

*Intimate Partner Violence and Depression  
among rural Mexican Women*

*Final Report to  
CMHI-UC MEXUS*



**Enriqueta Valdez Curiel, M.D.  
Universidad de Guadalajara, CUSUR**

**Yvette G. Flores, Ph.D.  
University of California, Davis**

**February 20, 2005**

## ***Introduction***

### **Background**

Depression is well documented as a major public health problem both in the United States and Mexico due to its high prevalence and severe impact on people's lives (Alderete et al. 1999, Romero et al. 2000, Salgado de Snyder & Maldonado 1994). Furthermore, a number of high risk indicators have been documented worldwide; specifically key sociodemographic variables predict to a greater likelihood of suffering from depression. Among these, female gender, belonging to a lower socioeconomic class, and low educational attainment emerge as powerful predictors of depression. Other studies (Firestone et al. In press, Vega et al. 1997 ) point to the incidence of depression among women who have been physically or sexually abused in childhood or adulthood. Likewise, feminist writers argue that the social location of women, particularly the pressures of gender roles, increase the likelihood of depression (Flores-Ortiz 1993, Lara Cantu 1991).

A few studies have examined the epidemiology of depression among Mexican women (Medina Mora 1992, Salgado de Snyder & Maldonado 1994). In their study, Salgado de Snyder & Maldonado found higher rates of depression among women from rural communities in Michoacan and Jalisco when compared with samples of Mexican American and Anglo women in the United States (Clark et al. 1981, Garcia & Marks 1989, Vega et al.1997). These studies utilized the CES-D to

measure depression. The authors point to possible cultural differences as an explanation of the higher rate of depression among rural Mexican women. These differences could be accounted for by gender role, role strain and familial or marital stress (Flores-Ortiz 1993). The women in Garcia and Marks and Salgado de Snyder and Maldonado's studies experienced similar symptoms of depression, in particular, negative affect (feeling sad, lonely or depressed) and difficulty experiencing positive affect (lack of feelings of optimism, lack of enjoyment in life, and not feeling happy). Moreover, the authors point out that these women would not have met criteria for clinical depression since they all continued to meet cultural role expectations by providing for their families and working outside the home. Salgado de Snyder and Maldonado also suggest that the symptoms these women manifested may in fact be an enactment of cultural mandates for rural women in traditional families. Stereotypically, such women are expected to be long suffering, martyr-like and demonstrate great abnegation. Thus, the mere presence of negative affect and the lack of positive affect alone do not imply the presence of depression, but the strength of these feelings does call for further evaluation of depression. Furthermore, these authors argue that depression may be manifested differently in different cultural or ethnic groups. Thus, it is important to understand the gender and cultural context within which symptoms of depression occur. Likewise, the early detection of depression is viewed as critical given the possibility of preventing and treating it successfully, provided it is diagnosed accurately.

There are particular issues which women in rural Mexico confront that may increase their risk for depression. It is estimated that over 8 million Mexicans reside in the United States, with the vast majority having emigrated from Jalisco, Michoacán, and Guanajuato, as well as from Zacatecas and the border regions of northern Mexico (*MILENIO Periodico*. Guadalajara, 3 December, 2001). Thus it is estimated that the majority of adult women in rural areas are partnered with men who at some point or another migrate to the United States in search of work. Other studies have documented the increase in role strain these women experience both while their partners are away and upon their return (Salgado de Snyder & Lopez, UCMEXUS-CONACYT grant).

In earlier studies (Flores-Ortiz, Andrade Palos & Valdez Curiel, in press) we examined Intimate Partner Violence among Mexican women. We found high rates of physical and verbal abuse among partners in rural Jalisco. Furthermore, the more traditional the couple, the more likely they were to use violent tactics for conflict resolution. Similar findings were obtained with couples in rural Jalisco and couples in Northern California who had emigrated from Jalisco and Michoacan. The qualitative findings from this study indicate that women whose husbands migrated experienced sadness, uncertainty, preoccupation, and added responsibilities that often were unrecognized by the partner and extended family. The women, however, gained a sense of agency while the men were away, which was difficult to surrender once the men returned, or when they joined the spouse in the United States. Several couples

indicated an increase in violence between them upon reunification, since the men became upset that the women had become more independent during the separation. The women also experienced dysphoria once in the United States due to the loss of their families of origin, changes in their surroundings, and increased couple conflict.

Clearly it is important to assess with larger samples the relationship of migration (of the man alone or of the couple to the United States) to intimate partner violence and depression among women.

### *Specific Objectives*

Our project aimed to examine the prevalence of intimate partner violence and depression in three rural Mexican samples of women who reside in high sender states: Jalisco, Michoacan, and Guanajuato. In addition, we examined the strategies utilized by the women for conflict resolution, their perception of couple relationship, and adherence to traditional roles. The sample was stratified by municipality and whether the spouse was in the United States or in Mexico at the time of the interview.

Thus our project aimed to elucidate the following:

1. What is the incidence of depression among women in rural communities whose partners have left for the United States compared to those who reside with their spouse?

2. What is the incidence of intimate partner violence among women in rural localities who live with their spouses, compared to women whose husbands have migrated but visit regularly?
3. To what extent and in what ways does migration affect strategies for conflict resolution among Mexican women whose spouses have migrated to the United States compared to women with a similar sociodemographic profile whose spouses have never migrated?
4. In what ways do Mexican women negotiate conflict?
5. What is the relationship of perception of couple relationship to specific strategies for conflict resolution among women whose husbands have migrated and those whose husbands have not migrated?
6. Is there a relationship between adherence to traditional values, depression, and intimate partner violence among rural women?

## ***Methodology***

### **Field Work Setting**

Participants were recruited from the states of Jalisco (communities of Gomez Farias, Tuxpan, Lo Arado, Copala, and La Manzanilla), Guanajuato

(communities of El Vergel, Alfonso Yañes, Nuevo Pantoja and Montelongo) and in Michoacan

(Capula, El Porvenir y Amargosilla, Aranjuez Iranparampeo, Sevina Nahuatzen and Miguel Hidalgo-

Indaparapeo). The selected states have the highest rate of male emigration to the

United States with concomitant female-headed households. The communities selected from each state were chosen also due to their rural and semi rural characteristics, road accessibility, and the existence of previous contact in some of them.

### **Characteristics of the Sample**

The women recruited for this study were 626 Mexican nationals (approximately 200 from each state) between the ages of 18 and 50 who resided in fifteen communities of the states of Jalisco, Guanajuato and Michoacan. The sampling provided a mix of rural and semi rural female dwellers. Half of the sample resided with their spouses year-round. The remaining participants had husband or partners who had migrated to the United States.

## ***Procedures- Sampling***

### **Quantitative data collection**

The Mexican team established contact with *promotoras de salud* or with women that hold a leader position in their communities. These women were asked to accompany the research team to the houses of possible participants, introduce the members of the research team to them and to encourage them to participate on the study. There were some communities that did not have *promotoras de salud*; therefore, the research team had to canvas door-door identifying women that met the sample criteria.

During the first visit, the team arranged an appointment with the women who agreed to answer the questionnaire, and during the second visit, research assistants from each of the states visited the women, previously selected, and once they signed the consent form to participate, the researcher administered the survey, which lasted from 40 to 50 minutes. Researcher assistants were advised to write a note on the surveys of those women that could be candidates to participate in the focus group discussion because of their own depression-violence experience, or because their interest and willingness to give their opinion on the subject.

Half of the women interviewed had spouses who had never migrated to the United States and half had spouses or partners who had migrated to the U.S. at least once and who were residing in the United States at the time of the study. The participants were individuals over 18 years of age who had been married or cohabitating for at least 2 years. The sampling technique was a convenience sample that was tested in earlier studies conducted by the researchers.

The questionnaires were administered in interview format as our previous study found minimal levels of literacy in a sample with similar sociodemographic characteristics (Ciudad Guzman, Jalisco). In Jalisco, three undergraduate psychology students from the Centro Universitario del Sur were trained to recruit and administer the questionnaires. These students, together with the Mexican Co-investigator were in charge of supervising one local resident from Michoacan, and 12 from Guanajuato who also received the same

training and collaborated on the survey administration. Dr. Valdez-Curiel and Dr. Flores-Ortiz directed the data collection in Jalisco, Michoacan and Guanajuato.

### *Qualitative data collection*

From our sample of female participants we selected those who scored high on the depression inventory, who had a spouse in the United States or whose partner had never been in the US, and/or who were recommended by the research assistant to participate on the discussion. One hundred twenty women were invited (only 64 attended the discussions) to participate in the in-depth interviews to discuss how they negotiate their differences with their partner, how they understand depression, and the impact of the migration of their spouse on their role functioning. The Mexican and the United States co-investigators conducted the interviews until saturation was reached. Interviews were conducted either at the health center, public library, house patios, *salas de comuneros* (community spaces), private living rooms, or outside the town's temple. The interviews were audio taped and subsequently transcribed for analysis.

## ***INSTRUMENTS***

This was a combined methodology study utilizing qualitative and quantitative inquiry.

Five standardized instruments, validated for use with a similar Mexican sample, were utilized: the Conflict Tactics Scale (Straus et al., 1979, validated for use with Mexican subjects by Flores-Ortiz et

al 2002), Inventario de Reacciones Ante la Interacción de Pareja (IRIP) (Díaz Loving et al., 1998, modified by Andrade Palos, 2000), the Machismo Scale (Andrade Palos & Valdez Curiel, 2000), and the CES-D (Radloff 1977). In addition, a subsample of women from both groups (with and without migrating spouses participated in focus groups.

### **Instruments (Quantitative)**

Five instruments were utilized

- a) Demographic questionnaire: consists of 16 questions addressing primarily sociodemographic information, family composition, and 3 open-ended questions which explore the subjects' perception of the most common problems couples face, the most difficult problems the respondent and his/her partner have faced as a couple, and what the subjects liked best about their relationship. In addition, respondents are asked whether or not their spouses have ever migrated, whether they are currently in Mexico or the United States, how many times they migrated, and pattern and duration of the migration. The women will be asked how their husband's absence affects them in terms of responsibilities, their role, and mood.
- b) Conflict Tactics Scale (CTS): this is a 78-item scale developed by Strauss et al. (1996) and modified for use with a Spanish population by Medina and Barbaret (1996). The Spanish version of the CTS was revised and modified for an earlier study

with Mexican couples by Flores-Ortiz et al., (2000). For the current investigation, minor modifications were made based on the previous Mexican study, resulting in a 74-item scale which measures the frequency and severity of physical, psychological, and sexual violence between couples. The scale also measures the frequency of negotiation strategies couples utilize to resolve their conflicts. Half of the items refer to tactics the subject has experienced from her partner. The other half refers to tactics the subject has utilized towards her partner.

- c) Inventario de Reacciones ante la Interacción de Pareja (IRIP)/Inventory of Reactions towards a partner or spouse. This scale consists of 40 items that measure perceptions and reactions towards the couple relationship (Díaz-Loving et al., 1998). This scale was validated with a Mexican population. For the previous study with Mexicans from Mexico City and Jalisco, the scale was modified to meet the lower literacy level of subjects, resulting in a 20-item scale which measure the constructs originally proposed by the authors: desire for interaction, fear-distancing, desire to know the other, and displeasure-frustration. This scale was validated for use with rural Mexicans in Jalisco and urban Mexico City dwellers (Andrade Palos et al. 2000).

- d) Machismo Scale: this scale was developed by Andrade-Palos and Valdez Curiel (2001) utilizing as a foundation the items comprising the Machismo dimension of the Historical and Sociocultural Foundations of the Mexican Family Scale (Díaz-Guerrero 1979). This scale measures traditional beliefs and values generally held by Mexican families.
- e) CES-D (Radloff 1977) was developed to assess risk indicators for depression in the general population. Its 20 items measure the most important components of the symptomatology of depression. This scale was validated for use with rural Mexican women by Salgado de Snyder and Maldonado (1994). The scale has been used extensively with non-clinical community samples. In Mexico, the scale has been used with adolescents and adults of both sexes and with both urban and rural samples (Lara-Cantú 1991, Gonzalez-Fortaleza et al., 1992, Medina Mora et al. 1992) and found to have high internal consistency.

### Quantitative data analysis

Since this sample had more rural sociodemographic characteristics than the previous Mexican samples, factor analysis of the major scales was conducted to determine their validity.

This study utilized a factorial design which examined the relationship of four

scales (IRIP, CTS, Machismo, CES-D) and demographic factors in four groups (women with migrant husbands, women whose husbands have not migrated, women with depressive symptomatology and women who do not meet criteria for depression).

### Qualitative data analysis

The audiotapes of the interviews were transcribed and the data analyzed utilizing the grounded theory method, a method of qualitative analysis developed by Glasser and Straus (1967). Grounded theory was used to generate theory-through the technique of collecting and coding data in parallel-- that assisted us in elucidating the influence of migration on the quality of the couple's relationship, the ways in which the couple resolves conflict, and the incidence of depression and intimate partner violence among the women.

## **Results**

### Depression

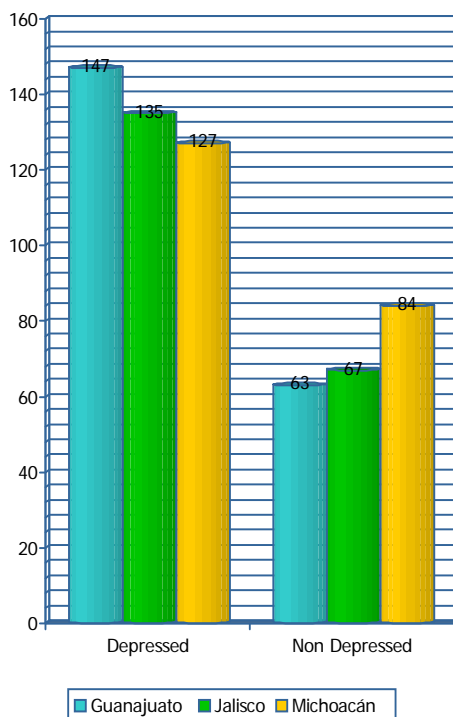
We found a 65.7% prevalence rate of depression in women from the three states (as measured by the CES-D). The rate of depression was highest for women between 20-40 years of age and among those whose husbands were working in the U.S. ( $\chi^2=4.86$ ,  $p=.0275$ ).

| Name       | Depressed |      | Non Depressed |      |
|------------|-----------|------|---------------|------|
|            | n         | %    | n             | %    |
| Community  |           |      |               |      |
| Guanajuato | 147       | 23.6 | 63            | 10.1 |
| Jalisco    | 135       | 21.7 | 67            | 10.8 |

|  |     |       |     |       |
|--|-----|-------|-----|-------|
| Michoacan                              | 127 | 20.4  | 84  | 13.5  |
| <b>Age</b>                             |     |       |     |       |
| < 20                                   | 10  | 1.6   | 6   | .96   |
| 20-30                                  | 156 | 25    | 82  | 13.1  |
| 31-40                                  | 140 | 22.4  | 85  | 13.6  |
| 41-50                                  | 91  | 14.6  | 39  | 6.3   |
| 51-60                                  | 11  | 1.8   | 3   | 0.5   |
| > 61                                   | 1   | .2    | 0   | 0     |
| <b>Marital Status</b>                  |     |       |     |       |
| Married                                | 367 | 58.8  | 206 | 33    |
| Living together                        | 42  | 6.7   | 9   | 1.4   |
| <b>Migrant Partner</b>                 |     |       |     |       |
| No migrant partner                     | 196 | 31.41 | 123 | 19.71 |
| Migrant Partner                        | 213 | 34.13 | 92  | 14.74 |
| <b>Years living with their partner</b> |     |       |     |       |
| < 5                                    | 59  | 9.52  | 38  | 6.13  |
| 5-10                                   | 112 | 18.06 | 53  | 8.55  |
| 11-15                                  | 68  | 10.97 | 41  | 6.61  |
| 16-20                                  | 64  | 10.32 | 41  | 6.61  |
| 21-30                                  | 81  | 13.06 | 34  | 5.48  |
| > 31                                   | 23  | 3.71  | 6   | .97   |

**\*To see more sociodemographic data see Appendix 1.**

**Depression by State**



### Intimate Partner Violence

We investigated particular strategies for conflict resolution the women and their spouses utilized. Ninety seven percent (N=618) of the sample reported their husbands utilized negotiation strategies; yet, 67% (N=422) reported suffering psychological aggression, 33% (N=210) reported suffering physical aggression with 14.9% (N=93) reporting suffering injuries. Twenty percent (N=125) reported being the victims of sexual coercion.

Likewise, the women reported utilizing particular strategies with their husbands. Nearly one hundred percent (99.7% N=622) reported negotiating with their spouses. Nearly 70% (N=430) utilized psychological aggression against their spouses, 27.4% (N=171) of the women reported using physical violence against them with 30.2% (N=188) reported causing injuries to their spouse. Five percent of the women (N=32) reported they sexually coerced their spouses.

### IPV and depression

We found a strong relationship between IPV and depression. Specifically, women who suffered psychological abuse evidenced higher levels of depression than women who did not suffer such violence ( $\chi^2 = 38.5$ ,  $p < .0001$ ). Women who suffered physical aggression and injuries also showed more depression than women who did not ( $\chi^2 = 20.4$   $p < .0001$ , and  $\chi^2 = 14.38$   $p < .0001$ , respectively). Women who suffered sexual coercion also showed



greater levels of depression ( $\chi^2 = 27.8$ ,  $p < .0001$ ).

Moreover, women who perpetrated violence also showed higher levels of depressive symptomatology, particularly those who used psychological aggression ( $\chi^2 = 22.63$ ,  $p < .0001$ ), physical aggression ( $\chi^2 = 12.75$ ,  $p = .0004$ ) and causing injuries ( $\chi^2 = 19.04$ ,  $p < .0004$ ).

**IPV and perception of the couple relationship**

As with our earlier studies, the presence of intimate partner violence did not decrease the women’s desire to know their husbands better or to interact with them. Likewise, there was no difference in the levels of fear towards spouse between the women who suffered violence and those who did not.

**IPV and Machismo**

Also as in our previous studies, women who reported using various forms of violence towards their husbands and who similarly reported suffering abuse from their spouses or partners, held more traditional views, which privilege male superiority, power, and status. These women also expressed an acceptance of male aggression.

**Qualitative Results**

From the 623 women who answered the survey, 120 of them (40 from each state) were invited to participate on the focus group discussion; however, only 64 attended them. We conducted 9 focus groups (with a theoretical sample) with

and average of 7 to 8 participants in each. Once the focus group aim and process were explained and consent was obtained, the groups began. Each discussion group lasted approximately 50 minutes.

The topics guiding the discussion were: a) Common problem among couples, b) Intimate partner violence, 3) Conflict resolutions, 4) Migrant couples/ partners, 5) Feeling toward the partner migration.

**Sociodemographic Results**

The majority of the focus group’s participants (77%) were between 20 and 40 years old; almost all of them were married (92%), a third had attended elementary school, 4.7% were illiterate, 40% had been living with their partners from more that 10 years, half had between 1-3 children, 85% were housewives, and 57% had their husband living in the United States at the moment of the discussion.

**Qualitative Results**

The qualitative data were transcribed verbatim, and subsequently divided into 7 main subjects and 20 categories.

| THEMES  | CATEGORIES   |
|---|--|
| Violence                                      | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Modes of Aggression</li> <li>• Triggers of aggression</li> <li>• Turning point</li> </ul>           |
| Negotiation / tactics for conflict resolution | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Forms of negotiation</li> <li>• Forms of self defense</li> <li>• Establishment of limits</li> </ul> |
| Family  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Children</li> <li>• Relatives</li> </ul>  |

|                                |  |
|--------------------------------|--|
| Alcoholism                     | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Violence and alcohol</li> <li>• Alcohol as attenuation of responsibility</li> </ul>   |
| Couple                         | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Marriage</li> <li>• Courtship</li> </ul>  |
| Couple feelings                | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Depression symptomatology</li> <li>• Hope of change</li> </ul>  |
| Migration to the United States | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Role conflict (temporal power)</li> <li>• Remittances</li> <li>• US changes them</li> <li>• Life in the US</li> <li>• Role changes and task reduction</li> <li>• Communication with migrants</li> </ul> |

## Violence

### *How violence begins*

The unequal distribution of household chores was mentioned as a detonator of aggression for women who considered they were working a higher load than their partners. As a woman stated:

*yo veo que uno aquí hace el quehacer, atiende a los niños, hace la comida, y todo; y a veces hasta les ayudamos a ellos en el trabajo de la alfarería. Y ellos descansan cuando menos un ratito, o todo el domingo, pero nosotras ni un ratito, todo el día dale y dale*

... I see that one keeps doing house chores, takes care of the children, cooks, and does everything, and sometimes, one even helps them with the pottery work. And they rest at least a

moment, or the entire Sunday, but we (don't rest) not even a second, we are working and working

All the participants mentioned that they would like their partners to participate in household chores and to see them specially more involved in child-rearing. The male attitude of passivity to confront some situations that require more of their participation, or at least a more active role and commitment on their part, created distress in women and they responded with aggression against their partners. As an example of male passivity, one of the participants said:

*Yo le digo que se salga a buscar trabajo, en lo que sea, pero que sea para que se consiga algún dinero, pero no, él dice que pagan muy poquito, y pues mejor se queda sin hacer nada. Ha de creer que del cielo le va a caer el dinero. Eso a mí me desespera mucho, y pues me enojo con él*

I tell him to go out and find a job, anywhere, as far as he can get some money, but no, he says that they pay almost nothing. He must be thinking that money will fall from the sky. This really annoys me a lot, and of course, I get upset with him

### *Modes of Aggression*

Among the ways in which men showed aggression mentioned by the participants were jealousy on their partners part. “*No hay un hombre que no sea celoso* / There is not a man who is not a jealous,” said one of the participants, and a second one

added, “*Mi esposo me dice que ya por qué me arreglo tanto, que si es para irme a ver a otro, y se enoja mucho* /My husband tells me that why do I fix myself up so much, that if I do it to go a date with another man, and that really irritate me a lot.” In addition to jealousy, the women mentioned the control men try to have over their appearance. Men prohibit their wives to modify their hair style or to wear some clothes that women would like to wear.

Other forms of violence mentioned by the participants were the lack of economical resources (due mostly to unemployment) and how their partners use those limited resources on alcohol consumption, parties with friends, and buying tickets to attend the soccer game. A participant stated, “*Es que ya no es de ellos el dinero. Sí se supone que ellos lo ganan ¿no?, pero supuestamente es para nosotros, para los niños, y ellos se lo llevan*”/ Money doesn’t belong to them anymore. It is true that they earn it, isn’t it? But it is supposedly for us [wives], for the children, but they [husbands] take it.” Regarding the soccer game, another woman said, “*...para él lo más importante es su deporte, el futbol, que así no tenga dinero, si hay un partido aquí él se va, sea como sea, hasta consigue pero él se va. Entonces yo le digo, así como consigues para eso, ¿por que no consigues para la familia? / ...to him, the most important thing is his game, soccer, even if he doesn’t have money, if there is a game, he will attend it, it doesn’t matter how. He will even borrow some money, but he goes to the game. Then, I tell him, the same way that you got some money for you game, why don’t you get some money for your family?”*

### ***Parte-aguas /Turning Points***

Some of the participants indicated that they had responded to their husbands’ physical aggression in the same form, and that this reaction had been a turning point for them since none of the women that beat their partners had ever been physically hurt by them again. A woman narrated the episode during which she encouraged herself to respond to her partner’s physical aggression and what moved her to do it:

*... me golpeó mucho ese día, y yo me puse a pensar que si él no había tenido compasión de mí por qué yo de él sí. O sea, que él me agarró a patadas en la cabeza ... entonces ya se me vino a la mente que si él lo hace casi con fin de matarme, yo por qué voy a detenerme, entonces fue cuando yo le di un puñetazo, pues fuerte, porque hasta la mano se me descompuso. Pero dije: va con todas mis fuerzas. Se fue así para atrás y se me quiso dejar ir otra vez, pero yo lo paré con un patadón donde más les duele. Así que ahí se quedó todo doblado un rato y yo me salí ... y de ahí jamás me ha vuelto a pegar.*

... he beat me a lot that day and I started thinking that if he had not had any compassion of me, why do I had to have it for him. That day he kicked me on my head ... then it came to my mind that if he was doing it with the aim to

almost kill me, why should I control myself, it was them when I gave him a punch, a very hard one because even my hand was hurt. But I said, lest do it with all my strength. He went back and almost fell and he then tried to come at me again, but I stopped him kicking him on the more sensitive male part. He kept himself doubled over on the floor for a while and I left the home ... since then, he has never hit me again.

### ***Negotiation / tactics for conflict resolution***

#### ***Alcoholism***

*Cuando mi esposo llega borracho, luego dice, “¿Que por qué no me abres rápido?, le digo, “Pos si no es hotel pa’ que esté abierta la puerta a la hora que quieras”. “Pos ábreme rápido, o ¿Qué pinches estás haciendo? Y todo se enoja. Es que piensa que he de estar con otro y que por eso me entretengo en abrirle la puerta. Y pues una se la pasa toda miedosa de que ellos se emborrachen y ya lleguen nomas fregando.*

When my husband arrives drunk, he then asks why I do not open the door immediately. I tell him, “Well, this is not a Hotel so the door won’t be open anytime you want to come in. You must open the door immediately, or what are you doing?” And he gets mad. He thinks that I might be with another

man and that that is why it takes me some time to open the door. And that is why one is full of fear that they drink and come home bothering us.

Most of the participants agreed on the fact that their partners’ alcohol consumption was responsible for most of the violence they had suffered. However, they minimized their husband’s violent reactions blaming alcohol and assuring the interviewer that their partners were better persons when they were not drunk. One of the participants stated:

*Borrachos lo ofenden a una, y uno hace como que ni le dolió. Pero pues por supuesto que le dolió, pero pos ya luego habla uno, ya cuando están conscientes, y pues ya viene la disculpa, “Pues es que no me fijé o no lo pensé”, y pues así es, cuando están borrachos no son realmente ellos y no saben ni lo que dicen.*

When they are drunk, they offend us, and one pretends that it doesn’t hurt us. But of course it hurts, but then, later, we talk, when they are conscious, and they then apologize, “Well I didn’t realize it or I didn’t think what I said to you,” they say, and that is how they aren’t really them when they are drunk and they are not responsible for what they say.

#### ***Migration to the United States***

*“Se vuelven más desconfiados” / They become more distrustful,” one woman said.*

Some participants recognized that staying alone with their children

represented a greater burden and responsibility for them, and that this made them feel a lot of pressure. They were afraid of being blamed for any negative act committed by their children, or even for an accident or unpredictable success that affected the family while they were totally responsible for them.

Most of the participants stated that although it took them some time to adapt themselves to be alone and to assume the responsibility that it represented, they missed the power and personal independence they earned during their partners' absence, since once they came back from the United States, women lost their privilege, their "borrowed" position and assumed a secondary role in the family system.

Some participants mentioned that their partners' absence represents for them a restriction in their social sphere; specifically, it means they visit less frequently their relatives and they do not attend friends' or relatives' parties. They also restrict their trips to neighboring communities where they have to go for doctor visits or shopping. According to the participants, these restrictions are ordered by their husbands and aim to control women's freedom in order to guarantee their absent husband's honor. Most of this control is made throughout their partner's phone calls to them, and to the close control that their husband's relatives keep on daughters-in-law. Thus, the women have to depend on the availability of relatives to accompany the women, even to trips to the children's doctor.

Most of the participants did not show interest in traveling or living in the United States, and they wished that their

partners were not in that country either. However, they appreciated the economical advantages afforded to the family, which were obtained through their partners' presence in the United States, although that put them at the risk of abandonment. Such had been the case of some women in their communities.

Multiple causes of conflict were mentioned by the women whose partners were immigrants. Among them, the competition for authority with their children was a great issue. Women found it unfair that even though they were the ones continually present with the kids, the ones that were there when they were sick, and who showed consistent interest in the family well-being, their authority with their children was very poor. However, with one single phone call from the absent father, the children would behave. "*Parece que la mamá no basta para ellos [los hijos], siempre es el padre, aunque no esté, el que tiene mayor autoridad/* It appears as if the mother is not enough for them [the children], it is always the father, even if he is not present, the one who has more authority," stated one of the participants.

Another major complaint was that upon their return, the men would take over the authority over the children. The men also were harsher disciplinarians than the mothers. This led to couple conflicts as the mothers considered it cruel that a father who spends so little time with these children would talk to and discipline them in way that they, who are always present, would never treat the children.

### ***Depression***

In anticipation of their partners' trip to the United States, most of the participants, including those that suffered violence, expressed feeling anxious, losing their appetite, suffering sleep disturbances (either sleeping too much or insomnia), sadness, crying spells, and loss of interest in almost any situation. For some of the participants, the feelings aroused by the departure of their spouses were almost impossible to explain, "*Desde que te dice que ya pa' las próximas semanas se van, el próximo mes ...el corazón se te apachurra ... es algo así como que se quiere uno hasta morir, es un dolor que no, no, no sé. No se expresarlo la verdad ... es algo así que no sé decir /* Once they tell you that they will leave in a couple of weeks, or the next month your heart just shrivels ... it feels like if you almost want to die, it is a pain that I don't know how to express it; it is something that I don't know how to say."

Some participants identified the symptomatology of depression as a sickness, but most of the women do not know what to do or where to go for help and assistance. "*Se siente que nadie quiere a uno, que se quiere ir de aquí, no quiere ver a nadie, a nadie soporta, bueno, todo, todo ... así, como que nada más en la casa quería vivir, no quería salir a ver a nadie; así me pasó. Dicen que era depresión, no sabía yo que era una enfermedad /* One feels like nobody love you, like you want to move to another place, one doesn't want to see anybody, you don't tolerate anybody's presence, well everything ...I only wanted to be at home, I didn't want to go out or to see anybody, it happened to me. They said it was depression, I didn't know it was a sickness." One of the participants stated one she only felt

better when her husband told her that he would come back pretty soon. Although she said that the doctor explained to her that she was suffering from depression, she did not receive any treatment and she still does not know what to do.

## **DISCUSSION**

A major finding of our study is that over 60% of our sample experienced depressive symptomatology, irrespective of the migration status of the spouse. This can be explained in part by the high level of conflict in the couples, particularly the high incidence of psychological abuse that was suffered and perpetrated by the women.

In addition, there was a higher prevalence of violence among women whose spouses did not migrate, although both groups of women experienced violence. Despite the violence the women suffered, those whose husbands migrated experienced depression, loss of authority with their children, and an increased burden of being the sole parental figure for the family. Furthermore, the women whose husbands migrated faced significant restriction in their freedom, as the husbands demanded they do not go out alone. Even visits to their children's doctors and shopping had to be in the company of a family member.

In addition to the violence they suffered and the loss of freedom experienced by spouses of migrants, most of the women faced economic hardship and spousal alcohol abuse. Most of the women who suffered violence blamed their partner's drinking for the abuse and minimized the severity of the problem.

A few of the women described turning points in their lives, when they too became physically violent in response to spousal physical abuse. Several noted that once they defended themselves in this way, their husbands did not strike them again.

While most of the women suffered from depression, none had sought help or were aware of how they could be helped. Both the quantitative and qualitative data from the project point to an extreme need to provide primary and secondary prevention to women from rural Mexico.

The policy implications are many. Public health clinics need to screen for violence suffered and perpetrated by the women, level of depressive symptomatology among women and develop appropriate treatment protocols. Moreover, educational campaigns are needed to explain the impact of psychological abuse on the victim, the perpetrator and the children. Likewise, educational campaigns need to prepare families where the spouse migrates regarding the level of burden and distress the women experience.

#### **MANUSCRIPTS IN PREPARATION**

We have three manuscripts in preparation. The first reports on the qualitative findings of our study and will be submitted to an anthropology journal. The second reports on the relationship between IPV, depression and migration. This article will be submitted to the Hispanic Journal of Behavioral Sciences. The third reports on the relationship between IPV and perception of the

marital relationship and will be submitted to Family Process.

#### **CONFERENCE PRESENTATIONS RELATED TO THE PROJECT**

##### **Yvette Flores**

- Latino Behavioral Health Institute, Los Angeles, Ca. September 2003
- National Association for Chicana/o Studies, Albuquerque, New Mexico April 2004
- International Oral History Association, Rome, Italy June 2004
- Mujeres Activas en Letras y Cambio Social (MALCS) Summer Institute, August 2004

##### **Enriqueta Valdez Curiel**

- Conferencia Iberoamericana de Psicología, Chile Julio 2004
- Semana Nacional de Ciencia y Tecnología, CONACYT, Ciudad Guzmán, Jalisco Noviembre 2004

##### **Drs. Flores and Valdez Curiel**

- Foro Binacional de Salud México-California, Guanajuato México Octubre 2004
- Congreso Iberoamericano de Psicología Clínica y de la Salud, Estado de México, December 2004

## **CONTINUATION OF PROJECT BEYOND FUNDING CYCLE**

We plan to use the findings of our study as the basis to seek extramural funding both in Mexico and the United States. We hope to establish a binational research program, housed at UC Davis to investigate behavioral health issues among Mexicans on both sides of the border. The co-investigators have a strong record of collaborative research. Their interdisciplinary approach to investigating behavioral health will facilitate obtaining such funding. In addition, both researchers are committed to translating research findings into community projects. Thus proposals will be submitted to the Wellness Foundation in California to seek support for community intervention projects to assist immigrant families with migration related and family violence problems. The Packard Foundation will be approached to seek funding for similar community projects in rural Jalisco, Michoacan and Guanajuato.

## **SIGNIFICANCE OF THE WORK**

This study is among the first quantitative and qualitative investigations of the possible impact of migration, couple separation, and reunification on the mental health of rural Mexican women. Likewise, this is the first empirical investigation of how the migration experience may exacerbate intimate partner violence. As indicated in the literature review, few studies have investigated the factors that contribute to intimate violence among Mexicans and Mexican immigrants, despite the reported high rates of family violence

among these groups. Our earlier study found a relationship between intimate violence, traditional cultural beliefs of male superiority and female passivity (machismo), and fear and closeness between the couple. This study expands the investigation to the possible relationship of spousal migration, intimate partner violence and depression among rural Mexican women, allowing us to examine how migration influences these factors.

Our findings have policy implications on both sides of the border. Few family services exist in rural Jalisco; moreover, medical personnel who are generally the first to come in contact with intimate violence have received minimal training in the detection and treatment of this problem. Fewer still are trained to recognize the possible relationship between depression and IPV. Dr. Valdez Curiel will be using the findings of this study to train medical students and advocate for additional services for women facing intimate violence. While epidemiological studies have examined depression and IPV among Mexican immigrants in California, few have investigated the relationship between IPV and depression among women in high sender states or those who have migrated to the US from those localities. Dr. Flores-Ortiz will utilize the findings of this study to develop training curricula for health and mental health service providers to work with Mexican immigrants. Finally, our study will add to the growing body of research and social science literature on the subject of intimate violence and depression among Mexicans.



## ***Bibliography***

- Alderete, W., Vega, W.A., Kolody, B., Aguilar-Gaxiola, S. (1999). Depressive symptomatology: prevalence and psychosocial risk factors among Mexican migrant farmworkers in California. *Journal of Community Psychology* 27:457-471
- Firestone, J.M., Lambert, L.C., Vega, W.A. Intimate violence among Mexican Americans: Correlates of abuse. *Journal of Gender, Culture, and Health* (in press).
- Flores-Ortiz, Y. (1993) Levels of Acculturation, Marital Satisfaction, and Depression among Chicana Workers: A Psychological Perspective. In V. L. Ruiz (Ed.). *Las Obreras: The Politics of Women and Family*. *Aztlan*, v.20, (1, 2), 151-175.
- Flores-Ortiz, Y., Valdez Curiel, E., Andrade Palos, P. Intimate Partner Violence and couple interaction among Mexican women from Jalisco and México City. *Journal of Border Health*, in press.
- Garcia, M., Marks, G. (1989). Depressive symptomatology among Mexican American Adults: An examination with the CES-D Scale. *Psychiatry Res.*; 27: 137-148.
- Glasser, B. & Straus, A.L. (1967). *The discovery of grounded theory: Strategies for Qualitative Research*. New York: Aldine Pub.
- Lara-Cantu, MA. (1991). Masculinidad, feminidad y salud mental. Importancia de las características no deseables de los roles de genero. *Salud Mental*; 14: 12-18.
- (*MILENIO Periodico*. Guadalajara, 3 December, 2001).
- Morse, J. Designing funded qualitative research. In Norman, K. Denzin & Yvonna S. Lincoln (eds.), *Handbook of Qualitative Research*. Thousand Oaks, Ca. Sage Publications, pp. 220-235.
- Radloff, LS. (1977). The CES-D Scale: A self-report depression scale for research in the general population. *Appl. Psicol.. Measurement*; 1: 385-401.
- Romero, M., Mondragón, L., Cherpitel C., Medina Mora, E., Borges, C. (2001). Characteristics of Mexican Women Admitted to Emergency Care Units, Alcohol Consumption and Related Problems. *Salud Publica, Mex.* 43: 3537-543.
- Salgado de Zinder, V & Maldonado, M. (1994). *Salud Publica*, 36(2): 200-209.
- Vega, W.A., VanOss Marin, B. Risk taking and abusive behavior. *Journal of Gender, Culture, and Health* 2:135-141, 1997

**FINANCIAL REPORT  
UC DAVIS**

|                   |                      |             |             | dif         |
|-------------------|----------------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|
| Student Salaries  |                      |             |             |             |
|                   | Elizabet Covarrubias | \$ 5,637.90 | \$ 5,000.00 | \$ 637.90   |
| Student Benefits  |                      |             |             |             |
|                   | Elizabet Covarrubias | \$ 69.94    | \$ -        | \$ 69.94    |
| Supplies/Expenses |                      |             | \$ 1,040.00 |             |
|                   | supplies             | \$ 411.04   |             | \$ (249.28) |
|                   | phone                | \$ 379.68   |             |             |
| Travel            |                      | \$ 6,291.44 | \$ 6,000.00 | \$ 291.44   |
|                   |                      |             |             | \$ -        |
| Other             |                      |             | \$ 750.00   | \$ (750.00) |
| Total             |                      | \$12,790.00 | \$12,790.00 | \$ -        |

**SUPPLIES AND EXPENSES:**

Digital camera  
CD's  
Audiocassettes  
Printer paper, cartridges

**TRAVEL:**

Yvette Flores:

1. Albuquerque, New Mexico March 31-April 5, 2004 Southwest Airlines NACCS Conference
2. Rome, Italy June 22-Julio 5, 2004, Delta Airlines Internacional Oral History Association Conference
3. Seattle, Washington August 6-9, 2004 Via Alaska Airlines, MALCS Conference
4. Los Angeles, Ca. September 19-23, 2004 Southwest Airlines, Latino Behavioral Health Institute
5. Leon, Guanajuato, Mexico October 9-12, 2004, United Airlines CMHI Foro Binacional
6. Estado de Mexico, Mexico November 28-December 5, 2004. United Airlines, Congreso Iberoamericano de Psicología Clinica y de Salud

**FINANCIAL REPORT  
UNIVERSIDAD DE AGUADALAJARA**

| University of Guadalajara (Centro Universitario del Sur)  |                       |  |  |   |               |
|---|-----------------------|--|--|---|---------------|
| Dollar rate<br>exchange \$10.907<br>pesos   | SALARIES AND<br>WAGES | SUPPLIES AND<br>SERVICES                             | TRAVEL   | OTHER   | TOTAL         |
| <b>DOLARES</b>  | 6,200.00              | 2,540.00   | 7,550.00   | 2,000.00  | 18,290.00     |
| + Transfers (%)   |                       |  |  | 10% (755 dolls)<br>were transferred<br>from TRAVEL<br>-----<br>2.73% (69.26 dolls)<br>were transferred<br>from SUPPLIES<br>AND SERVICES |               |
| - Transfers (%)   |                       | 2.73% (69.26 dolls)<br>were transferred to<br>OTHERS | 10% (755 dolls)<br>were transferred to<br>OTHERS |   |               |
| <b>Relocated Budget</b>   | 6,200.00              | 2,470.74   | 6,795  | 2,824.26  | 18,290.00     |
| <b>Expenses</b>   | 6,189.66              | 2,230.91   | 6,719.85   | 2,824.26  | 17,964.68     |
| <b>Final Balance</b>  | <b>10.34</b>          | <b>239.83</b>  | <b>75.15</b>                                     | <b>0</b>  | <b>325.32</b> |
| <b>NOTE:</b><br>Transferred= 284 dollars<br>Fees for Bank transference \$41..32 dollars<br>Total Balance= 325.32<br>Dollar exchange rate the day of Bank transference 1 doll = \$11.335 pesos |                       |  |  |   |               |

**STUDENT SALARIES: Expenses \$6,189.66**

Jorge Estanislao Alvarez Barajas  
Diana Ruiz Cerón  
Esther Llamas Perales  
Isis Bravo Cano

**SUPPLIES AND EXPENSES: Expenses \$2,230.91**

|                 |                    |
|-----------------|--------------------|
| Xeroxing        | Audio tapes        |
| MiniDisks       | Cassette recorders |
| Batteries       | Diskettes and CDs  |
| Zip Discs       | Ink Cartridges     |
| Office supplies |                    |
| Phone charges   |                    |
| Postage         |                    |

**TRAVEL: Expenses \$6,719.85**

| <b>Names</b>  | <b>Means of travel</b>                    | <b>Locations</b>  | <b>Dates</b>  |
|---|---|---|---|
| Enriqueta Valdez-Curiel<br>Jorge Estanislao Alvarez Barajas<br>Diana Ruiz Cerón<br>Esther Llamas Perales<br>Isis Bravo Cano | Ground transportation (car, taxi and bus) | <b>Jalisco</b> (Gomez Farias, Tuxpan, Lo Arado, Copala, and La Manzanilla),<br><b>Guanajuato</b> (El Vergel, Alfonso Yañes, Nuevo Pantoja and Montelongo) and<br><b>Michoacan</b> (Capula, El Porvenir, Amargosilla, Aranjuez, Iranparampeo, Sevina Nahuatzen and Miguel Hidalgo-Indaparapeo) | From March 2, 2004 to November 22, 2004.                      |
| -----<br>Enriqueta Valdez Curiel  |   | -----<br>Leon, Guanajuato   | -----<br>October 2004   |
| Enriqueta Valdez Curiel   | Air fare                                  | Guadalajara-San Francisco-Guadajara<br>-----<br>Guadalajara-San Francisco-Guadalajara<br>-----<br>Guadaj- México City-Guadaj.   | July 2004<br>-----<br>November 2004<br>-----<br>November 2004 |

**OTHER COSTS: Expenses \$ 2,824.26**

Compensation for participants  
 Extended memory for PC  
 Printer  
 Pendriver USB

## APPENDIX 1

| Name                          | Depressed<br>n | Non<br>Depressed<br>% | Depressed<br>n | Non<br>Depressed<br>% |
|-------------------------------|----------------|-----------------------|----------------|-----------------------|
| <b>Education</b>              |                |                       |                |                       |
| Illiterate                    | 18             | 2.9                   | 3              | 0.5                   |
| Literate without education    | 18             | 2.9                   | 9              | 1.4                   |
| 1-3 elementary school         | 107            | 17.2                  | 39             | 6.3                   |
| 4-5 elementary school         | 54             | 8.7                   | 27             | 4.3                   |
| Complete elementary school    | 117            | 18.8                  | 77             | 12.3                  |
| Not complete Middle school    | 17             | 2.7                   | 2              | 0.3                   |
| Complete Middle School        | 57             | 9.1                   | 35             | 5.6                   |
| Not complete Hugh School      | 2              | 0.3                   | 1              | 0.2                   |
| Complete High School          | 11             | 1.8                   | 9              | 1.4                   |
| Technical career              | 4              | 0.64                  | 10             | 1.6                   |
| College/University            | 4              | 0.64                  | 3              | 0.48                  |
| <b>Educación de la Pareja</b> |                |                       |                |                       |
| Illiterate                    | 21             | 3.5                   | 6              | 1.0                   |
| Literate without education    | 33             | 5.6                   | 20             | 3.4                   |
| 1-3 elementary school         | 80             | 13.5                  | 51             | 8.6                   |
| 4-5 elementary school         | 42             | 7.1                   | 12             | 2.0                   |
| Complete elementary school    | 104            | 17.5                  | 56             | 9.4                   |
| Not complete Middle school    | 13             | 2.2                   | 5              | 0.8                   |
| Complete Middle School        | 66             | 11.1                  | 35             | 5.9                   |
| Not complete Hugh School      | 1              | 0.2                   | 3              | 0.5                   |
| Complete High School          | 10             | 1.7                   | 10             | 1.7                   |
| Technical career              | 1              | 0.17                  | 2              | 0.34                  |
| College/University            | 8              | 1.35                  | 6              | 1.01                  |
| Does not know                 | 9              | 1.52                  | 0              | 0                     |
| <b>Occupation</b>             |                |                       |                |                       |
| Housewife                     | 58             | 9.29                  | 40             | 6.41                  |
| Business / Commerce           | 336            | 53.85                 | 161            | 25.8                  |
| Professional                  | 3              | 0.48                  | 6              | 0.96                  |
| Technician                    | 2              | 0.32                  | 5              | 0.8                   |
| Other                         | 10             | 1.6                   | 3              | 0.48                  |
| <b>Ocupación de la pareja</b> |                |                       |                |                       |
| Field labor/agriculture       | 130            | 21.96                 | 91             | 15.37                 |
| Construction                  | 104            | 17.57                 | 41             | 6.93                  |
| Business / Commerce           | 17             | 2.87                  | 12             | 2.03                  |
| Employee                      | 41             | 6.93                  | 26             | 4.39                  |
| Professional                  | 9              | 1.52                  | 4              | 0.68                  |
| Services provider             | 55             | 9.29                  | 25             | 4.22                  |
| Unemployment                  | 2              | 0.34                  | 0              | 0                     |
| Other                         | 26             | 4.39                  | 9              | 1.52                  |

Note: all photographs displayed are used with written consent of the individuals photographed. Photographs taken by Dr. Enriqueta Valdez Curiel.

@2005 All Photos are the property of Enriqueta Valdez Curiel, M.D. and cannot be used without the written consent of Dr. Valdez.