente” (“So I decided to come to the United States and here everything changed completely. I come here to be more independent”). Martha reflects that her only option to escape *marianismo* was to immigrate to the United States. Although it was a completely new environment, Martha recalls she was able to grow in her independence and autonomy, which she would not have been able to fully attain had she remained in México.

Devotion to Catholic Faith

Lastly, it is vital to highlight that throughout all of the interviews, there was a common thread that God and the Catholic faith gave the women strength to survive violence in their home as children and leave abusive relationships later in their lives. Lourdes reflects, “Gracias a Dios y con la bendición de Dios he podido salir adelante” (“Thanks to God and with the blessing of God I have been able to move forward”). Eva similarly agrees and proclaims “Cuando uno más está solo es cuando más está Dios contigo” (“When you are most alone is when God is most with you”). Additionally, Martha expresses that she views herself as “soltera pero nunca sola” (“single but never alone”) because God is always by her side. Further, two other participants describe

how they relate to their faith in ways that resonate with them, not necessarily following every teaching. Andrea describes :

“siempre he tomado, lo bueno de todos esos en la misa o los sermones que daba el padre y cosas así... no tanto al pie de la letra con reglas” (“I have always taken the good from mass and sermons the father gave and things like that... not always adhering to teachings fully”).

Importantly, due to Sagrario’s negative experiences with the Catholic church, it changed the way she views her faith today. She explains:

“I still have my faith, honestly. I still believe in the Virgen de Guadalupe but I do not agree on some things that church does. I feel like they have so many rules for a woman.

[...] I don't see the church no more. The same way as I used to growing up, you know?”

Sagrario expresses the pain she endured from the Catholic church which immensely dictated how she was expected to behave as a woman. Instead of being a caring and nurturing environment in which to grow closer to God, it focused on her role in the home. Although it did not push her away from God completely, it changed how she now connects to her faith, as she has become more aware of how she deserves to be treated.

Summary of Findings

This study aimed to explore the ways Mexican migrant, Catholic mothers understood love and sacrifice (marianismo) before and after migrating to the United States, as based in Mexican culture and Catholic faith. Further, this study has focused on how marianismo impacted their perception of womanhood, familial and romantic relationships, self-esteem/love, and whether their views transformed after having children. The findings of this qualitative study primarily indicated that participants interpreted self-sacrificial love as freely given, such as

taking care of family and as the love of being a mother. Additionally, Mexican culture played a much greater role over Catholic faith in socializing women to be “good daughters” in the home, leading to intergenerational and multiple violences by their mothers, fathers, and grandmothers. Additionally, it led to repeated violence later on in their marriages. However, only one participant specifically described how the Catholic Church created harm in her life, by dictating how to behave as a “proper woman”. In the end, four of the women described self-love and love of children as motivating factors to leave abusive relationships. All of the women aspired to have a life free of violence to create greater opportunities for their children. This meant cultivating love for themselves first. The next chapter is a discussion of these results in greater detail, conclusions, and recommendations based on the findings from this chapter.

CHAPTER V

DISCUSSION, RECOMMENDATIONS, AND CONCLUSION

The killing of women due to their gender (femicide) has been drastically increasing over the past several years. Particularly, last year in México and in the duration of just over six months, there were close to three thousand victims of gender based deaths which is about ten killings of women a day (ONU Mujeres, 2022). The Mexican government's purposeful corruption of accountability and normalized impunity continually prevents the assailants from being brought to justice. This widespread impunity socializes the public to believe violence against women is nothing out of the ordinary and cannot be prevented. This ultimately leads to a never ending cycle of violence that is "normalized" by most of society (UN General Assembly, 2012). This atrocious and unfathomable behavior calls individuals to no longer remain bystanders, witnessing violence on the side, but take an active step towards understanding the root of the problem. It urgently calls people to comprehend where this systemic violence originates from, by assessing the systems that sustain it.

This present study focused on unpacking how systemic causes of violence against women are interwoven with women's everyday lived experiences, specifically looking through the lens of marianismo. The purpose was to understand if marianismo led to violence in the home for Mexican migrant, Catholic mothers, as it is the place where women learn to be proper caretakers and violence is ingrained into their being. This study was also intended to comprehend how marianismo influenced their notions of womanhood, familial and romantic relationships, self-esteem, and whether it changed after having children and migrating to the United States.

This chapter is divided into the following sections (a) Discussion, (b) Recommendations and (c) Conclusion. The discussion section is organized by the themes presented in chapter four.

It presents conclusions drawn from the findings of the study and makes connections to the literature in chapter two, as well as connections to the Mujerista Theology framework. The last section presents both practical and academic recommendations, guided by the participants, to further advance the study.

Discussion

In this section, the findings in chapter four are further discussed. The study aimed to answer the following research questions:

1. How do Mexican, migrant mothers interpret self-sacrificial love and is it aligned with their Catholic faith?
2. How do women express their relationship to ideals of what it means to be a good woman in relation to their Catholic faith, their upbringing within Mexican families, and romantic relationships? Did it change after having children?
3. To what extent do the Mexican Catholic ideals of womanhood relate to the experiences of domestic violence/abuse/oppression in women's lives?
4. What are the ways Mexican migrant, Catholic mothers resist authority? Have they used silence as resistance?

Many vital, poignant, and touching themes emerged throughout the participants' data which created beautiful connections of love and rapport between the researcher and the women during the interviews. All of these themes were presented in chapter four. Although the researcher wished to speak on all themes that surfaced in this chapter, only the most recurring themes, quotes, and emerging themes will be further expanded upon. The discussion of the findings is divided into the following themes: 1. Love as Cultural Responsibility and Being a Mother (b) Imposed Sacrifice and Fear of God, 3. Socialization of Childhood Gender Roles in Mexican Culture, 4. Absence of love between parents, 5. La Cultura Mata (Robbing of Education), 6. Separation as Self-Love, and 7. Education as Resistance.

(a) Love as Cultural Responsibility and Being a Mother

For almost all of the participants, they interpreted love and sacrifice as a responsibility as articulated by their Mexican culture and families. To take care of others is a duty that they freely give. Andrea describes: “en nuestra cultura, en nuestra comunidad, aunque no podamos hacer nada, el simple hecho de estar ahí en apoyo moral...Son cosas que no lo piensan”. Andrea describes the value of family coming together during times of need. She does not see this as something burdensome but as a sacred custom that is ingrained within her community. Similarly, Eva explains that “when you do things with love, it is considered less sacrifice”. She presents the story of migrating to the United States with her ex-husband. Although it was a difficult decision to leave her parents there in Mexico, she had hope of one day seeing them again. Hope and love are what gave her the strength to leave everything behind and move to a new and unfamiliar place.

For both Andrea and Eva, they describe love and sacrifice as being in relation to their family and community. Contrary to Pineda-Madrid (2011) who explains women as sacrificing themselves to the point where their identity is defined by the “service others expect them to perform” (p.89), these women had different interpretations. They did not view themselves as sacrificial women, denying their own needs and selves. Rather, they explained sacrifice as life giving, something that replenished their souls and returned love back to them. They described sacrifice as a reciprocal relationship of love.

Similarly, for two participants, Lourdes and Martha, they interpret love and sacrifice as that of being a mother to their children, where they also saw it as an interdependent relationship of love and care. Lourdes describes the greatest and everlasting love she feels is for her children, where they also gave her “la fuerza para salir adelante y para darles a ellos una mejor oportunidad de vida”. Similar to Eva and Andrea, Lourdes’ love for her children gave her the

strength and hope to change their lives one day. She aspired to provide a life free of violence from the gender roles she was born into and had to follow under her parents. Although Martha also interprets love in relation to being a mother, she believes it is sacrifice, but one done with love. She describes sacrifice as “Intentar escuchar es darlo todo y amor para ellos”. Like Eva and Andrea, Martha also views sacrifice as freely flowing, rather than forced upon her, because she sacrifices out of love. Similar to Lourdes, Martha chooses to give of herself because she wants the best for her children and does not view it as depleting or mentally harmful. Ultimately, while all of the participants reject the marianista ideology, they view their well-being and love in relation to their families and communities, as they conceive of themselves as co-existing with one another. .

Imposed Sacrifice and Fear of God

Only one participant, Sagrario, described love as sacrifice, imposed by her family and enforced by the Catholic church. This led to not only harmful psychological effects but also created a deep fear of God as a child. Castañeda-Liles (2018) describes mothers, grandmothers, and aunts as the primary figures to teach the women in the family of the Catholic faith (p.8). Sagrario's primary socializing family member was her grandmother who instructed her from a young age that “to be a good woman in the Catholic church, one must ‘serve man’”. This meant she had to learn all domestic duties by age fifteen and willingly follow all the mens’ commands in her family. Likewise, her grandmother continually reminded Sagrario, “in a clean house, *esta Dios*, God is there, in a dirty house is the devil”. If Sagrario did not follow her pre-assigned gender role in the home, her grandmother would remind her: “God is seeing you, God is going to punish you somehow”. Sagrario reflects: “So there was always someone in my head like, God *te va castigar* God you cannot lie to God”. Sagrario internalized her grandmother’s words deeply

and believed that to be a good Catholic woman, meant to abide by her role in the home.

Pineda-Madrid (2011) describes the Ideology of Suffering stating some Latina women adhere to marianismo, believing being “submissive” will bring them closer to God, for they have “borne their cross well and long” (p.88). The author explains just as Jesus carried his cross, Latina women believe they too must carry their cross on Earth and sacrifice themselves completely to grow in faith. In Sagrario’s family, it is possible that her grandmother followed this ideology, and by never allowing her beliefs to be questioned, she ultimately transmitted them intergenerationally, thereby “writing them in stone” (Castañeda-Liles, 2018, p.11)

Socialization of Childhood Gender roles in Mexican Culture

Cabrera (2014) describes socialization begins at birth and spans a lifetime, where social interaction influences people to adopt society’s ethics, ideals, and conducts that are prevalent in their community (p.106). From a young age, Lourdes was forced to follow gender roles and serve the men in her family, by both of her parents. She explains her brothers were not allowed to serve themselves, not even a glass of water, because that was a woman’s responsibility.

Pineda-Madrid (2011) describes marianismo as a type of “surrogacy” where the needs of humanity, husband, family and not women’s personal goals and aspirations “defines the human ideal” (p.89). Lourdes’ parents continually treated her as a “little mother” where her needs were easily dismissed and never taken into consideration, and the only thing that mattered were the men’s wishes in the family.

Moreover, her parents were so greatly fixated on Lourdes completing her prescribed gender role, that they did not allow her to have a social life, preventing her from having friends or doing outdoor activities. She reflects:

“hasta ganas me dan de llorar porque no tengo amigos de mi infancia, porque pues nunca me permitieron tener amigos porque no salía para ningún lado. Así crecí solo en la casa, haciendo los quehaceres de la casa y sin poder salir a ningún lado”

When Lourdes described this during the interview, she became emotional because it is still a painful experience that she carries to this day. She describes that due to her parents' strictness, she had no childhood friends, essentially making her believe that her “identity” was to serve in the home (Pineda-Madrid, 2011, p.89).

Additionally, Sagrario elaborates on how socialization of childhood gender roles led to violence later in her marriage. She explains that, once when she was a child, her mother stopped her from calling 911 when her father came home drunk and abused her mother. Instead of accepting help, her mother proclaimed, “we as women need to put up with everything”. Ultimately, this further reinforced the good woman mentality that Sagrario's grandmother ingrained in her. Cabrera (2014) explains that once socialization becomes internalized and normalized, it can lead to a denial of violence for both genders and specifically affects women mentally, emotionally, and physically (p.106). As a result of her grandmother's socialization, Sagrario accepted physical, psychological, and emotional abuse from her ex-partner for 20 years. She recalls:

“For me, it was normal. Him cheating, beating me up, putting his friends first, not coming to home to sleep. So I thought it was normal because that's how I grew up seeing my parents”.

For both participants, childhood socialization left a lasting impact psychologically and emotionally. For Sagrario, familial violence transcended into her romantic relationship many years later, continuing the cycle of violence.

Absence of love between parents

An emerging theme that surfaced throughout the findings, that the researcher was not originally looking for, was the absence of love between the participants' parents and family. For instance, Martha describes that she never recalled seeing her mother show love towards her or her siblings. When Martha opened up and shared her vulnerability during the interview, she began to tear up describing her family dynamics and asked for a moment to pause, apologizing for crying. However, I reassured her that everything was alright and to not apologize. This intimate sharing of the heart makes me realize that many of these women have not healed from childhood trauma and it still impacts them to this day. They carry it on their shoulders daily, and put on their armor to survive. *Son guerreras poderosas* (powerful warriors). Further, many women have not had the opportunity to openly share their stories of grief, pain, and motherhood.

Similarly, Lourdes reflects that her parents never said I love you, gave her a hug, or a kiss. Instead, they equated love with providing all the essentials she needed to survive. However, this mentality ended up harming Lourdes as they took away her choice to select what food to eat or what to wear. They forbade her to use "shorts, nunca podía usar una una playera sin mangas porque tampoco era bueno para ellos" ("shorts, they never allowed me to wear a sleeveless shirt because it was not good for them"). Although now as an adult Lourdes has the freedom to make her own decisions, this continues to affect her. She describes: "Eso quizás sí me afectó porque hasta hoy no puedo usar esas cosas" ("This perhaps affected me because today I cannot wear those things"). Ferrer Perez & Bosch Fiol (2013), describe that through socialization, women end up making the desires of others their own (pp.111-114). This leads the researcher to understand why it is difficult for Lourdes to release her parents' voices over her clothing. It was a belief that

was hardwired for so many years, that she had to comply with, if she wanted to survive in her home.

Both Lourdes and Martha demonstrate they are on a continual healing journey from their parents' words and actions, that continue to have a mark on their souls today.

La Cultura Mata (Robbing of Education)

Furthermore, two of the women described their family culture prevented them from continuing their education. Lourdes states her father abruptly terminated her schooling at sixth grade. When she tried to persuade him to at least allow her to take stenography courses with a relative, he quickly responded “vete a cocinar que eso es lo único que puedes hacer” (go cook, that's the only thing you can do”). Lourdes internalized her father's words and proclaims “mi autoestima se fue hasta los suelos” (“my self-esteem hit rock bottom”). As previously mentioned, socialization of gender roles led to negative psychological effects for Lourdes. As Lagarde (2001) elaborates “Women have been forbidden self-love. It is the greatest perversion of patriarchal culture” (p.30). Her father essentially took her voice away and removed the last thing that would make her happy; detrimentally affecting her self-esteem and the love she had for herself.

Likewise, SAGRARIO also endured harsh punishment with her mother when she tried to pursue a higher education. She describes:

“My mom was waiting with like literally a belt in her hands. And I told her, I want to graduate. I want to go to school. I want to be someone. I told her that I didn't want to be like her, you know, like I wanted to have a career. I wanted to be someone I didn't want to be depending on a man”.

Sagrario saw education as a way to leave the preassigned gender role she was born into. Unlike Lourdes, who was aware of the mental toll her father's words had during that moment but never spoke back to him, Sagrario chose to act and call out her mother. Coll (2010) describes autoestima as putting your own interests before men or other family members (p.101). Sagrario grew in autoestima or "self-esteem" when she voiced her opinion and went against her mother's wishes. During that moment, Sagrario broke free from the self-sacrificial mold in her family, by choosing herself.

As presented, both testimonios demonstrate how the participants' parents utilized both physical and emotional violence as intimidation factors for them to continue being marianista women. However, for one participant, fear gave her the strength to proclaim her voice and fight para lo que anhelaba (what she strongly believed in).

Separation as Self-Love

Separation as self-love was another prominent theme with almost all of the participants. Four of the participants described how they grew in self-love when they left their abusive partners. Ferrer Perez and Bosch Fiol (2013) state, "The false belief that love can conquer all delays the decision to leave the relationship or ask for help (p.114). Lourdes specifically endured many years of abuse by her ex-husband and later discovered his infidelity. She strongly believed that love could conquer all, but it was the love of being a mother, not a wife, that ended up giving her the strength to leave this toxicity. When Lourdes confronted her ex-husband, she proclaimed: "Siempre yo primero soy madre y después mujer". Similarly, Tomasa, who endured violence by her ex-husband, learned to assert herself, stating "I knew that I was a woman and that I was worth a lot" (Coll, 2010, pg.111). Lourdes also realized "también valgo mucho y yo creo que para que mis hijos estén bien, yo tengo que estar bien y para eso yo tengo que darme a respetar".

As previously mentioned, she sees her self-love in relation to her family, and if she wants them to be alright, she needs to take care of and prioritize herself first.

Education as Resistance

Moreover, all of the women indicated the value of educating their children and loved ones to resist marianista culture. Sagrario details that she is teaching both her son and daughter that they can be independent on their own and do not need to subscribe to gender roles. Most importantly, she is teaching her daughter the respect she deserves as a woman. Isasí-Díaz (2004) explains that participating in a self-reflective process leads to *conscientization* where individuals understand the world they are a part of and the future they aspire to live in. As a result of Sagrario's teachings, both of her children have also self-reflected and her daughter fully believes "I would never date a person like my dad and I will never let people put me down the way he, grandma, and everyone put you down and my dad". It also caused her son to want to carve a different future stating: "I don't want to be like my dad. I want to be a different person". Similarly, Sagrario sees her happiness in relation to her children, who state, "We know you suffer a lot, but you're so happy and we want to see you happy".

Similar to Sagrario, Andrea describes the importance of educating older family members who may have altering beliefs. She explains it is imperative to teach relatives to "desaprender las cosas" ("unlearn things"). Although she realizes that they may not completely change their perceptions, it is still important for them to become educated and aware that we are living in different times. Although Lourdes also agrees with Andrea on the vitality of unlearning behaviors, she finds it a bit harder. She states: "siempre es tan difícil porque para mí son cadenas que vamos arrastrando desde la infancia hasta hasta la vejez". Through her openness and sharing del corazón, she teaches us that to desensitize from ingrained beliefs will be a lifelong and

difficult process. However, she is cognizant that things must change within her, “estoy totalmente de acuerdo que eso debe de cambiar”. Similar to how she still finds it difficult to choose her own clothing, she demonstrates how it will take time to unlearn, as that does not happen from one day to the next. By sharing her personal testimonio, she teaches readers to self-reflect on our own lives and the difficulties of changing learned behaviors that were forced upon as children and had to endure if we wanted to survive (Isasi-Díaz, 2002, p.11).

Community Activism

Moreover, in order to resist authority, two participants described being actively involved in their communities to work for change. Specifically, Sagrario created a self-esteem workshop at her former job, for a Latina immigrant mothers group she ran weekly. Sagrario aimed to provide a space for them to share their stories to “be at the center and no longer in the shadows” (Isasi-Díaz, 1996, p.2). She gave the women mirrors and made them look at themselves to realize how strong they are. One of the mothers shared that she was tired of being controlled by her husband and treated as the maid of the family. Sagrario describes that when she heard this, she immediately connected with the mother, because they endured similar life experiences. Sagrario shared nearby resources with the mother and created a plan to help her with finances and grow in self-love. This intimate sharing of Latina womens’ lived experiences (*lo cotidiano*) and corazón with one another follows the “liberative praxis” of the Mujerista Theology framework. By collectively working together to help them become empowered women, Sagrario actively works towards Latina women’s liberation (Isasi-Díaz, 1996, p.33).

Recommendations

The following recommendations are guided by both the participants and the researcher. The section is divided between practical and future research. Practical recommendations include

(a) English courses and (b) Women’s Community Forums and Dialogues. The researcher aimed for the participants to be the primary ones guiding the recommendations and next steps to take as they are the ones who have directly experienced marianismo and survived. Interview question 11 (Appendix B) helped guide and answer this section.

Practical Recommendations

(a) English Courses

Martha describes the importance of creating more English classes, as well as greater accessibility in her city. While Martha was the only participant to make this particular recommendation, it is vital to highlight due to the passion and need she placed upon it. She explains it is necessary for migrant women to be able to understand their children and not use them as “interpretes” (“interpreters”). She elaborates, “si te preparas y hablas inglés y no dependes de nadie, te vas a querer más” (“if you prepare yourself and speak English, you will not depend on anyone and will love yourself more”). Martha strongly believes that by having more English classes, it will increase womens’ independence and autonomy because they will feel confident, as well as grow in their self-love. She adds that self-esteem education is equally as important in order for women to “recuperen su voz” (“recover their voice”). In order for women to grow in their self-worth, after being oppressed by harmful ideologies, Martha believes it is vital to increase awareness and advocacy around this topic. She warns, if we do not take action now, “mujeres van a seguir sufriendo” (“women will continue suffering”).

(b) Women’s Community Forums and Dialogues

Additionally, Martha advises to create greater programming around violence against women, where Latina immigrant women drive the conversation, speaking on their lived

experiences. She explains: “invitemos a la gente a hablar y como se sienten las mujeres en esto, en estos temas”. Similarly, three of the five participants advocate for greater dialogues and interviews for women to openly share their stories. Sagrario explains that individuals should: “Take the time to get to know someone, interview, why they feel the way they do,” as well as “learn about different cultures, learn about our culture, about our traditions”. Sagrario stresses the importance of stepping out of your comfort zone to educate yourself first in order to understand why marianismo happens in Latinx communities. Similarly, Sagrario calls to “be understood” and listened to, instead of being helped right away. She reflects on when she faced difficulties in her previous marriage, stating, “I wanted to be heard and I wanted someone to like, understand me and guide me, not tell me you need to do this”. Sagrario reminds readers the importance of cultural humility. It is not alright for community members to jump in and take action, when they have not been in their shoes. Instead, individuals who want to help must provide an open space for women to feel comfortable enough to share their stories and guide them in what they need, as only they know their stories best and what has worked for them to survive.

Likewise, Eva agrees with the previous participants to teach women to put their happiness and well-being first. She elaborates “nomas conscientizarlas de que si no están en pareja en una relación sana, es mejor salir adelante sola que como dicen en mi rancho, mal acompañada”. This is a common dicho (saying) in Latinx culture that calls for women to realize they are better off by themselves but in peace, than with someone who takes away their tranquility. Nevertheless, Eva adds that women are never alone because they are loved by God: “Si el (Dios) nos ama, todo va a estar bien” (“If He [God] loves us, everything will be okay).”

She teaches us the importance of knowing our worth and that we will survive, because God is with us.

Lastly, although a majority of the participants described Mexican culture as having a greater impact than faith in creating harmful homes, it is still vital to bring Sagrario's story of harm by the Catholic church to the forefront. Not only did her grandmother weaponize God to create fear for Sagrario to follow orders, but Catholic priests also reinforced machista ideology when they told Sagrario to forgive her abusive ex-husband. This is a situation that has happened too often in religious communities throughout the years. This calls for there to be greater education and dialogue in Catholic churches to dismantle machismo and marianismo, as this is the place where most Latinx families are socialized to be "Good Catholics". Additionally, I advise non-profit domestic and gender based violence organizations who work with grassroots Latina immigrant women, to integrate greater conversations and instruction, in their outreach and education departments. I advise them to describe how machismo and marianismo can lead to widespread violence in the home, as well as create a guide that details how to have these difficult conversations with family and community members.

Recommendations for Further Research

Further research should focus on analyzing the correlation between Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) and femicide in México. As presented, México has one of the highest and most recurring rates of gender based violence and killings over the years. This violence is not sporadic, but intentionally planned. This study intended to continue to look at the core of the problem to understand how it was leading to structural violence. As demonstrated in this study, all of the participants faced and continue to face trauma as a result of social systems that were institutionalized in the home.

However, future research must continue to understand how an individual acquires a mentality where they believe killing a woman is normal, by looking at how trauma has affected their psyche in relation to gender based violence. Menakem (2017) describes “unhealed trauma can appear to become part of someone’s personality...as it is passed on and gets compounded through other bodies in a household, it can become a family norm. And if it gets transmitted and compounded through multiple families and generations, it can start to look like culture” (Chapter 3). It is vital to conduct further investigation on how culture originates from collective and individual trauma. I wonder if widespread bloodshed and violence in Mexico derives from unhealed trauma. As Mirande (1998) describes, when men are placed in situations where they face vulnerability or weakness, they react with hypermasculinity. This can compound unhealed trauma, leading to greater violence inside and outside the home.

Conclusion

In conclusion, this thesis explored what love and sacrifice meant for Mexican migrant, Catholic mothers pre- and post-migration as rooted in Mexican culture and Catholic faith. Although it did not intend to make a direct correlation to femicide, it aimed to add to existing literature describing how marianismo may lead to perpetual violence against women in the home, as this is where they are socialized to be proper caretakers. In order to understand the extent of marianismo, it asked women how it impacts their sense of womanhood, familial and romantic relationships, and self-esteem/love. Overall, the findings partially confirmed the literature describing Mexican culture as playing a greater role than faith in socializing women to be self-sacrificial. Further, findings indicated that women in the family transmit intergenerational violence to their daughters by upholding damaging sacrificial beliefs. However, it also highlighted that the love of being a mother propelled women to break free of the marianista role

with their parents and also leave their abusive partners. Their children ultimately gave them the strength and hope to provide a better life for them free of violence, as they saw their happiness interwoven with them. By choosing their children, they chose themselves and beautifully grew in self-love, agency, and *autoestima*.

All in all, just two years ago, over 80,000 women and girls' lives were taken away in a heartbeat by someone they knew (UNODC, 2022). The women in this study continually remind us that we are part of a machista and marianista ingrained system of power. They teach us that if we do not take action now to “desaprender las cosas”, marianismo will continue to be “cadenas que...arrastra[mos] desde la infancia hasta la vejez”. Inevitably, gender based killings will continue to grow and it will no longer be a stranger killed, but someone we know.

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APPENDIX A

CONSENT FORM



Testimonios of Mexican Migrant Catholic Mothers' Relationship to Self-Sacrificial Love
(Marianismo) Pre- and Post-Migration

CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN A RESEARCH STUDY

Below is a description of the research procedures and an explanation of your rights as a research participant. You should read this information carefully. If you agree to participate, you will sign in the space provided to indicate that you have read and understand the information on this consent form. You are entitled to and will receive a copy of this form.

You have been asked to participate in a research study conducted by Jessica Ornelas, a graduate student in the Department of Migration Studies at University of San Francisco. The faculty supervisor for this study is Christina Garcia Lopez, cglopez3@usfca.edu, a professor in the College of Arts and Sciences at the University of San Francisco.

WHAT THE STUDY IS ABOUT:

The purpose of this research study is to understand how Mexican migrant, Catholic mothers interpret love and sacrifice pre-and post-migration, particularly as rooted in religion and culture in México, and how this shapes your home life in the United States. The researcher is specifically interested in understanding how these ideas influence: 1. your self perceptions of womanhood, 2. your understanding and experience of familial and romantic relationships, and 3. your expression and view of self esteem/love.

WHAT WE WILL ASK YOU TO DO:

During this study, you will be asked to respond to a series of questions and conversational points about your experiences, to the extent you feel comfortable doing so in a 1:1 interview with the researcher.

DURATION AND LOCATION OF THE STUDY:

Your participation in this study will involve a single session 60 minute interview. The study will take place at your preference: an agreed in person location where you feel most comfortable and private (i.e. home or library) in the Bay area, at the University of San Francisco, or via Zoom.

POTENTIAL RISKS AND DISCOMFORTS:

You face little to no risk as you are reflecting on your life experiences pre-and post-migration.

If a question becomes psychologically triggering for you, you may choose to skip it or discontinue your participation at any time without penalty. If you choose to discontinue, be assured the researcher will promptly end the interview and retract any information with your consent.

The following resources are available for you in case of psychological activation:

- <https://www.crisistextline.org/> Text HOME to 741741 to connect with a Crisis Counselor
- <https://988lifeline.org/> Call 988 to connect with the Suicide & Crisis Lifeline
- <https://www.lacasa.org> Bilingual 24 hour Crisis Line Call 1-877-503-1850 or text at 1-877-923-0700
- <https://mujeresunidas.net/services/alma-crisis-line/> Call Support Line at 415-431-2562 to connect with a Latina immigrant woman in your language

BENEFITS:

You will receive no direct benefit from your participation in this study; however, the possible benefits to others include: 1) the freedom to share your testimonio in an open, inclusive, judgment-free space, 2) a potentially increased self-awareness produced through the act of reflecting on personal experience and 3) the opportunity to educate others, through your story, on this vital subject matter.

PRIVACY/CONFIDENTIALITY:

The only personal information that will be collected will be your name and preferred contact information such as email address or phone number. All of this information will remain stored in a password protected computer and your identity will remain anonymous in the written project. Only the researcher and advisor will have access to the transcription of the interview on their laptop. It will be saved on the laptop until May 2023 or when the thesis board confirms the results and then immediately destroyed.

COMPENSATION/PAYMENT FOR PARTICIPATION:

There is no payment or other form of compensation for your participation in this study.

VIDEO AND AUDIO RECORDINGS: Audio recordings are needed for this research for data analysis and transcription. They will remain anonymous and will be stored in a password protected computer. Audio recordings and transcripts will be kept until May 2023 or when the thesis board confirms the results and then promptly destroyed.

VOLUNTARY NATURE OF THE STUDY:

Your participation is voluntary and you may refuse to participate without penalty. Furthermore, you may skip any questions or tasks that make you uncomfortable and may discontinue your participation at any time without penalty or loss of benefits. In addition, the researcher has the right to withdraw you from participation in the study at any time.

OFFER TO ANSWER QUESTIONS:

Please ask any questions you have now. If you have questions later, you should contact the principal investigator: Jessica Ornelas at (626) 222-3205 or jmornelas@dons.usfca.edu. If you have questions or concerns about your rights as a participant in this study, you may contact the University of San Francisco Institutional Review Board at IRBPHS@usfca.edu.

I HAVE READ THE ABOVE INFORMATION. ANY QUESTIONS I HAVE ASKED HAVE BEEN ANSWERED. I AGREE TO PARTICIPATE IN THIS RESEARCH PROJECT AND I WILL RECEIVE A COPY OF THIS CONSENT FORM.

PARTICIPANT'S FIRST AND LAST NAME (PRINT)

DATE

SIGNATURE

DATE

RESEARCHER'S SIGNATURE

DATE

APPENDIX B

ENGLISH INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

1. What does love mean for you and how do you describe it? More specifically, how do you understand self-love as different from romantic love?
2. Can you speak about your beliefs of womanhood? What do you believe is the responsibility of being a good woman and did your perception change after having children?
3. When you were young, did you do all the chores at home? Have you ever said no to your parents or family or refuse to fulfill the obligations of being a good woman? What happened? Did you hear about other girls who said no to the role of being a good woman?
4. When you were a child, how was love shown in your family? Do you remember watching your mother, aunts, grandmothers always attending and serving the man?
5. When you were young, what did your relationship with faith look like? Did your faith inform how you should behave as a good woman and how you should love in a romantic sense?
6. What does sacrifice mean to you and do you think it is related to your faith?
7. Today, do you have beliefs of attending to men often or what do you believe is your responsibility, if you believe there is one as a woman? How does your faith inform your responsibility as a woman today?

8. Today, what do you think healthy, romantic love looks to you? What are some words or actions that demonstrate healthy, romantic love to you?
9. Today, do you think your voice is important? How do you use your voice today?
10. Today, how is your relationship with self-love and how do you show it?
11. How can we as (Latina, Catholic, religious) women or allies help you grow in your self-love journey and educate others on these important issues?

APPENDIX C

SPANISH INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

1. Qué significa el amor para usted y como lo describe? Como describe el amor propio y romantico para usted y que significa para usted?
2. Me puede platicar un poco sobre sus creencias de ser una mujer? Cual es la responsabilidad de ser una buena mujer?
3. Cuando era pequeña, usted hacia todo el quehacer en su casa? Alguna vez le dijo no a sus padres o familia que no queria cumplir las obligaciones de ser una buena mujer? Que paso o eschucho a otras muchachas que dijeron no al role de ser una buena mujer?
4. Cuando era pequena, como se demostraba el amor en su familia? Usted recuerda mirando a su madre, tias, abuelas siempre atendiendo y sirviendo al hombre?
5. Cuando era pequena, como era su relacion con su fe? Su fe informaba la forma que deberia de comportarse como una buena mujer? Que le decia su fe de la forma que tenia que amar en sentidos romanticos y al amor propio?
6. Que significa el sacrificio para usted y cree que esta relacionado con su fe?
7. Hoy en dia, tiene las mismas creencias de atender al hombre todo el tiempo o cual cree usted que es su responsabilidad, si cree que hay una como mujer? De que manera hoy en dia su fe informa su responsabilidad como mujer?
8. Hoy en dia, como cree usted que se mira el amor, romantico saludable para usted? Cuales son unas palabras o acciones que demuestran el amor, romantico saludable para usted?
9. Hoy en dia, usted cree que su voz es importante? Hoy en dia como usa su voz?

10. Hoy en día, cómo es su relación con el amor propio y como se lo demuestra?

11. Como nosotros como (mujeres Latinas, Católicas religiosas) o aliadas/os podemos ayudarlas a crecer en su amor propio y educar a más personas sobre estos temas importantes?