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Intimate Partner Violence in Mexico: An Analysis of the Intersections Between Machismo Culture, Government Policy,and Violence Against Women (2018)

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and Violence Against Women

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Abstract

This paper investigates the root causes of intimate partner violence against women in Mexico, as well as the factors that are closely linked to an increased risk of partner abuse. Intimate partner violence is commonly referred to as gender-based violence, or any form of recurring physical, emotional, economic, or sexual abuse against one's partner. Gender-based violence is a global problem and is prevalent in many Latin American countries. Mexico has some of the highest rates of intimate partner violence in the region, and for this reason will be the focus of the study. "Machismo culture" is the Latin American variant of sexism that informs gender differences, and gives power and decision-making authority to men. Machismo can be linked to the high rates of intimate partner violence in the region, which is evidenced by risk factors that are associated with women's deviation from conventional gender roles. Machismo and patriarchy also inform the challenges to the successful implementation of Mexican laws that aim to reduce intimate partner violence. This thesis argues that greater autonomy and influence for women across society is essential for ending gender-based violence in Mexico.

Keywords: intimate partner violence, violence against women, Mexico, women's rights, machismo, patriarchy

Introduction

Almost 50% of women in Mexico have reported being a victim of intimate partner violence at some point in their lives (Moral de la Rubia & Lopez Rosales, 2013). Most factors that increase a woman's risk of intimate partner violence (IPV) are related to challenging traditional gender roles. When those expectations are not fulfilled, some men feel emasculated and turn to violence against their partner as a means to re-impose patriarchal order (Ramírez-Rodríguez, 2006, p. 318). These habits and expectations are further encouraged by the activities of government officials and organizations that promote machismo culture through their inaction (Cappucio, 2013). In many cases of gender-based violence, police forces and the criminal justice system do not validate the suffering that women are subjected to and re-victimize women as being the culpable party in their own abuse or deaths. This behavior by Mexican authorities further cultivates the cycle of violence through a lack of enforcement and punishment for violence against women.

Violence is generally defined in relevant literature as an intentional act directed towards a specific person with the goal of suppressing, hurting, or otherwise damaging that individual (Moral de la Rubia & Lopez Rosales, 2013, p. 50). Intimate partner violence (IPV), also referred to as gender based violence (GBV), is a very common form of abuse against women and includes physical, sexual, and emotional aggressions by an intimate partner (WHO, 2012). Although these terms can be used interchangeably, there are specific nuances that separate IPV from GBV, and even specific characteristics of violence against women (VAW) that separates it from other terms. Violence against women is a more general "umbrella" term that encompasses all types of gender based violence that could occur in public or private life. IPV "refers to behavior by an intimate partner or ex-partner that causes physical or psychological harm" (VAWG, 2018). GBV specifically relates to violence directed on the basis of gender that "constitutes a breach to the fundamental rights of liberty, security, and dignity" among others (VAWG, 2018). There are circumstances in which it is important to understand the differences of the categories of violence against women and the people they apply to. However, for the

purposes of this paper the terms detailed above will be used interchangeably to emphasize the reach of the consequences of violence against women and the various social and political spheres to which women can belong.

According to the *Encyclopedia of Domestic Violence* (2007), IPV has been identified as prevalent in at least 30 Latin American countries. Mexican machismo, or the reference to "a standard of behavior exhibited by men in Mexican culture", promotes values that can influence the likelihood of a woman becoming a victim of partner violence (Arciniega & Anderson, 2008, p. 19). In any discussion concerning "machismo culture" it is vital to define it and locate it within a specific context because cultures vary widely from place to place, even within Mexico. Because Mexico is such a large nation, cultures and people's way of life differ greatly in each region. Despite any cultural differences that do exist, "machismo culture" is a constant throughout indigenous villages and sprawling urban cities.

Most of the research on machismo and machista cultures focuses on violence and hyper masculinity. However, there are some less harmful characteristics that are connected to machismo such as protection of the family, wisdom, hard work, responsibility, and emotional connectedness (Arciniega & Anderson, 2008, p. 20). Rather than refer to "machismo culture" as a single cohesive identity, this paper will discuss the influence that negative characteristics have on Mexican women. The other side of "machismo culture" is known as *caballerismo*, or the act of being chivalrous. Although this thesis will not discuss the subtleties of *caballerismo*, it is important to acknowledge the characteristics of machismo that are less detrimental to women's health. Traditional machismo, which is the focus of this analysis, is more associated with sex-role dominance, and aggressive and sexist mannerisms (Arciniega & Anderson, 2008, p. 29).

There also exists a duality within machismo between the "old machismo" and the "new machismo", or the way machista values manifest in different generations. The more current conceptualization of what makes a good man "is someone…who works hard, who is responsible towards his compañera, his children, and is generous with those around him". The older, or

more traditional idea of a good man is related to "someone who could drink, fight, gamble, and have a large number of sexual conquests" (Lancaster, 1992, p. 175). This is comparable to the differences between *caballerismo* and traditional machismo values. Traditional machismo idealizes a strong man as a dominant figure in his family and community, which can translate to sexual prowess, drinking and fighting to demonstrate strength. *Caballerismo* on the other hand, values responsibility, emotional connectedness and kindness which is linked to the principles of "new machismo". Although the differences in characteristics and understandings of what machismo means for different generations will not be analyzed in this paper, it is intriguing to note that these changes in what constitutes a "good man" could contribute to the decrease in rates of violence against women in Mexico and other machista cultures.

Machismo creates a 'system of manliness', which explicitly defines the roles of men within macho cultures (Lancaster, 1992, p. 92). "Any show of sensitivity, weakness, reticence – or whatever else is judged to be a feminine characteristic – is swiftly identified and ridiculed" (Lancaster, 1992, p. 43). From a young age, children are taught that women are subordinate to men, and the gender roles that support and enforce "machismo culture" are introduced early as well, in many cases solidifying how men and women behave for the rest of their lives (Lancaster, 1992, p. 42). Young boys are trained and expected to conform to machismo characteristics. If they do not, they are publicly shamed, which motivates them to adapt to the more violent and aggressive, or non-feeling traits that are projected onto men in Latino cultures. Women, on the other hand, are still supposed to be demure and respectful, and are punished much more severely than boys when they step outside of the boundaries set by societal expectations.

Intimate partner violence is exacerbated for women who face multiple forms of social difference, such as poverty, low education levels, and rural living. Intersectionality theory is a concept used to analyze how women with multiple social differences are marginalized by their community and society. Much of the literature takes intersectionality into account when

analyzing the diverse effects of gender-based violence on women's lives. Including machismo and the patriarchy in these discussions is vital because of the connection between family life, gender roles, and societal expectations. The current literature has discussed and debated the particulars of these relationships, but has failed to delve deeper into the role of the state regarding gender based violence. The research has also fallen short of explicitly connecting "machismo culture" to violence against women and the risk factors associated with that type of abuse (Cappucio, 2010; Castro & Casique, 2009; Christiansen, 2014; Moral de la Rubia & Lopez Rosales, 2013; Ramírez-Rodríguez, 2006). This paper will argue that Mexican societal beliefs and values directly affect machismo values and personal and familial relationships, which perpetuate the cycle of partner violence (see Figure 2).

Why Mexico?

Violence against women in Latin America has been perpetuated and encouraged since colonization. The 'conquest of women' was a tactic of the Spanish conquest of Latin America meant to subjugate the native peoples, and the cavalier way in which violence of women was used to subdue communities is reflected in the gender norms and family life that emerged from that colonial society (Lancaster, 1992, p. 306). The modern concept of machismo and how women are valued in Mexican culture is a result of the trauma, both cultural and psychological, that developed because of the conquest of Mexico and the domination of poor, indigenous females by their more powerful male counterparts (Lancaster, 1992, p. 306).

Intimate partner violence is a global problem, but incidence rates of violence against women is higher in Latin American countries than in other regions. Machismo culture exists in many countries in Latin America but manifests itself through intimate partner violence more in Mexico than in other countries with large populations and economies. For example, 28% of women in cities of Brazil reported being violently assaulted or abused by their partners (WHO, 2005) as compared to 74% in Mexico (D.F. State of Mexico, 2003). In Mexico, 42.6% of women also reported family member abuse, yet another form of violence experienced by many women.

The differences in rates of intimate partner violence can be attributed to several factors, one being that the Brazilian government has passed specific laws and policies that define violence against women as a human rights violation, which laid the foundation for the formation of a support network for victims of gender-based violence (Kiss et. al, 2012).

The Mexican government has signed several international declarations and passed laws that promote women's autonomy and a violence-free life. Since a survey done by the Mexican government in 2003, the reported incidence of intimate partner violence against women decreased to 47% as reported in a 2008 survey (Moral de la Rubia and Lopez Rosales, 2013). A 2012 report in Brazil recorded the victimization of women from IPV at about 18%, significantly lower than six years earlier (Ally et al., 2016). These numbers provide a preliminary overview of the prevalence of gender based violence in Mexico, but it is incredibly difficult to accurately measure rates of violence quantitatively. Gender-based violence is a social phenomenon encouraged by cultural values, and for these reasons is challenging to measure. Interviews and surveys attempt to quantify the suffering of women, but because of the lack of reports as well as the inability of surveys to reach and account for all communities, the data cannot represent the true frequency or impact of violence against women.

The significant decrease in reported partner violence in Mexico in just five years could be due to several factors. The first is that policies and punishments for gender-based violence inspired a decline in incidents of violence against women. However, due to the lack of new policies during this time and the trend of inadequate police investigation, this explanation alone is not sufficient. The second factor that could explain the drop is a difference in methods between the questionnaires administered in 2003 and 2008. Because the same survey was not used to collect data, the discrepancies in questions or other methodology could account for the difference in findings. A combination of the two factors is a much more likely explanation than relying on one alone, and despite the inconsistencies in data collection, the numbers

demonstrate that the prevalence of intimate partner violence has decreased in the last decade. However, it remains to be seen if the cause of this decrease is the actions of the government or other factors that have yet to be analyzed. This paper will explore other origins of the changes in rates of VAW and identify institutions or organizations that contribute to the protection and empowerment of women in Mexico.

Theoretical Frameworks

In the past several decades, gender-based violence and violence against women have come to the forefront of discussions centered around social justice. Several frameworks exist to explain violence against women, some stronger than others. Figure 1 (below) exemplifies a simplified model for understanding the cycle of partner violence (Moral de la Rubia & Lopez Rosales, 2013, p. 61). This preliminary model generalizes the relationship between partners and neglects to distinguish the differences in experience of the male and female partners. The justification of this model accounts only for two factors: "machismo" and "consent", or conformity to traditional gender roles.
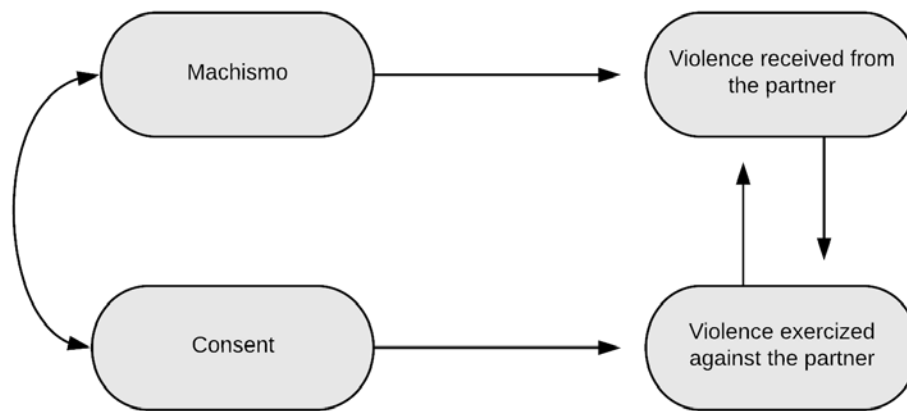

Figure 1: The cycle of violence (Moral de la Rubia & Lopez Rosales, 2013)

This visual depiction of the cycle of violence connects machismo to each individual's "consent", or conformity to traditional gender roles which then influences violence against women. This theory is helpful for thinking about gender roles as evidenced in specific cases, but

does not account for the many other factors that influence intimate partner violence. As a corrective, Figure 2 (below) offers a more comprehensive approach to IPV by explaining the intersections of machismo, traditional gender roles, other social interactions and the influence they all have on intimate partner violence.

Figure 2 depicts four spheres of social interaction: structural, individual, familial, and community. This representation is inspired by the ecological model as well as the vocabulary used by the World Health Organization to describe each sphere of interaction.[1] Heise (1998) uses the model as a theoretical framework for providing "a way to understand much of the existing research with respect to gender-based abuse" (p. 282). The ecological model has been broadly applied to research on violence against women in Mexico by Christiansen (2014) and Castro and Casique (2009), and was highlighted by the WHO as the most prevalent model for analyzing violence. This thesis applies the ecological model in a more comprehensive investigation of the multiple factors that influence and are affected by gender-based violence in the Mexican context.

Although the ecological model as proposed by Heise provides an intersectional lens for understanding why some societies and cultures have higher prevalence of VAW than others, it focuses mainly on aspects of daily life that directly affect women's risk of abuse. The framework concentrates on cultural values and beliefs that influence familial relationships, and in so doing, overlooks the significance of various institutions and organizations. This limitation of the ecological model is what this paper aims to fill and contribute new insights to the impacts of governmental policies and women's rights activism in Mexico.

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[1] See Heise (1998), p. 265, for a depiction of the original ecological model to compare the terms used to refer to each level of interaction.
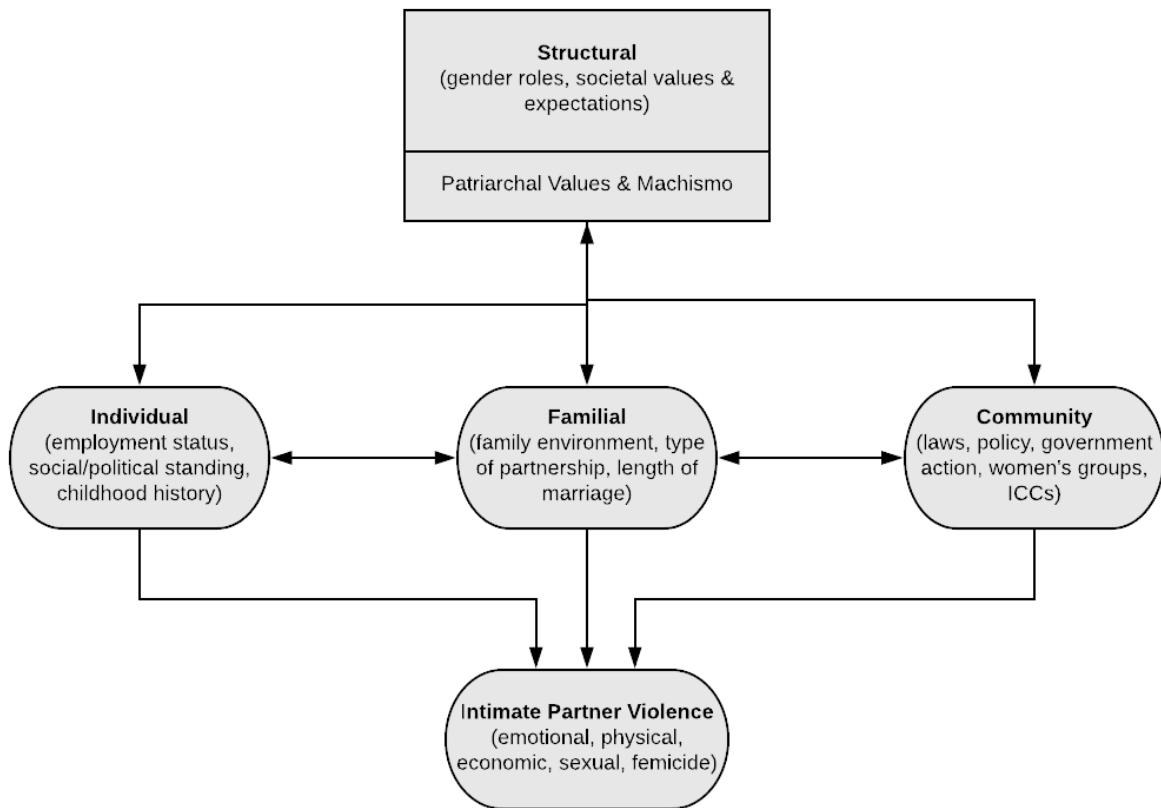
Figure 2: Intersections of machismo and social spheres on IPV

In an attempt to apply the ecological model to a specific cultural context, this thesis will focus on the community and structural spheres. The structural level is commonly viewed as the most broadly encompassing level, which is described as "a broad set of cultural values and beliefs that permeate and inform the other three layers" (Heise, 1998, p. 277). For this reason, it is depicted here as the first in a chain of events and influences that can lead to intimate partner violence. The literature on gender based violence in Mexico is centered around an analysis of the individual and familial sectors, and in many cases the community level is excluded from investigations. This means that the state and other institutions are not held accountable for their actions that can shape societal values and expectations. The community sphere, or what Heise labels the 'exosystem', is discussed in regards to hypermasculinity and rigid gender roles, but references mostly cases in the United States. This thesis will fill the gap left by Heise and other

research by applying the ecological framework specifically to Mexican cases of violence against women.

Gender-based violence and violence against women are complex and multi-dimensional topics that have generated a wide range of research on this subject. This analysis will focus on intimate partner violence against women, the influence of machismo culture on government laws and policies, and how women's rights activism might impact intimate partner violence in Mexico. Figure 2 illustrates this argument by depicting the impacts of machismo as a structural aspect of society which influences three other levels: individual, familial, and community. It is the author's adaptation of the ecological model to Mexican context. This analysis will concentrate on the community, and how this public sphere connects to other levels of societal interaction.

Ecological Model for Understanding Violence

The most accepted and widely-used model for understanding violence is the ecological model, "which proposes that violence is influenced by factors operating at four levels: individual, family/relationship, community and societal or structural" (WHO, 2012, p. 4). Lori Heise first introduced the ecological model in 1998, which conceptualizes violence against women as a multi-dimensional issue that is influenced by personal, situational, and sociocultural factors. This intersectional approach to understanding violence against women allows for a greater investigation into the causes of gender-based violence, but does not fully address the community aspect. The revised model published by the WHO (2012) uses more comprehensive language to describe each sphere of interaction, but also fails to connect the community aspect to risk factors associated with intimate partner violence. Despite the lack of community-centered analyses, the ecological model remains appropriate in multiple contexts. It has been applied to investigations of violence against women in multiple countries, but is particularly relevant to Mexico because of the dominance of masculinity and patriarchy in Mexican society.

Several factors associated with increased rates of VAW and IPV were identified in the ecological model and corroborated by other investigations, including male dominance in the

family, rigid gender roles, and the isolation of women. "Several lines of research suggest that adherence to traditional gender roles – either at the societal or individual level – increases the likelihood of violence against women" (Heise, 1998 p. 279). Cultures with strong ties to traditional gender roles generally have higher rates of gender-based violence because they are less accepting of those who break expectations. The elements identified in the explanation of the ecological model are extremely relevant to Mexican culture and the experiences of women that are dictated by gender roles and male dominance.[2]

Castro and Casique's review of various risks associated with each type of violence (physical, sexual, emotional, and economic) highlights the individual and familial levels of interaction. They conclude that violence in a woman's past, whether she works outside of her home, length of marriage, and type of partnership she has can all influence her likelihood of being a victim of intimate partner violence (Castro & Casique, 2009). These factors fall under the familial relationship and individual levels presented in the ecological model for understanding violence. As evidenced by the literature, all factors in the ecological model are influenced by the patriarchal culture and gender hierarchy of Mexico. Machismo culture, which presumes the superiority of men over women and values masculine pride, is deeply ingrained in Mexican culture. This structures household relations around roles of women as homebound, and men as "providers" working outside the home. The patriarchal society that Mexicans live in and are accustomed to imposes specific values and ways of thinking that then dictate family and gender relationships. These claims will be further explored throughout this paper as they relate to intimate partner violence, implementation of laws, and the actions of civil society organizations.

Intimate Partner Violence: Types and Causes

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[2] Although this model is based on North American research, it is still applicable to other regions of the world because the four levels of relationships that influence the ecological model can be applied to other societies.

The exact causes or factors that influence violence against women are highly debated. However, most authors and researchers, like Ramírez-Rodriguez (2006), Hanser (2007), and Christiansen (2014), agree that violence against women and intimate partner violence stems from societies and cultures with patriarchal ideals that force women into submissive roles. In Mexico, deeply ingrained patriarchal society and gender hierarchies inscribe violence against women as an expected part of familial life. Indeed, 47% of women in Mexico have experienced intimate partner violence (Moral de la Rubia & Lopez Rosales, 2013, p. 50). This number is even more concerning when considering the number of assaults or abuses that go unreported, especially in rural areas where authorities are not as readily available to the population.

It is important to note, and much of the literature on intimate partner violence does, that the term "violence" includes emotional and economic violence, as well as physical and sexual violence. Emotional violence can qualify as anything from telling a woman she is ugly to threatening to leave her or hurt her if she disobeys her husband or partner. Economic violence is identified as the withholding of funds or spending of funds that are intended for rent, bills, or food. The key to identifying either type of violence is that it occurs regularly and with the intent to hurt (Castro & Casique, 2009). Several surveys that were done to gain a greater understanding of intimate partner violence in Mexico identified emotional violence as the most prevalent type of violence against women, and the one that causes the most long-lasting damage to victims (Castro & Casique, 2009; Moral de la Rubia & Lopez Rosales, 2013; Ramírez-Rodríguez, 2006). Many women in Latin America do not recognize emotional abuse as violence because abuse is often understood as physical acts, or use of direct violence. However, once defined, emotional violence can be identified as a more frequent form of gender-based violence. Indirect violence (emotional or economic) is more commonplace, but is more destructive to women's well-being because it "deteriorates [a woman's] self-esteem, mines her autonomy, and modifies her perception of the world" (Ramírez-Rodríguez, 2006 p. 321). Each form of violence against

women has dire consequences, but the evidence positions emotional violence as the type that most greatly affects women's ability to function in everyday life.

The most gendered and severe type of violence against women is femicide. The World Health Organization (WHO) defines femicide as "the murder of a woman" because of her gender, and more than 35% of murders of women globally are reported as being committed by intimate partners (2012, p. 1). In the state of Mexico, about 30% of femicides are committed by an intimate partner or someone else close to the victim (Padgett & Loza, 2013, p. 124). Femicide falls under the broad category of violence against women, but can also be identified specifically as intimate partner violence. It is crucial to use the term femicide instead of homicide because 'homicide' does not differentiate between the murder of men and women and does not paint a comprehensive picture of the dynamics of violence against women. Vocabulary that highlights gender-based violence is vital for discussions surrounding violence against women to emphasize the role that gender plays in acts of violence. Murders of women are not always committed by a relative or partner but can also be perpetrated by complete strangers, just as emotional, physical, and sexual violence is not always caused by intimate partners. Not all violence against women qualifies as IPV, but all violence against women is gendered. This is a significant point to make, because it more strictly defines the parameters of this analysis around gender-based violence.

Risk factors associated with IPV

As in most countries, rates of reported violence against women vary depending on location. Women in rural areas are more likely to receive violence than their counterparts in urban areas. In Peruvian cities for example, 51% of women reported having been abused by their partners, while 69% of rural dwelling Peruvian women reported intimate partner violence (WHO, 2005). This pattern is seen in many other countries. An exception to this generalization is economic violence, which increases 1.7 times for a woman if she lives in an urban area rather than rural (Castro & Casique, 2009). This was determined though surveys because it is more

likely that a male will be controlling of finances when there is more money to be spent, as is generally the case in urban households. However, to focus on the other types of violence (sexual, emotional, physical), there is an evident discrepancy in the amount of intimate partner violence women in rural dwellings experience when compared to patterns in urban areas. This could be attributed to several things, such as the lack of government authority in rural villages, or the strong traditional values and that are often vital to rural ways of life.

The data represented in Figure 4 (below) shows the main factors that influence the various categories of intimate partner violence as discussed by Castro and Casique in their analysis of several Mexican surveys (2009). Each factor in the left column was proven to increase a woman's risk of receiving violence from their partner, and the other columns depict how risk differs with each type of violence studied. The numbers in each column represent the increased amount of risk a woman has of receiving violence from her partner if elements of her life correspond to the factors listed. For example, if a woman belongs to a low social status, she is 2.2 times more likely to become a victim of IPV than a woman of middle or high social status.

Risk Factors Influencing Intimate Partner Violence				
Factors	Physical Violence	Emotional Violence	Economic Violence	Sexual Violence
Woman works outside the home	1.5	1.5	1.8	1.5
Man does not work	1.1	1.1	1.5	1.1
Woman can choose to work or not	1.3	1.4	1.1	1.2
5+ years older than her partner	2.0	0.7	1.3	0.7
Low social status	1.5	1.7	2.2	1.4
Urban living	1.2	1.0	1.7	1.0
Woman's decision-making power *	-0.58	-0.52	-0.67	-0.62

* this factor has been proven to decrease the risk that women will be victims of intimate partner violence rather than increase the risk, as the others in this table do.

Figure 4: Risk Factors Influencing Intimate Partner Violence (Castro & Casique, 2009)

The study that Figure 4 is based on was a culmination of several surveys that investigated the risk factors associated with intimate partner violence, so the numbers represented above in Figure 4 are averages of the data provided by those surveys. There are

seven variables that significantly affect the risk of experiencing partner violence: whether the woman works outside the home, if her husband works, the woman's decision-making power, if she is five (or more) years older than her partner, her social status, where she lives, and if she can decide whether to work or not. It is interesting to note that an age difference of five or more years if the woman is older is a risk factor associated with physical violence, but no other type of IPV. Being older by five years or more increases her risk to double that of women who are the same age or younger than their partner. This switching of gender roles that dictate the superiority of the male in terms of age and intelligence can make him uncomfortable and insecure, interrupting his sense of masculinity and power, which in turn increases the risk of gender-based violence (Castro & Casique, 2009). Figure 2 illustrates this argument by connecting gender roles, the ecological model, and machismo culture to intimate partner violence.

Curiously, the only factor that has been proven to reduce the likelihood of a woman being abused by her partner is her decision-making power. This factor was measured by an index that calculates the woman's decision-making power based on 13 questions which record how often each partner makes decisions for the whole household (Casique, 2004). Decision-making power is recognized as a tool for women's empowerment that could lead to a woman's ability to avoid or reject violence. "The breaking of a patriarchal system could establish a temporary situation in which power gains by the woman mean a readjustment of power that is traditionally concentrated in men" (Casique, 2004 p. 81). Women's decision-making power is a part of a larger network of factors that combine to empower women and shift power structures to benefit women as well as men.

Several key elements of women's empowerment are freedom of movement, decision-making power, formal education, and generation of income (Casique, 2004 p. 90). This is also evidenced in Figure 4, as it has been proven in several surveys that women with higher education and socio-economic status have lower risk of being a victim of intimate partner

violence. Having the power to make decisions concerning herself and her family can decrease a woman's risk of IPV by up to 67% (Castro & Casique, 2009). However, this data seems contradictory to the increase in risk that is associated with a woman's agency to choose if she works or not and if she works outside the home. How can having decision-making power decrease the likelihood of being a victim of IPV, while working outside the home and being able to choose to work or not increase the risk of being abused?

According to the analysis done by Castro and Casique (2009), if a woman works outside of the house, the likelihood of her receiving abuse from her partner increases up to 1.8 times more than women who do not work (see Figure 4). If a woman has significant agency to choose whether she works, her risk of being a victim of physical violence increases 1.3 times. If a woman's male partner does not work, her risk of violence can increase up to 1.5 times. All three of these risk factors seem to contradict or intersect with the one factor that reduces a woman's risk of receiving violence; having decision-making power in her relationship. Castro and Casique do not elaborate on this contradiction, but only comment that decision-making power regarding a woman's work activity should be a central focus of public policy (2009). Without further investigations into the intersection of these risk factors, it is difficult to analyze the apparent contradictions that are presented.

The risk factors associated with each type of violence can be connected to traditional gender roles and patriarchal values, which contribute to keeping women in submissive roles. The ecological model as introduced by Lori Heise (1998) seeks to conceptualize violence as a "multifaceted phenomenon grounded in an interplay among personal, situational, and sociocultural factors" (p. 263). There are four levels of analysis to the model: personal history, family context, community, and societal or structural. Each of these levels of analysis can be connected to machismo culture and values. For example, impoverished families are more likely to experience gender-based violence than others (Heise, 1998). Poverty, or economic status, is a part of the individual level because it is a "factor that each individual brings to his or her

behavior and relationships" (Heise, 1998, p. 264). The violence instigated by low economic status can be explained by the stress caused by poverty, which makes the man feel that he is inadequate in his masculine role of provider. This feeling of inadequacy comes from gender and cultural expectations that men be the primary provider for their family. This also partially explains the phenomenon discovered by the WHO in their 2005 survey that women in rural areas are more likely than women in urban cities to experience intimate partner violence.

Many of the factors that relate to high risk of intimate partner violence are linked to the breaking of gender roles and stereotypes that are expected of women. If a woman works outside the home, she has less time to clean, cook, and care for her partner or family. If a woman has more decision-making power within her relationship, she will have more authority in the decisions that affect her well-being. Both factors are examples of how women's roles and interactions with intimate partners can increase risk of abuse if her actions or lifestyle affects the gender-dynamic in that relationship. Traditionally, women are supposed to stay home to care for the family, and men are expected to make the decisions regarding the family. When these gender roles are broken or lines are crossed, women are much more at risk for being victims of intimate partner violence than if they were to stay in their proscribed roles as humble caretakers.

Intimate Partner Violence and Government Practice

Traditional gender roles have historically held a central role in Mexican society, beginning with Spanish colonization of the region in the 1500s. Because of the consistent prevalence gender hierarchies have had in Mexican culture, it is often difficult to identify which individual characteristics are influenced or how transformation is possible on both personal and societal levels. In his article centered around machismo in everyday life, Galarce (2018) discusses the division of labor between spouses when it comes to household chores, and reflects on how entrenched in everyday activities and tasks machismo has become. This theme of gender roles being dictated by patriarchal expectations is found in most other sources mentioned in this literature review, but this commonality in the literature also connects violence

against women to the government's role in the issue. Historically, women have been marginalized and forced into caregiving roles that persist in their professions and social sphere. Because of the failure of the government to provide equal pay and opportunities for women, the contributions of women in the workforce are not respected or appreciated, leading to further suppression of their rights and liberties in familial and personal relationships. In 2016, the gender wage gap in Mexico was 16.5% as compared to the median wages of males (OECD, 2016). This is greatly improved from 2008 when the wage gap was closer to 60%, however there remain significant gaps in women's compensation for their contributions to society.

As gender roles and expectations shape women's status as being "inferior" to men, they earn lower wages and take poorer jobs (Cappucio, 2010). The transition of women entering the labor force also allowed them to break from traditional "housekeeping" roles and explore further career paths, but overall women were still marginalized within this new sphere. This subordinate role of women in the workforce has reinforced the relative devaluation of their opinions and actions in Mexican society. It also has promoted gender-based violence because women are moving from a caretaking role into the labor force, and breaking gender expectations which in turn can initiate violence. This can be seen in the case of the Campo Algodonero, or the femicides of three working girls found in a cotton field. "One of the structural factors that has motivated violence against women in Ciudad Juárez is the modification of family roles that generated working life for women" (Cappucio, 2010, p. 52). Because of women's entrance into the labor force and the transition of familial roles, incidences of gender-based violence has increased throughout Mexico. It is a result of the devaluation of women's contributions to society that authorities and government entities do not make the necessary commitments to the plight of women and complete investigations with due diligence when it comes to violence against women (Cappucio, 2010).

There is significant evidence in the form of personal testimonies from women and families who have been affected by femicide and intimate partner violence that demonstrate the

lack of initiative that police authorities and other government officials have in properly investigating possibilities of violence against women. Whether evidence is mishandled, spouses or partners get let off easy because of their social or political position, or no investigation is begun until days after a report is made, government officials do not prioritize attacks on women as a serious crisis of public health or security (Padgett & Loza, 2014). In 2012 and 2013, only 24% of the 3,892 femicides in Mexico were investigated by authorities, and only 1.6% of those led to sentencing (Bautista, 2017). This argument begins to fill the gap around government influence and how women's autonomy is affected, but evidence is still lacking for the effects of other entities and institutions that are not directly related to the government.

The problem is not that the government of Mexico is actively ignoring the issue of gender inequality, but that they do not follow through on their commitments to provide women with a safe and violence-free life (Cappuccio, 2010). Mexico participated in several global conventions and signed declarations committing them to eliminate violence against women. Three of these are the Declaration on the Elimination of Violence Against Women in 1993, the Inter-American Convention on the Prevention, Punishment, and Eradication of Violence Against Women in 1994, and the General Law of Women's Access to a Life Free of Violence in 2007 (Christiansen, 2014). Christiansen, however, points to the inadequacy of these declarations and laws in addressing this multi-dimensional issue. She specifically focuses her analysis on the framework of the General Law passed in 2007, which was centered around the multiple and combined causes of intimate partner violence. This law also references the ecological model as framed by Heise and the World Health Organization, and is based on the complexity of the issue of violence against women. However, Christiansen argues that although this law is considerate of the multiple factors influencing IPV and promotes cohesion between branches of government, it functions more as a theoretical perspective on how to resolve violence against women. It fails in practice for multiple reasons, one being the lack of incentives for municipalities and local governments to adhere to the recommendations stipulated in the legislation.

Article 23 of the legislation claims that the purpose of the general law is "aimed basically at guaranteeing the safety of women and the cessation of violence against them and at eliminating the inequalities produced by legislation that harms their human rights" (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2007, p. 12) It emphasizes the cooperation between government entities and the roles of each, but does not dictate how programs will be implemented, which is the primary obstruction that prevents the reduction of violence against women. Laws that are intended to create a safe space within their community for vulnerable women instead magnify the traditional machismo values that exacerbate incidences of intimate partner violence and do nothing to decrease its frequency. Although the policies encouraged in the legislation are forward-thinking and promote the empowerment of women, the subtleties of the language used undermine the good intentions of the law itself. Rather than implementing requirements that local and federal legislation must abide by, most sections use vocabulary such as "suggest", "should", and "consider", none of which are compulsory (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2007). The law also places the responsibility of execution onto municipalities and local state systems, without providing incentives or consequences for lack of implementation. This means that authorities who are meant to enforce and encourage these laws still belittle the pain and struggles of women who suffer from gender-based violence.

The Shortcomings of Government Policy and Social Accountability

The factors discussed above and shown in Figure 4 have been available for nearly a decade, but are ignored in policy implementation that is meant to deter or discourage violence against women. The government fails to address the severity of the issue of intimate partner violence in their investigations and enforcement of laws and policies prohibiting violence, which has the opposite effect than what was intended. The laws in place are well-intentioned and meant to improve quality of life for women in their personal relationships, but the lack of enforcement and the patriarchal values that govern social interactions in Mexico still promote gender-based violence as an outcome when gender roles are challenged.

Authorities who are charged with investigating violence against women often have a cavalier attitude towards the accusation, and in some situations might treat evidence with less care than in other cases not involving violence against women. The lack of attention when it comes to IPV is especially noticeable when it comes to investigations of femicide as demonstrated through this quote. "The thing in common is the negligence of the authorities. When you arrive at the Attorney General's office to denounce violence, the authorities minimize it" (Padgett & Loza, 2014, p. 410). This statement came from the mother of a woman who was hung by her husband in front of their two young children. He was later freed from any criminal accusations after eight years of debate with the State of Mexico. Despite the evidence against him and the testimonies of the sons who were present at the time of the murder, the death of Nadia, his wife, was ruled as a suicide. This ruling came six years after approval of the General Law of Women's Access to a Life Free of Violence, and demonstrates the inadequacy of government laws and enforcement regarding gender-based crimes against women.

Although Mexico passed policies in 1993, '94, and 2007, the absence of any significant consequences for committing gender-based violence is a major limitation to the enforcement of these policies. The Federal Criminal Code of Mexico defines violence against women "as a serious act that is punishable by a term of imprisonment between 1 to 7 years and a fine" (ACCORD, 2017, p. 9). However, as evidenced by the testimonies throughout this thesis, this is often not the case as husbands and partners are not convicted of crimes relating to intimate partner violence or femicide. In fact, less than 2% of nearly 4,000 cases of violence against women in a two-year span were taken to court and convicted (Bautista, 2017). Moreover, a justice system that is skewed in favor of men, especially ones with higher social status, causes women to be forced into situations that put them at risk for violence once again. "The diligence of moving the body, the most important thing in the investigation of a possible assassination, took at the most 15 minutes" (Padgett & Loza, 2014, p. 52). The girl (body) mentioned in the quote was murdered by her husband, a policeman, after years of marriage and a significant

history of abuse. He was never convicted of any crime because of his status as a government officer, personal connections to the justice system and the underlying patriarchal values that still permeate government entities and value men over women.

The most significant step that has been taken regarding women's rights was the decriminalization of abortion in the first 12 weeks in Mexico City (D.F. Legislative Assembly, 2002). The legislation was reformed in 2007, which has allowed women greater autonomy and control over their bodies, giving them more confidence and decision-making power in their relationships. However, this reformed legislation looks better on paper and in theory than when implemented in real situations. The law was intended to target poor and underserved women throughout Mexico, but because poor women outside of Mexico City often do not have the resources to travel, they still do not have access to safe abortions. Intersectionality theory can be applied to the accessibility of abortion services, because women of indigenous identity, low economic status, and with little education are much more likely to seek unsafe abortions than affluent, wealthy women (Sousa, Lozano & Gakidou, 2009). In tandem with Figure 4, this theory explains that women of diverse backgrounds with low social status and some decision-making power are more likely than others to become victims of intimate partner violence. The decriminalization of abortion within Mexico City is a step in the right direction for gender-equity, but when coupled with the strong machismo culture that permeates Mexican society and the limitations of the policy itself, the decision-making power granted to women with this legislation change will likely increase their risk of being victims of gender-based violence.

Civil Society Organizations in Mexico

Valdés and Donoso contribute to this discussion by evaluating and analyzing the functions of the Index of Commitments Fulfilled (ICF) in South American and Latin American countries (2009). ICFs in Mexico were created in 1995 as a result of the Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing, which has become a point of departure and inspiration for many women's activist and women's rights organizations. Their discussion is centered around

the roles of ICFs as well as their shortcomings, including a comparison of improvements based on the ICF in Mexico, Brazil, and Venezuela, demonstrating how the index functions in different social and political settings.

ICFs were formed as a way to allow for civil society organizations and other members of society to hold the government accountable for commitments to their citizens that are not legally binding. According to Valdés and Donoso, the ICFs focused on three areas of importance for women: "participation and access to power, economic autonomy and poverty, and health and sexual and reproductive rights" (2009, p. 170). This method of social accountability should create a more gender-equitable culture for women, but the progress made during the period of evaluation was very slow. Valdés and Donoso also make the point that much of the progress that has been made is due to the efforts of women's organizations through the creation of women's ministries and offices which allow women to have a larger role and participate in the government and society that still tries to keep them in the dark (2009). Unfortunately, ICFs in Mexico only lasted until 2003 which has left a gap in data and tracking in women's rights progress. The end of ICFs has made it difficult to analyze laws that have been passed since then, such as the decriminalization of abortion within Mexico City. Fortunately, as stated above, research and statistics on women's access to the services provided by this policy have filled that gap to some extent. Other CSOs have also taken up the role of policy tracking in order to encourage citizen participation and ensure that government policy fulfills its promises.

Fundar, another non-profit organization in Mexico that was formed in 1999, tracks public policy and public institutions with the goal of furthering democracy. Their work is done on a broad scale with a focus on citizen participation, but specific programs that emphasize women's autonomy and decreasing violence against women fill the gap left by ICFs. Fundar has analyzed the General Law on Women's Access to a Life Free from Violence, and brings up a significant aspect of the law that is not often mentioned. The law includes a protection component for women in the form of shelters which provide basic needs such as social work, medical, and

legal services. "In Mexico there are 72 shelters of which 34 belong to civil society organizations, 4 to private welfare institutions and 34 are public institutions" (ACCORD, 2017, pp. 9). CSOs are vital participants in providing safe spaces for women and vulnerable populations, because they often reach communities and groups that are excluded from government policy and institutions. However, non-profits and other CSOs are often underfunded and only focus on a small community-related problem rather than national issues. For this reason, the balance between public institutions that are government-funded and shelters run by CSOs is imperative.

More recently, women's civil society organizations (CSO) have taken a feminist perspective and focus on "projects for the specific needs of women, always considering the equality of gender" (Guadarrama-Sánchez & Pliego-Alvarado, 2017, pp.192). Women's CSOs in Mexico focus on three points of entry for the involvement and care of vulnerable women, each of which is useful in different settings. The three categories are *from within, participant,* and *from without.* Each type of interaction highlights the different roles and situations of vulnerable women and the responsibility of the CSO in providing aid and support. The perspective *from within* is if an organization's members are currently or have been a part of the vulnerable population, in this case, women who have been victims of IPV. *Participant* intervention views women as agents of their own transformation, so organizations focus on the development of strategies to "generate ideas and solve problems". Interventions *from without* involve the least amount of involvement by the organization because the organization's members do not relate to the target population. In the case of women as the population in need of support, they are seen as individual victims and subjects of attention. (Guadarrama-Sánchez & Pliego-Alvarado, 2017, p. 195).

One example is the organization Hogar Comunitario Yach'il Antzetic, based in Chiapas, the most southern state in Mexico. Hogar Comunitario encourages the development of women's rights and supports vulnerable women in whatever way they can (Guadarrama-Sánchez & Pliego-Alvarado, 2017). This organization is associated with the *from within* intervention

strategy, because many of the members who work to provide support and assistance are women who have been helped by the same organization in the past, and therefore are very involved in what they do. In Chiapas especially, women's advocacy and support groups are vital for the development of autonomy because of the high rates of poverty and large indigenous community present within the state. The two of these factors, when combined, further marginalize women and increase their risk of becoming victims of intimate partner violence.

CSOs as Watch Dogs

Because of the shortcomings of the Mexican government, social accountability as monitored by CSOs is necessary to work towards a more gender-equitable society. "Civil society refers to organizations and social movements outside of direct state control, such as unions, community associations, voluntary associations, NGOs, and self-help groups" (Cosgrove, 2010, p. 18). Civil society organizations work toward finding solutions to problems by involving community members who have connections to the issues they address. However, their progress is impeded by the patriarchal values underlying government policy and government employees' actions. Patriarchal values that are ingrained at the societal level make it increasingly difficult for organizations who want to break down those societal barriers and expectations to create a safe space for women (Guadarrama-Sánchez & Pliego-Alvarado, 2017, p. 191).

In 2015, "in collaboration with civil society, the State of Mexico established the country's first 'gender alert' system" which would gather information to help investigations of gender-based violence against women (ACCORD, 2017, p. 15). As of 2016, the gender alert system was only implemented in 11 of the 125 municipalities of Mexico, and civil society organizations have complained about the lack of noticeable changes or significant action resulting from the alert system. Despite the requests of Mexican State society that the gender alert be implemented, the governor continues to insist that "there were no problems of gender-based violence facing women in the state" (Conn, 2016). These assertions made by authorities that

ignore the magnitude of violence against women within their states support the victim-blaming that is common throughout Mexico. Although the gender alert system was implemented to speed investigations of violence against women and to provide legal, health, and psychological services, machismo values that demean the experiences of women and the lack of trust that women have in the penal system have led to the failed execution of the alert system.

The gender alert system is imperative to implement nationally because far-reaching, universal policies will have a greater impact on women's rights and access to services. CSOs can reach marginalized communities, but are limited to specific geographic areas by their size and funding. It is important to acknowledge the limitations of CSOs, because this places responsibility in the hands of government to provide universal policies that require state action. Civil society organizations are a part of the community sphere of the ecological model, and thus have influential power over more personal social relationships and interactions (see Figure 2). This is demonstrated through the work of organizations like Fundar and Hogar Comunitario Yach'il Antzetic which focus on the improvement of individual lives and specific situations of vulnerable women. The empowerment of women, which is a primary focus of these CSOs, will be key to reducing violence against women and spreading knowledge to understand women's role in the family and in society. The failure of government to enforce laws and punishments to prevent violence against women conveys the belief that abuse of women is socially acceptable, which then upholds patriarchal values.

Conclusion & Policy Recommendations

The values imbedded in Mexican society influence the various levels of societal interaction, and dictate gender roles and expectations. If these expectations are not fulfilled, women risk becoming victims of intimate partner violence. Surveys completed in the last ten years show several factors that put women at a higher risk for receiving violence from their partner, but the same surveys also found that if women have significant decision-making power, their likelihood of experiencing IPV is significantly reduced. This point will be key to any policy

changes and societal transformations that will need to happen in Mexico for women to lead lives free of violence. The empowerment of women is vital to attain a gender-equitable environment, but in order for that to be achieved, the machismo values that govern Mexican society will need to be transformed. To change the way women are perceived, they will need greater autonomy in fulfilling their economic responsibility and more influence in family and society. This is a substantial goal, and cannot be placed only on the shoulders of women. Institutions, societal perceptions, and men all need to be involved in the process of social transformation and support women's empowerment. Men perpetuate the cycle of violence because of the traditional machismo values they are raised under, and as they grow into members of society, the ideals they hold permeate and influence the way institutions and policies address women's rights issues and gender-based violence. It is also essential to call attention to the women and girls who are a part of the informal sector and often left out of discussions surrounding women's contributions to society. Research on violence against women in the informal sector is severely lacking, and without knowledge of what women's situations are, no policy changes or social transformation can be made.

The role of CSOs in empowering women is of utmost importance, especially because the government historically has not properly enforced its policies meant to improve vulnerable women's situations. If the Mexican government provides proper training for a less gendered system of justice and investigation, women might regain confidence and trust in the criminal justice system. However, the efforts of the government will have to be coupled with civil society organizations because the populations that are targeted by CSOs are often the communities that receive less aid from government as a result of their geographic location or their social status. Social transformation is already taking place, as younger generations of men uphold a different ideal of what it means to be a 'good man', changing stereotypes of machismo culture from sexually dominant and aggressive males to men that care for their family and are financially and socially responsible. This popular conception of what it means to belong to

"machismo culture" is beginning to change, so for the transformation to spread further and remain permanent, the "new machismo" of younger generations will need to be absorbed into governmental bodies and implemented in public policy.

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