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Gendered Stories of Adaptation and Resistance: A Feminist Multiple Case Study of Immigrant Women

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Gendered Stories of Adaptation and Resistance: A Feminist Multiple Case Study of Immigrant Women

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Immigration has recently highlighted a new era of cultural dynamics in the U.S. (Hing, 2004; Marsella & Ring, 2003). Immigrant women constitute around half of the over 12 million documented immigrant population (Larsen, 2004; U.S. Census, 2005) and approximately 40 % of the 11 million that are undocumented (Passel, 2006). Scholarship regarding immigrant women has expanded, both within the social sciences in general and feminist social studies in particular, as seen, for example, in the recent focus on intersectionality in immigrant women's lives (e.g., Mahalingam & Leu, 2005; Stewart & McDermott, 2003) and post-colonial perspectives on immigrant women's adaptation (e.g., Bhatia & Ram, 2001; Aiwa Ong, 1999). As well, in a chapter of the recently published *Handbook of Diversity in Feminist Psychology,* Yakushko and Espin (2010) reviewed research on immigrant women through feminist lenses, highlighting such topics as heterogeneity among immigrant women, interpersonal violence, reproduction, sexuality, resilience, and mental health.

This present qualitative study seeks to build on such work by listening to immigrant women themselves. We believe that by hearing immigrant women's voices, the feminist psychological and scholarly community can expand its understanding of the distinct and diverse perspectives of those whose lives have been marginalized by cultural and political discourse.

Literature Review

Challenges for Immigrant Women

The immigration experience is often fraught with difficulties and has been shown to have multiple social and psychological consequences for women (Berger, 2004). Whether as single women or as partners, immigrant women often undertake key economic and familial roles (Pesar, 2003), and such responsibilities occur within the context of extant stress related to

relocation (Rumbaut, 1991). Specifically, immigrant women have variously reported experiencing post-traumatic stress, multiple losses, adaptation stress, isolation, negative changes in identity, cognitive overload, discrimination, and violence (Berger, 2004; Espín, 1997, 1999; Garza-Guerro, 1974; Yakushko & Chronister, 2005). Moreover, immigrant women who reported higher stress related to relocation showed considerably higher levels of depressive symptoms (Miller & Chandler, 2002).

Contextual and systemic factors related to both the sending and the receiving environments are also influential on experiences of immigrant women (Ben-Sira, 1997). In particular, scholars have noted that non-forced migration, positive expectations and optimism, flexibility, resilience, linguistic abilities, and the presence of support are associated with better outcomes for immigrants (Escobar, Nervi, & Gara, 2000; Espín, 1987; Espín, 1999; Hondagneu-Sotelo, 1994, 1999, 2003; Salgado de Snyder, 1994). One such systemic factor, employment, especially when those work positions offer women opportunities to continue in their pre-migration career paths or help them develop new ones, is another key to succesful adjustment (Berger, 2004; Yakushko, 2006). However, such employment successes appear uncommon, and demographers have shown that immigrant women are disproportionately represented in physically demanding industries with substantial potential for injury (Pranksy, Moshenberg, Benjamin, Portillo, Thackrey, & Hill-Fotouhi, 2002). Immigrant women are also overrepresented in low pay and low skills occupations (Larsen, 2004), and whatever income they earn is often further limited by the women's commitment to support extended families in their home countries (Mehta, Gabbard, Barrat, Lewis, Carroll, & Mines, 2000).

Immigrant women's social status may also come into conflict with the often patriarchal emphases on them as being not only primary caregivers for all family responsibilities but also

key carriers of cultural values (Espín, 1999; Hondagneu-Sotelo, 2003; Narayan, 1997; Simons, 1999). Intergenerational and gender-based conflicts may be common because of these patriarchal demands (Bhuyan, Mell, Senturia, Sullivan, & Shiu-Thornton, 2005; Darvishpour, 2002; Merali, 2008; Perilla, 1999).

Lastly, immigrant women in the U.S. often experience discrimination and oppression, which may include xenophobia, racism, and discrimination based on poverty and employment (Berger, 2004; Marsella & Ring, 2003; Yakushko, 2010; Yakushko & Chronister, 2005). Access to health care, including mental health care, is another barrier immigrant women face (Buki et al., 2004). Furthermore, patriarchal gender oppression can be found both within the receiving as well as the ethnic immigrant communities (Espín, 1999; 2006; Merali, 2008).

Strengths and Resilience among Immigrant Women

Despite many challenges, immigrant women, often portrayed in victimized positions, typically possess resilience and strengths (Cole, Rothblum, & Espín, 1992; Yakushko, 2010). Many perceive their choice to relocate as giving them safety, personal expansion and success, and opportunities for themselves and their children (Zajacova, 2002). Service to their families and new communities as well as activism initiatives may aid women in their pursuits of self-empowerment (Light, 1992; Yee, 1992; Yakushko, 2011).

Immigration can offer women the chance to challenge established gender roles (Espín, 1999; Knorr & Metter, 2000). For instance, immigrant Latinas have been shown to shift both their self-perceptions and family relations toward greater sense of empowerment than prior to migration (McCloskey, Southwick, Fernandez-Esquer, & Locke, 1995; Perilla, 1999; Salgado de Snyder, 1994). Immigrant women can also view migration as an opportunity to transgress culturally assigned heteronormativity (Espín, 1999, 2006).

Foner (2001) highlighted that it is important to view immigration's impact on women's status and identity as complex and contradictory. For example, their particular losses and gains as the result of migration can be difficult to establish. She further suggested that it is often challenging to ascertain whether immigration is an emancipating or a subjugating process. For instance, Dubois (2004) highlighted that although many women report greater autonomy and economic independence, they are also among the most "underpaid, overworked, and underserved by public policy" individuals in the U.S. (Dubois, 2004, p. 25).

Thus, it seems vital to approach the study of immigrant women through methodological pathways, such as those offered through qualitative research, that attend to contradictions, complexities, and multiple standpoints. Although some of the immigration scholarship is based on immigrant women's personal accounts (e.g., Espín, 1999, 2006), most of the writings regarding women's challenges and strengths are grounded either on quantitative research or on theoretical and clinical observations. As with other communities of women who have been traditionally marginalized, research that offers women's own voices and articulates their own experiences within their contexts, is needed (Morrow, Rakhsha & Castañeda, 2001).

Moreover, feminist scholars in diverse academic fields have suggested that even though the number of migrant women has dramatically increased in the last decades, the data and scholarship on international immigration continue to be "gender blind" (Kelson & DeLaet 1999; Knorr & Metter 2000; Morrison et al., 2008; Simon 2001; Willis & Yeoh, 2000). In most of the literature on migration, women largely continue to be invisible, playing a role of insignificant actors in immigration flows. Moreover, documentation of experiences distinct to immigrant women remains limited. This invisibility is likely related to a tendency towards traditional assumptions held by scholars, which perceive migrants as non-gendered beings, resulting in

favoring the undertaking of studies, primarily quantitative, that largely focus on immigrant men (Kelson & DeLaet, 1999).

Qualitative Studies with Immigrant Women

A limited number of psychology-related studies with immigrant women have utilized qualitative methods. Espín (1999, 2006) offered qualitative explorations of both immigrant Latinas as well as those immigrant women whose migration was a pathway toward coming out. More recently, for her book *Immigrant Women,* Berger (2004) interviewed diverse immigrant women, focusing on their migration experiences and adaptations. Other studies have focused on specific immigrant populations – for example, Kelly (2009) interviewed immigrant Latinas who experienced domestic violence and Lee and Bell-Scott (2009) explored Korean immigrant women's experiences. Yoon and colleagues (2010) also interviewed ten immigrant Korean women, who shared their perceptions of challenging patriarchal cultural expectations, dealing with discrimination, and adapting to new ways of caring for children and families. Finally, Koert and colleagues (2011) interviewed ten immigrant women who possessed higher educational levels to explore their experiences specific to career development and employment.

However, studies have not to this point engaged diverse immigrant women participants in examining their experiences from specifically gendered and feminist lens. The current study utilized a multiple case studies approach to examine narratives of immigrant adjustment among eight immigrant women, from a feminist standpoint. By utilizing a multiple case study approach, we were able to listen to culturally and individually distinct aspects of immigrant women's experiences as well as examine factors that appeared across all cases (Stake, 1994; Yin, 2009).

Methods

This investigation employed a multiple case study approach within a feminist framework. Creswell (2007) suggested that case studies provide a methodological platform for studying a diverse set of individuals in a naturalistic way, in contrast to other qualitative methodologies that typically seek to minimize the differences between studied individuals in order to gain a perception of phenomena. Stake (1995) highlighted that case studies, such as those included in this investigation, are typically termed instrumental case studies. Instrumental case studies are based on an inclusion of several individuals to illustrate a process or processes that they share.. Thus, in this study we sought to instrumentally (i.e., by soliciting participants from across a range of immigrant experiences) study the process of gendered adaptation experienced by several immigrant women. In addition, we viewed the case study method as appropriate here because it allowed us to continually acknowledge the diverse contexts that the immigrant women represented. Case studies allow such diversity in contrast, for example, to phenomenological research, which would require us to focus on immigrant women representing a similar ethnic immigrant background (Creswell, 2007).

Therefore, the study was based on methodological conclusions indicating that the case study method allows researchers to preserve the essential holistic aspects of life events (Yin, 2009) as well as to hear the stories of multiple participants, acknowledging both their distinct and shared aspects (Stake, 1995). According to Creswell (2007), the case study involves the examination of an issue through one or more cases within a bounded contextual system. In our study we identified individuals with recent immigrant status as being a bounded system.

In the study, we utilized a feminist framework as a criterion for interpreting results. Social scientists' traditional approaches to examining women, men, and social life have been challenged as representing a gender-blind reality (Harding, 1987). Harding asserted that such

traditional approaches as quantitative methods "make it difficult to understand women's participation in social life" (p. 3). Furthermore, she stated:

> Feminists have argued that traditional epistemologies, whether intentionally or unintentionally, systematically exclude the possibility that women could be 'knowers' or *agents of knowledge;* they claim that the voice of science is a masculine one; that history is written from only the point of view of men (of the dominant class and race); that the subject of a traditional sociological sentence is always assumed to be a man. (p. 3)

Feminist critiques of positivism stances towards research further suggest that subjects typically are objectified, with researcher(s) "interacting" with them only through mediums such as surveys, resulting in "fragments of decontextualized human experience" (Sprague & Zimmerman, 2004, p. 41). Thus, feminists have advocated for studies of women to reject a priori constructs in favor of the subjectivity of women (e.g., DeValut, 1990; Fine & Gordon, 1989). The present study sought to engage with both the topic and the participants by taking this feminist standpoint.

Participants

This study included eight immigrant women. Their selection was based on consultations with gatekeepers within varied immigrant communities in a medium sized Midwestern town in the U.S., which was close to a large urban area and surrounded by rural farming-based communities. We decided to solicit participation of immigrant women for whom migration signified a contrast from their previous home culture linguistically, economically, and culturally. Thus, the study included women from South and Central Asia, Central Africa, Central and South America, and Eastern Europe. All of the participants were recent immigrants, ranging from two to twelve years since their migration to the U.S. Their ages ranged from 27 to 65.

Seven of the eight women had children (ranging from one to seven children). Half of the women reported being single. All women reported having part-time or full-time employment and

worked in such settings as social services, education, farming, and an industrial factory. Although we offered an interpreter as an option for interviews, all women elected to communicate in English.

Data Collection

Interviews were conducted at locations selected by the women, which typically included workplaces or homes. After initial phone introductions, the women approached expressed a strong interest in participating in the study. Several of them shared a desire that the information gathered be shared with others, in order to help other women like them. Participants seemed to establish a good rapport with the primary interviewer, especially when it became obvious (i.e., from her name and her accent) that she too was a recent immigrant.

Interviews were characterized by high emotionality and warmth between the participants and the interviewer. As part of case study protocols (Stake, 1994; Yin, 2009), the interviewer invited the women to share artifacts that amplified their stories and she made observational notes about the context of the interviews. Interviews lasted between one and three hours, with breaks for beverages and meals offered by the participants. All women signed a consent form and agreed to audio-taping, after clarifications about the confidentiality and safety of the materials. In order to protect the women's confidentiality, it was decided that no detailed demographic data or names, even aliases, would be provided in order not to identify the women, even accidentally, within their small ethnic communities.

Data Analysis

Consistent with analytical strategies suggested by multiple case study scholars (Stake, 1994; Yin, 2009), the analysis of data began with in-depth immersion in the raw data. Interviews were read multiple times by the primary researcher. Following this immersion, HyperResearch

software was utilized to code transcripts. Each case was coded separately, using free textual analysis approach (i.e., coding all possible themes). After the first stage of coding was conducted, families of themes were created for each case. These families were then examined across all cases utilizing a feminist approach (i.e., themes and quotes were questioned for their gendered content with attempt to highlight issues of power and disempowerment, voice, and positionality), thus producing a list of superordinate themes that reflected women's experiences through the chosen lenses. The data analysis also took into consideration women's cultural nuances. For example, although it was clear during the interviews that women often talked about themselves and their own families, it appeared easier for them to discuss challenging aspects of their experience in third person accounts, such as from the perspectives of their friends or acquaintances.

The superordinate themes and their structures were shared with each participant. The women mostly supported the preliminary findings, although several of them also offered suggestions for adjustments to the data. For example, several participants highlighted the primary significance of children in the lives of immigrant women: as the reason for migration, as a cause of significant worry and stress, and as an impetus for their adjustment to a new culture. Their suggestions were incorporated.

Reflexivity

The interviewing co-researcher in this study is a recent immigrant woman from Eastern Europe. Several of her family members have lived and worked in the U.S. as undocumented immigrants over long periods of times. She has focused her scholarly work on immigration. The writing co-researcher is a third-generation Latina immigrant, whose personal and scholarly experiences have also focused on immigration, especially in regard to resilience.

Results

The following results integrate single case (i.e., within case) analyses with cross-case analysis. Thus, we will highlight the superordinate themes that appeared in the narrative interviews with all eight participants. Within these superordinate themes we will discuss the family of codes that created the themes, with these lower order codes emphasizing the distinct views on the themes expressed by women based on their individual and cultural backgrounds. As discussed in the methods section, application of differing lenses to analysis (e.g., cultural, psychological, sociological) result in diverse potential interpretations of data. In this research, we applied a distinctly feminist, gender-focused perspective in examining women's stories. Our analysis showed the following themes among transcripts of the narratives by all participants: Gendered Adaptations, Gendered Resilience, Gendered Violence, and Gendered Discrimination.

Gendered Adaptations

The participants continually highlighted that their adaptation to the new culture after their migration was different than that experienced by men. Women emphasized that it was they who had to maintain cooking, housekeeping, and child-rearing responsibilities in the new country. They did the grocery shopping, dealt with schooling and childcare, and attempted to maintain their families' equilibrium. Here is a description given by an Arab immigrant woman:

> You have to speak the language. And if you don't speak the language that's a big stress. And then you see like yourself around, like in the airports, here and there, lookin' for, you know, my daughter was, she was six months old, and we look for like formula, we were out of form…—You know, when to all that places, and oh, it's good, you know, good shop and this, we didn't even know how to ask for formula. And that's a big stress because you see your daughter here, you know, or your son, or your child is crying, and you can't, you know, umm, give them food because you can't even ask for the food.

An African immigrant woman similarly discussed the challenge of understanding school-related procedures for her children:

> I experience a lot of worry, because, like, one day when they come, to come my, to, to take my kids to school, they will told me that they gonna take them by the bus. So I just found the bus come there, so I still now remember the number of bus is ###, so I'm scared that they gonna take my kids. So I spent all the day, walking upstairs, down, so I didn't eat until my kids come back.

These examples consistently stressed that women's adaptation concerns were inseparable from their gendered position; primarily as a parent and a caregiver. This gendered adaptation challenge was viewed as especially difficult for single mothers. Several participants talked about their experiences as well as experiences of their immigrant friends who were single mothers. Here is a description of a Latina participant who discussed this concern as a significant issue for her immediate community:

> Many times we have single mothers… they will have a hard time, really, dealing not only with the, umm… with the… with the work, with the idea that they need to find a job in order to survive, but, also, the idea that they need to do the job of a parent, taking care of their two kids. And, it's gonna be really difficult for them to do both. Work, 8, 10 hour jobs, come home, and then take care of his or her children.

Therefore, this theme highlights an important context of immigrant adjustment, which appeared to be intrinsically gendered.

Gendered Resilience

Similar to themes of adaptation that often focused on stressful aspects of migration, stories of resilience also carried a distinctly gendered focus. Many women discussed the fact that their strengths came from their connection to their community and extended families, especially other women. Immigrant women talked about their mothers and grandmothers as well as other women, with whom they connected around celebrations, childcare, and cultural or religious practices.

An African woman described a tradition passed from her mother, which she held onto in times of distress. She shared that her mother taught her the following:

> Pray… And there is, we have some essence [herbal remedy] we use. I have that in my home also we use it. You put that like every morning and every night, you smell that. For me that reminds me like, my country, my people. So, also this, my mom told me this can take… bad spirit, once you have problem in home or stress, they [her female elders] think that this is bad spirit come between people… It made me feel comfortable. I just put it on.

An Arab woman, who discussed community celebrations, continually highlighted that one of their purposes was to share cooking and exchange recipes as well as reconnect with the past. In her words, their community gatherings were:

> [The] only safe place, they feel like, and everybody speak their language. They get to talk have fun, socialize, you know, exchange recipes, just, you know, have fun, just joke, you know. People from their own country, people, you know, from their own culture. Sometimes from the same town. Sometimes, you know, women come here it's, oh, you went with me to school, you know, and they, you know, old friends you know, and they didn't know they're comin' to the same, same city, same town, you know.

Another aspect of gendered resilience was women's insistence on educational and economic solvency and empowerment. An Eastern European immigrant shared that for her, immigration signaled "opportunities I never dreamed of, like education, like doing the work I like, because, you know, this was not that available… to people like me [women] back at [home country]." Similarly, an Asian immigrant discussed the fact that for her and many other Asian women she knew, immigration was a way to "move forward."

An Arab immigrant woman viewed educational empowerment of other Arab women as her personal and religious goal; one she saw consistent with views of women in her understanding of Islam, in contrast to those of others in her religious community: "I always encourage women to go learn, get educated, because you know, this is not what the religion said. Even the husband say, this is not what they think, I'm a threat …"

Finally, women often alluded to the fact that their adaptation was at times more positive than for males in their lives. Among the reasons given for such differences were women's

creativity in dealing with challenges. In addition, women often emphasized that the U.S. offered them gender freedoms they could not have received in their home country. For example, an Asian immigrant discussed why gender played a role in positive ways of adjustment of refugees like herself:

> I think as a woman, uh, you also depend on… how you live in the past, in the family. Like my mother have high endurance… she very persevere, of, uh, put up with… disadvantage and, uhh… and unfair. So I think it's interesting that, in general, refugee woman adapt better than man in the new culture. Because they already endure, endure the, uh, unfairness, or endure the, uh, race, uh, sexes. So to the country [U.S.] where they seem emphasize the equality, um, on the woman, so in the society, they feel, they be treated better.

Thus, women's stories highlighted the gendered nature of resilience. However, gender-based violence and discrimination were also described by each woman in the study.

Gendered Violence

Gender-based violence was mentioned as a key part of immigrant experiences for many women. Specifically, refugee women who experienced wars and refugee camps as well as women who crossed borders to the U.S. without their documents seemed especially vulnerable to sexual assault. A Latina participant described what occurs for many women, like herself:

> Everything starts at the borderline, because that's where most of the stress will come. Many of 'em will go through rape, many of 'em will go through… uh, um, losing a loved one along the way, drowning, uh, some of 'em will die in the desert. Um, some others will see a coyote or a human smuggler, rape, uh, one of, uh, his or her siblings, and, so they bring that stress and that trauma, uh, from… right from where they come from. They have to sell everything in order to pay a human smuggler $5,000.

Other women shared that they and other women they knew had experienced increased domestic violence. An Asian woman shared an example that she witnessed with her recently migrated friend when "the husband… beating up the children and the wife, and then at one point he just left them without any money, without any food or anything in the apartment."

Women also discussed the dilemma of whether to report the abuse or leave the violent partner and the repercussions of such a choice on women and their children. An African woman described the following example she frequently observed (and possibly experienced herself):

> Cause they [men] used like hit the wife when they are overseas there, and the wife is nothing... When they came here, they know this America. They [women] say you cannot hit me anymore, if you hit me I gonna call the police for you. So you find the police come between them. But… I think police sometimes make it worse then, because they [partners] used to be fighting, and after that it would be okay, but if they fight here, even they didn't call the police, the neighborhood gonna call police department. When the police come and find the wife is hurt, they gonna take the husband. And say no, you cannot come to work, to cannot come this home again. Now the stress will become for this woman, because most the men when they came here, the men only go to school and the woman stay home with the kids. Now, when the man go, she didn't have any skill. She do not work. She found herself alone in the middle. So most of them became very stress.

An Eastern European immigrant shared that as an oldest daughter, who was more proficient in English than other family members, she was also often in charge of family well-being, including managing incidents of violence: "I feel like I'm 60 years old, (Laughter) because everything has changed, you know, at, at our time. We didn't know about, you know, 911, and calling the police on our parents [in cases of violence]. I mean it didn't ever cross mind."

It is important to notice that gendered violence was often mentioned together with other factors such as alcoholism and drug use. A Latina participant said that many women in their community faced a "high rate of alcoholism, of again, you know, physical abuse, drug abuse." However, immigrant women also were aware of it and gender violence and gender discrimination was as common in their host U.S. society as in their own culture. In the words of an Arab participant, "every culture, you know, I think every, even this cultures, a lot of men they try to control women."

Gendered Discrimination

The last theme we consistently observed in the narratives of the participants was experiences of discrimination. Although this discrimination was discussed regarding individuals of both genders, the analyses seemed to show that women experienced this discrimination differently than men. One of the main sources of discrimination seemed to come from women's employment experiences. They discussed supervisors who mistreated them, American born peers who ridiculed them, and continued perception that no matter how hard they tried, they would not be able to reach their goals for success. An Eastern European participant shared that it was nearly impossible to deal with such instances of discrimination because of language barriers as well as being "afraid of it [reporting], of losing… job."

An Arab participant highlighted that her visibility as an immigrant because of her traditional religious clothes made her a target of continuous discriminatory experiences:

> Sometime people call me names while I'm driving, or stoppin' at the stoplight, you know. Why? Why is that? Not hurting anybody. I, I don't run like red lights or something. I didn't run into their car, so why would just like, you know, do like there's, there's the, the hand signals and, like, yelling really loud that, bad, bad words and stuff. And I just… I always make sure the doors are locked and the windows are up, just in case they gonna hurt me or my children.

Several participants highlighted the general negative atmosphere in the country for all immigrants. A Latina immigrant talked about continual media and political portrayal of immigrants in general and immigrant women in particular in negative terms:

> Those messages are a constant. You turn on the, the, the television, you read the newspaper, it's day to day, that, you know, immigrants are a problem. Uhh, we need to send them all back to where they came from. Umm… for just one moment if [they] could put themselves… in their shoes. And then… realize what it feels, you know, to hear those messages, and… wonder, you know… what it feels like not to be welcomed.

The particularly difficult gendered aspects of such discrimination for many immigrant women occurred in spaces they would have deemed safe such as their children's schools or their neighborhoods. Because racist and xenophobic attitudes seemed to prevail in many social spaces,

immigrant women commented on the challenges of feeling continually unsafe. Another Latina participant voiced what most women in the study described: "And then you're dealing with… discrimination and racism and prejudices and, you know, all this hostility, when all [immigrants] really want is just better life."

Discussion

The results of this study mirror the writings of many feminist scholars on immigrant women (e.g., Berger, 2004; Espín, 1997, 1999; Hondagneu-Sotelo, 1994; Garza-Guerro, 1974; Pesar, 2003; Yakushko & Chronister, 2005; Yakushko & Espin, 2011). In this study, women discussed stressors of migration, ways they coped with these difficulties and experiences of violence and discrimination. We believe that the study extends previous writings, and challenges traditional gender-neutral contributions on immigration by bringing the voices of immigrant women themselves to life through a qualitative multiple case study. In addition, we applied a feminist lens in listening to women's stories, highlighting the distinct gendered aspects of immigration.

Specifically, the results show that women's own descriptions of their adaptation to a new culture carried a decidedly gendered perspective. Immigrant women discussed those domains that culturally belong primarily to them: cooking, shopping, caring for children, and building communities. Similarly, when women discussed coping with difficulties, they highlighted these same challenges as also sources of their strength. In addition, the study supported the writings of other scholars who suggested that immigration can help women to rise above their previous gender positions toward greater empowerment and self-reliance (Espín, 1999; Knorr & Meier, 2000; Lim, 1995).

Counselors who are working with immigrant women should, therefore, focus not on broad general aspects of immigration but on gender-specific aspects of adjustment. Exploring stressors as well as solutions that are grounded in women's experiences specific to their roles may prove to be more helpful to women. For example, counseling strategies could include explorations of stressors related to child care in the new culture or maintaining gender-based responsibilities (e.g., cooking, shopping). These gendered ways of adaptation may also serve as women-specific solutions to stressors they experience. Counselors may wish to explore how women could make connections with other immigrant women, especially from their own ethnic communities. Such connections could be faciliated through shared needs to child care, cooking and shopping tips, or cultural celebrations.

Gendered violence continues to dominate the discussion of immigrant women's experiences. Scholars have highlighted that immigration may facilitate greater incidences of domestic and sexual violence, because of disollution of prior cultural boundaries on such violence as well as an increase in stress placed on intimate partnerships (Bhuyan, Mell, Senturia, Sullivan, & Shiu-Thornton, 2005; Darvishpour, 2002; Perilla, 1999; Yakushko & Chronister, 2004). Counselors should pay especially close attention to immigrant women's concerns about violence in their households. Questions about gender relations in general and violent relations in particular could be included in assessment with every immigrant woman. Because in many cultures violence against women is not addressed through legal systems and because women's social resources may have deteriorated because of immigration, counselors should actively explore with women their options while in their new country (i.e., women's legal rights and options; ethnic and local community resources).

Lastly, the participants gave voice to their experiences of the current cultural zeitgeist, characterized by xenophobia and racism (Yakushko, 2010). Whether at work, in schools, or in their neighborhoods, immigrant women continually face overt and covert incidents of discrimination and prejudice. In addition, the results highlight that gendered violence and anti-immigrant discrimination are often related: women who cross borders without documents in search of work are often prey to horrific sexual assaults. Moreover, immigrant women's vulnerability and cultural invisibility can result in the under-reporting of domestic violence.

Counselors, recognizing the detrimental impact of prejudice and discrimination, can be especially attentive to how immigrant women manage these challenges. As mentioned in the findings, some immigrant women expressed confusion regarding reactions directed at them, not understanding if such reactions were warranted or unwarranted. Counselors working with immigrant women could take on roles of educators and advocates, helping women understand their rights as well as strategizing regarding ways for them to address discrimination and prejudice when they arise.

The results of this study can serve as a platform for future scholarship. Each aspect of immigrant women's adjustment can be further amplified and explored from culture-specific perspectives. For example, little continues to be known about undocumented immigrant women and their experiences of not only migration itself, but their functioning while in the host country. In addition to culture-specific differences, future research could focus on distinctions and intersections of educational, social, religious, and age status as well as women's sexualities and relational choices (i.e., lesbian immigrant women; single women without children).

This study examined experiences of women from a single community setting: a medium-size Midwestern urban area of the United States. Women's experiences are undoubtedly tied to

their locations, thus, other studies could seek to hear from immigrant women who reside in rural areas, who live in border towns or states, or who live in other parts of the U.S. or the world. In addition, this study did not include experiences of women from "developed" countries such as Canada, Western Europe, Japan, or Australia. It is likely that the experiences of immigrant women from these countries will differ significantly from those described in this study.

We hope that the findings of this study can also inform mental health practice, education and advocacy. As mentioned earlier, practitioners can focus on both gendered stressors and strengths among their immigrant women clients. Mental health providers can also be especially attentive to apparent contradictions in immigrant women's experience, such as regarding women's perceptions of immigration as empowering as well as fraught with violence and discrimination that is based on intersections of their gender and immigrant status.

Similarly, training of clinicians and researchers can expand to understand the distinctly gendered aspects of immigration. Scholars have suggested that most of scholarship (and we would add clinical training) on immigration remains "gender blind" (Kelson & DeLaet 1999; Knorr & Metter 2000; Morrison et al., 2008; Simon 2001; Willis & Yeoh, 2000). Because in many training programs, such training is nascent (Yakushko, 2009), inclusion of a specific emphasis on gender as a central and distinct aspect of migration experience may be important. Future research can seek to refine and amplify ways, in which immigration is experienced by women.

Lastly, scholars and counselors around the world can unite together with other community leaders in challenging the existing hegemony of anti-immigrant social and political agendas. In this study, women voiced their perceptions of tremendous negativity toward immigrants in all levels of society. Undoubtedly, such negative perceptions further fuel

individual, institutional, and cultural prejudice and discrimination toward immigrant women. Counselors and scholars can be at the forefront of addressing these multiple forms of violence and oppression. Moreover, the results of this study can seek to inform the changing immigration policies and practices. Understanding the gendered nature of relocation (i.e., women's concerns for families and children; border violence) and adjustment (i.e., women's economic and social-emotional responsibility for family well-being) can serve as a basis for creating programs and policies that aid immigrant women. Such changes, we hope, will support immigrant women in building, in the words of one participant, a "better life."

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