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Vietnamese Women and Domestic Violence: A Qualitative Examination

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Abstract

This grounded theory qualitative study investigated the major influencing factors in the United States that empowered six Vietnamese women who had been in abusive relationships to take actions, to make changes in their intimate relationships, unlike many of their abused counterparts in their homeland. Interviews of two focus group sessions, field-notes, and documentary evidence were used to obtain the results for this research study. Five major dominant influencing factors in the U.S. have helped these women to stand up to their abusers: 1) financial condition, 2) dominant U.S. cultures intolerance of domestic violence, 3) education, 4) support from other individuals, both genders, and 5) women role models in the community and from the media. These major determinant conditions of the theoretical model were identified and are illustrated by narrative data in this study.

Keywords

Vietnamese Abused Women, Partner Abuse, Empowerment, and Domestic Violence

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Vietnamese Women and Domestic Violence: A Qualitative Examination

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This grounded theory qualitative study investigated the major influencing factors in the United States that empowered six Vietnamese women who had been in abusive relationships to take actions, to make changes in their intimate relationships, unlike many of their abused counterparts in their homeland. Interviews of two focus group sessions, field-notes, and documentary evidence were used to obtain the results for this research study. Five major dominant influencing factors in the U.S. have helped these women to stand up to their abusers: 1) financial condition, 2) dominant U.S. culture's intolerance of domestic violence, 3) education, 4) support from other individuals, both genders, and 5) women role models in the community and from the media. These major determinant conditions of the theoretical model were identified and are illustrated by narrative data in this study. Key words: Vietnamese Abused Women, Partner Abuse, Empowerment, and Domestic Violence

Introduction

Over the past three decades an estimated 1,100,000 Vietnamese have migrated to the United States from Vietnam. And it has been estimated that at least half of this population are women (U.S. Census, 2000). For the majority of these women, America is their first exposure to the concept of women being "first" that is, in traditional Asian cultures, the husband assumes the role of leadership and authority, and is the provider and protector of the family. The wife is usually dominated by the authority of her husband, her father, her in-laws, and sometimes her son (Hsu, 1971). Also in traditional Asian cultures, domestic violence is "kept" in the house because people do not interfere in others' family affairs. Men are perceived to have the rights to "educate" their families in whatever ways they see fit. To a great extent, these philosophies of traditional Asian families are challenged by the beliefs and values of equality held by the American host culture regarding women and their roles in the family.

Goodman and Fallon (1995) define domestic abuse as physical, emotional, or sexual abuse taking place within the context of the family household. It may be between adults, between adults and children, or between children. For the purposes of this present study, domestic abuse between a husband and wife is examined. This present research concentrates on exploring the major factors in the American culture that have changed some Vietnamese married women's views of intimate relationships with their husbands. These women had been exposed to Western ways, perceiving equality in intimate relationships, and no longer wanted an unequal relationship with their husbands, unlike when they were in Vietnam. The research question for this qualitative study was, "What

are the major influencing factors in the United States that have empowered six Vietnamese women who had been in abusive relationships to take actions, to make changes in the relationships with their husbands?"

Through this present study, it was hoped that participants' struggles to be freed from domestic violence would be revealed. Furthermore, the author's interests for the study also included finding major environmental as well as cultural influencing factors that had helped some Vietnamese women to become intolerant of family violence, unlike in the past when they were in their homeland. With tremendous hope and optimism, this study could help to de-mystify the phenomenon of domestic violence in the Vietnamese community, with respect to Vietnamese women's empowerment process in their intimate relationships, in order to build a knowledge base in this under-researched area.

The study took place at a counseling center in a southern state. The researcher of the study is a Vietnamese male in his early 30s, who was the research participants' counselor months prior. There was good rapport between the researcher and the research participants prior to the data collection process. Because of good rapport and the women's willingness to articulate their past abusive experiences freely, the researcher recognized the potential of reaching many victims of partner abuse through conducting this present research study.

Literature Review

The main purpose of this section is to familiarize the reader with research studies in the literature that had focused on Asian Americans in general and Vietnamese Americans in particular. There are many classic research studies that have been done on the subject of resettlement of the Indochinese in America (Buss, 1980; Kunz, 1973; Liu & Muratta, 1978; Montero, 1979; Slotte, 1977; Tran, 1985). What these researchers have witnessed as a common theme that runs across their studies is that the majority of their subjects are in emotional crises because of their resettlement status in the new country. The men in some cases have lost prestige in terms of career and family status. This author believes that these factors contribute to a great extent of the increased of tensions and domestic violence within these people's families. Yamamoto, Lam, Fung, Tan, and Iga (1977) found that Chinese-speaking Vietnamese who just arrived in the United States usually presented themselves as victims of some unfortunate environmental event.

With regards to readjustment issues in America, McGoldrick (1982), found those Asian immigrants who live in areas with relatively small Asian populations, such as small towns and rural areas, generally have more trouble adjusting to the new country. Ho (1987) goes on to say that this is why we see Asian immigrants like to settle in cities where there are big Asian communities already established. Kim (1985) argues that once Asian women have other Asian women as role models, they tend to expand their support circles by incorporating other women role models from the dominant culture. In other words, Asian women assimilate into the dominant culture easier after they have connected with other women from their culture in the new country. Bui and Morash (1999) found that Vietnamese women who have assimilated into the dominant culture are more likely than their counterparts to exhibit ambivalence about traditional values in the context of their family life. Furthermore, according to Bui and Morash, these assimilated

Vietnamese women are more likely than their husbands to embrace both American and Vietnamese cultures.

Leung and Boehnlein (1996), Goodman and Fallon (1995), Uba (1994), and Rutledge (1992) were among the most recent researchers to study Asian post-migration issues in the United States. This research has revealed that one of the predictors that Asian women will or will not tolerate domestic abuse is employment/financial status (Uba, 1994). Dependence can be economic; a woman may not earn enough money to support herself and her children without her husband. Lateef (1992) found that tensions of modernization among Indo-Fijians such as women's increased participation in paid employment and education has meant that traditional familial ideology is slowly being undermined. Leung and Boehnlein (1996) maintain that a factor that contributes to marital discord in the Asian family, in America is the matter of survival; that all able family members have to participate in the workforce. Also according to Uba (1994), marital discord is the second most presenting family problem in the Asian community, after parent-child conflicts.

With respect to Asian men's identity readjustment issues in America, Uba (1994) found that the Asian men who perceive that they have lost their prestige in the new land show lower self-image than their counterparts. For example, the role of leadership no longer resides in the husband alone. This in turn creates a lot of tension for the family. Rutledge's (1992) study also reflects that men who perceive that they have lost more than they have gained in the new country show a higher desire to return to their homeland than that of their counterparts. According to Rutledge, these men are psychologically less ready to start a new life because their perceived losses are greater than that of their counterparts. Their counterparts, on the other hand, view America as a land of opportunity.

Bui and Morash (1999) state the husband's patriarchal beliefs play a significant role in wife abuse. Furthermore, Bui and Morash found that the important economic status of Vietnamese women does not imply an equal gender relationship in their participants' abusive marriages. In other words, a woman's positive economic status may not necessarily reduce the husband's dominance naturally; she has to learn to assert her new acquired power and independence based on her positive economic status. On the other hand, a woman's dependent or negative economic situation usually makes the situation of male dominance worse. One of the elements that made this project study unique was that it focused on examining Vietnamese women's successes in ending partner abuse in their lives. Other studies have focused on the prevalence of partner abuse and psychiatric symptoms among abused Vietnamese women (Bui & Morash, 1999; Tran, 1997). As a result, the knowledge base on domestic violence among Vietnamese women expands, with respect to Vietnamese abused women's empowerment process. In terms of research methodology, this project can serve as an exploratory study for studies to be replicated. Perhaps future studies on domestic violence among Vietnamese women could incorporate both quantitative and qualitative methods, with the purpose of striving for aggregate data and storied information.

Method

The primary method of investigation for this study was grounded theory (Glaser & Strauss, 1967), a qualitative research method designed to aid in the systematic collection and analysis of data, and the construction of a theoretical model. Grounded theory was used in order to develop codes, categories, and themes inductively from the data and to generate working hypotheses that reflected narratives of the participants in the study. The participants were asked only open-ended questions so that they could freely articulate their own experiences of their journey, in becoming the people they had become.

Participants

Research participants were six Vietnamese women, with ages ranging from 24 to 40, who had been clients at a women's counseling center in a southern state. These research participants were my former counseling clients, who were invited to participate in this study. They all agreed. I was aware of their past abusive histories from their counseling session in the few months prior to the study. Counseling created a good rapport between us.

These women had gone through four hours of counseling, as required by the law in Texas, after their husbands were arrested for making terrorizing threats toward them. These women had been abused by their husbands in Vietnam, but not in the United States. The main reason why these women called the police on their husbands, as stated by them, was because they did not want to put up with the same controlling tactics exhibited by their husbands. Participants' length of stay in the United States ranged from five years to ten years and their occupations ranged from hair stylist, to car dealership owner, to homemaker. Participants' educational levels ranged from tenth grade to having a bachelor's degree. Past abuse experience varied from being kicked, slapped, and punched to being verbally abused. These women reported no physical abuse from their husbands over the course of their counseling and participation in the study.

Procedure

The participants were contacted by the author to take part in a research study. The participants were asked to participate in a focus-group for three hours as part of a research project investigating domestic violence in the Vietnamese community. Participation was voluntary and the women could withdraw from the research at anytime. The purpose and the scope of the study were revealed to the participants and they were encouraged to be honest because the information would be confidential. An informed consent was given out to the participants with the information that audio-recording would be used during the focus-group meeting.

With respect to ethical considerations for this research project, clients were well informed at their initial in-take session of the possibility that they would be asked to participate in research projects due to the funding nature of the agency. Clients understood that participation in research projects were voluntary and their real names would be kept confidential. Therefore, the names of the participants in this present study

are fictional. In this project, older women were more open and felt more comfortable with the group than younger women; they shared their personal diaries and writings thoroughly in the interview without much hesitation. Younger women who had personal writings, on the other hand, had shown a preference for the author to read them in private.

Data sources.

Six participants were in a focus-group that lasted three hours, with two open-ended interview questions. The two questions were: "If you were still in Vietnam, how would your life with your husband be, versus in the United States?" and "How did you come to know that you didn't have to take the abuse from your husband?" The two questions were asked of the participants because they were open-ended questions that required participants' elaboration on their relationships with their husbands under two different environments.

The rationale for the first interview question was for the participants to compare their present lives with their husbands versus what could have been if they were still in their homeland. In other words, was the environment a huge factor in helping and shaping the participants' views of intimate relationships? The rationale for the second interview question was to elicit information from participants with regards to their intolerance of their husbands' partner abuse tendencies. Through asking the second research question, the researcher had hoped to understand particular environmental influences that had helped the participants understand that partner abuse was wrong and unacceptable in this new country. In short, what and who in the United States particularly has had direct or indirect influence on the participants' learning of partner abuse intolerance? Through counseling sessions, the author knew before the study was conducted that while in their homeland, these women had tolerated and endured their husbands' physical abuse without notifying authorities. The focus-group interview was conducted by the author in Vietnamese mainly because the women felt most comfortable in expressing their experiences in their native language. In previous counseling sessions, the author had used the spoken Vietnamese language with all of the participants. Therefore, it was natural to conduct the study in the same language that was understood by all participants. The rationale of using the group format for this study was to see if there was consensus among the participants. The group setting also gave the researcher opportunities to analyze participants' non-verbal cues when discussing the topic with one another (e.g., shed tears, looked sad).

Throughout the group interview process, this researcher's responses to the participants included active listening, empathic reflection, and minimal encouragers. The author's rationale for using these techniques was not to lead participants' discussions in any manner, but to facilitate the flow of the interview process that would make participants feel free to articulate what they needed to without hesitation. In striving for rigor in this study, the researcher also met with the participants for two hours after the focus-group interview for clarifications and feedback and also to allow the participants to review quotes. These steps were taken to preserve rigor and to protect the validity of the study's results (Guba & Lincoln, 1989; Maxwell, 1996). The main rationale for this two-hour session was to make sure that the author's interpretations of the participants'

comments were accurate. Another rationale was for the participants to ask questions about the results and put closure to what they had revealed in the group with other women. In striving for further rigor, the researcher also had asked a panel consisting of two male and one female bilingual Vietnamese to make sure that the meanings of the quotes were congruent with the author's English translations. The role of the panel basically was to make sure the meanings of the words expressed by participants in Vietnamese were congruent with the English translation in the data analysis. The panel had to unanimously agree with the English translation before data analysis could proceed. Participants' identities were not known to the panel in the process of translating. Documentary demographic information completed the data set. These data included intake forms and copies of personal writings the participants have kept such as journals and diaries.

Data collection, analysis, and writing

In collecting the data, the researcher used the information obtained from the five-hour audio-tapes, the field notes that contained body language of the participants, their facial expressions, author's impressions of the participants and the interview process, and documentary evidence, such as intake forms and personal writings and the panel's feedback. After the first focus-group interview, the author took three weeks to analyze the raw data from various sources mentioned earlier. Once this initial data analysis was complete, the author again met with the participants in a group setting and presented them with the preliminary findings for feedback and clarifications. In the second focus-group session, the researcher invited the participants to give feedback and any other information that was not mentioned in the study at the time of data collection. With the participants' involvement in the data collection and analytic processes, the researcher wanted to remove as many personal biases as possible and to clarify any misunderstandings or misinterpretations that might have existed in the study. After the second focus-group session, the author took another three weeks to revise and reanalyze the raw data. The whole research data collection process took place in the spring of 2000.

The analytic process was performed by coding and sorting the data, to connect common themes that the participants had alluded to the most frequently during the interview. For example, participants stated that if they were still in Vietnam they would still tolerate their husbands' abusive behavior due to their financial constraints. In this case the author would take notice the number of times financial issues were mentioned by the participants and created a socioeconomic category. As a result, any time financial concerns were brought up by the participants, they would be coded under the socioeconomic category. Coding was performed not only for counting purposes, but to generate categories and facilitate theoretical concepts of the topic under study. In the analytic process, the researcher also took into consideration his personal reactions to participants' narratives (e.g., participants' sense of pride, participants' tone of voice). This method of creating categories and coding was performed throughout the analytic process with data collected from the variety of sources mentioned earlier. The researcher linked data from the various sources and broad general themes began to surface. After twenty iterations of the raw data provided by participants to the two focus-group questions and information from other sources, four major general categories surfaced: 1)

Transition from Vietnam to the United States (e.g., Issues such as participants' exposure to how women in general are treated with respect by men in the new country), 2) significant events/people that have impact on the participants in the new country (i.e., Participants' more assimilated relatives telling their family role equality for women and men in the new country), 3) length of time in the new country and life situation (e.g., Participants' level of assimilation and stability in the new country determines their intolerance of partner abuse), and 4) socioeconomic status in the new environment (e.g., Participants' level of financial independence determines the extent of their intolerance of partner abuse in their lives). All of these categories were saturated with common themes that the participants provided. In other words, all information provided by participants was related in themes which were then coded under the four major general categories mentioned above. In the analytic process, the author continued to move from the general to the specific themes that the participants had directly or indirectly attributed to their process of becoming empowered in their abusive relationships. For example, under the general category "transition from Vietnam to the United States", a dominant theme could be education regarding the role of women in the home and in society. These women have learned that in America their roles are more flexible and progressive than those assigned by their homeland.

Results

Within the four major general categories mentioned earlier, five recurring dominant themes of environmental and cultural influences were developed from the information provided by the six women in the study. These themes illustrate the factors that were empowering for these women in the process of seeking equality and non-abuse in their relationships with their husbands. The five influences were: 1) financial condition, 2) dominant culture's intolerance of domestic violence (legal wise), 3) education, 4) support from other people, both genders, and 5) women role models in the community and from the media.

Financial Condition Influence

Under the general category "socioeconomic status in the new environment", the data unequivocally pointed out that financial status played a major role in the women's empowerment process. The results indicated that five of the women in this study had good paying jobs while only one was a homemaker. At the time of this study, the five employed women reported making more money than their husbands. The data showed that these women had an average income of \$700 a week, almost double of their husbands' incomes. Five out of the five employed women agreed that their financial independence gave them a sense of freedom and power in making decisions in the family without having to plead with their husbands. The homemaker reported that she was waiting for her child to be a year old then she would look for a job, because her husband's income was not enough for the family. For example, one participant named Yen (fictional name) reported:

My husband works at a bread company from 11:00 pm to 7:00 am, six days a week and gets paid \$350 a week. Me on the other hand, work in a

nail salon and get \$1000 a week easily. The problem is that he thinks earning money is tough and he gets upset easily when I tend to spend on something that he doesn't consider important.

As these women gained financial power because of their jobs, they tended to start making decisions on their own. In Vietnam, women in general do not buy anything expensive without consulting their husbands. The women (5 out of 6) in the study reported enjoying this new power (while the homemaker wished she had the same status), which they did not think they would have had if they were still in their homeland. Participant Thanh reported this statement:

One time I was speeding and the police stopped me and gave me a ticket. I was a little bit scared but not much. Later on I found out the ticket was actually \$113. When I came home and told my husband, he got crazy because he worried about insurance and all that bit. At that time I was angry because it seemed that he worried about money more than about me. We got into an argument on that day. It seemed like we argued about two different things.

Due to their stable financial conditions, many of the participants felt they were able to voice their opinions on issues that related to family matters. In short, they felt secure and not totally dependent on their husbands financially. The husbands, on the other hand, sensed that they were losing their power within the family, as reported by the majority of the women. According to Yen, her husband went over to her mother's house and said the following things about her:

Your daughter is not the same like when I married her. She has changed by this country. She thinks she can run this family without me. I want you to talk to her because I don't want your grandchildren to be without a father in the future.

In sum, as the data indicated, money or financial stability of the women was mentioned fifteen times and a sense of pride accompanied it when the women talked about it.

Dominant Culture's Intolerance of Domestic Violence

Under the major category "transition from Vietnam to the United States", the data showed that the dominant culture's legal system, intolerant of domestic violence, was a factor in the women's empowerment process. The participants mentioned 13 times the word "police" throughout the course of the interview. All of the women strongly believed that the police would intervene in their family matters when called upon. The majority of the participants said when the police were called to their homes they were initially afraid but then felt secure because authorities were willing to be involved in their matters. Five of the women in the study knew someone who had called the police for domestic violence and the intervention was effective in deterring the perpetrators' threats. In

Vietnam these women's husbands would not be arrested for incidents like these. As participant Hang stated clearly in the interview:

I still remember when the police came to our neighbor's house in Vietnam because of some disturbance and there was no siren, no arrest. Over here, it is a big deal when the police come, either someone will be arrested or something big will happen. And that is what I learned about the police system in this country early.

Also, in the area of the dominant culture's intolerance of domestic violence is the concept of "ladies first" that was revealed. All of the participants in this study voiced their support for America's ways of promoting women's rights. Two participants said they knew America was more liberal than their homeland in the area of women's rights. Three women stated they had to learn to accept America's ways of perceiving women once they arrived in the United States. Participant Hong voiced out her perceptions:

I am not sure if I ever want to go back to Vietnam to live. I mean I am scared of the ways women and children are treated over there. In America I experience the freedom to be me and I don't want anyone to take that away from me. Over here, my husband would not think of laying his hands on me, the police would get him if he does.

Formal and Informal Learnings

Education was categorized under the general category "length of time in the new country and life situation." The reason why education was placed under this category was because the data showed a direct correlation between participants' length of years in U.S. and their educational experiences. The majority (5 out of 6) of the participants did not go to college in the United States but this researcher considers that high school exposure and the informal education that these women had received helped them tremendously in their intolerance of abusive relationships. The word, "formal education" was not mentioned in the interview much (4 times), but there were implications about vicarious learning with respect to the issue of domestic violence. The participants alluded to the process of learning gender equality as it related to cultural norms. The Vietnamese word "hoc", meaning learn was mentioned fifty times by all participants in describing their self-image and un-acceptance of partner abuse. Furthermore, in the area of formal education and learning, gratitude (*ta on*) was the word used by the participants to describe their emotion. Participant Tracey stated in her own words:

I would not be the same person if I hadn't finished my bachelor's. I don't know what I would do and where I would be. Sometimes I still regret of the mistakes I made in my past relationships, but now I do see what is healthy and unhealthy relationship. Thanks to my years of schooling in America.

Education not only takes place in the classroom, but it can take place anywhere in the new environment that participants found themselves in. For instance, in the United States it is less likely for authority figures in the Vietnamese community to advise these women to be submissive to their husbands. In Vietnam or in other Asian countries, authority figures would advise women to be submissive to their husbands, for the sake of the children or harmony, as agreed by all of the research participants.

Support from Other People, Both Genders

According to all of the participants, in the United States people feel more freedom to support others with the issue of domestic violence. Five participants revealed that some of their male coworkers asked if they could do anything to help. The data indicated that the term support system (*ganh bo*) was mentioned forty-five times through the interview process. All of the participants stated that family, friends, and coworkers were their support networks when they had family crises. Two participants said that their families initially gave them “lectures” on how to be good wives and to endure their husbands’ difficult moods. The rest of the women received support from their families, especially their mothers. Two participants stated that they were offered advice like, “leave it to God” or “carry your cross.” At the same time, they also remembered advice from other more assimilated people, whom they associated with in society, regarding equality of intimate relationships in the new land. A commonality that all of the participants shared with one another was that they were not socially isolated. Thuy, a homemaker, stated that she visited her neighbors and friends regularly when her husband was at work. She stated:

These people are like my life-line. Without them I don’t know whom I can bounce things off with. In a way they are like my family when my husband is not around. I realize I have to juggle things around in order to be with them. But it’s important that I’d be with them.

In short, being connected with people outside of the abusive relationship was conducive to these women’s empowerment process. The sense that this author got was that support from others could contradict the husbands’ abusive messages in many ways and they gave the women an alternative to view intimate relationships, which in the end influenced their behavior.

Women Role Models in the Community and from the Media

Women role models were mentioned a great deal (60 times) in the interview by the participants. Five of the women saw these role models as “their permission” (*quyen*) to stand up for their own rights as individuals with worth and dignity. One participant stated that she felt somewhat intimidated by liberal women in the United States. Several of the famous women were mentioned, such as Hilary Clinton and Oprah Winfrey. But most important to these women as they mentioned it, were the women role models in their own community, both Vietnamese and American role models. These women role models range from dentists, doctors, to individuals who are successful in many areas of their

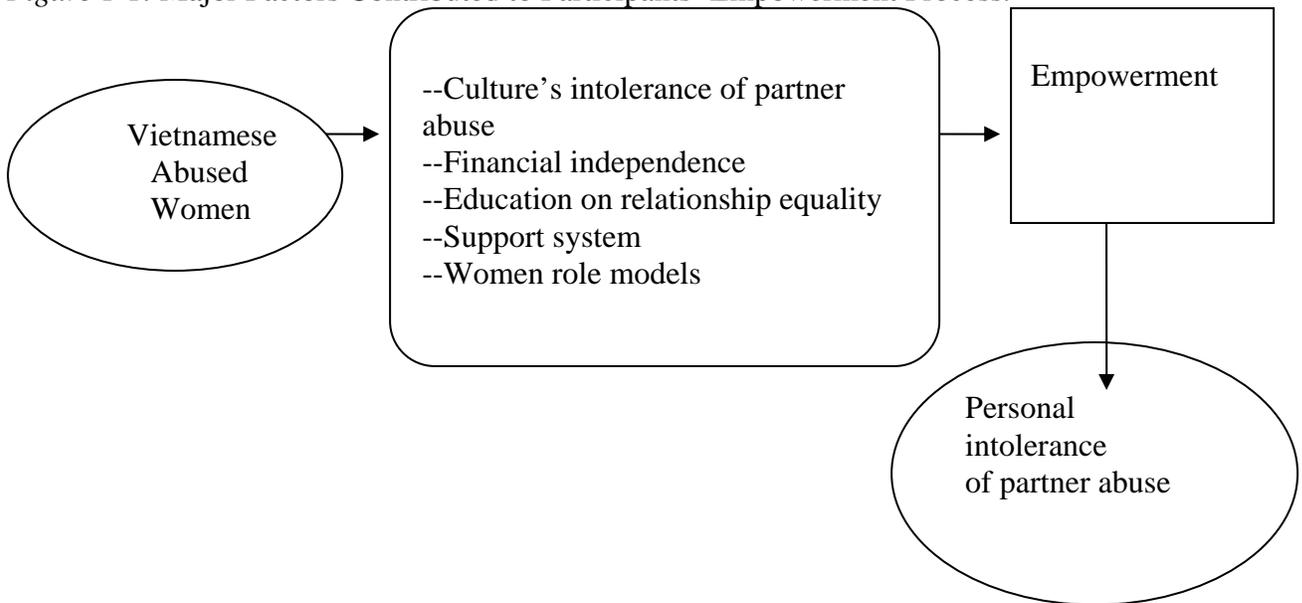
lives and are active in the community and churches. As one participant said about a woman role model whom she met at church:

This woman reads in church beautifully. She can do so many things. This woman is not afraid of anything. I can sense the self-confidence in her. She has taught me the true meaning of womanhood.

This researcher's field notes showed that these participants had a sense of respect for these women role models in their lives. For example, participants' tone of voice was strong and confident when they spoke of these women role models. However, the participants' sense of respect for their role models was also accompanied by their sense of wonder. For instance, three participants even articulated that they wished their mothers were like these role models, in order for them to not have to witness the abuse that they had seen in their families of origin. The other three women in the study remained silent in this regard. Two women grieved that their mothers never had a chance to be the loving and care-free people whom they truly were. At this point in the interview, the other four participants seemed quiet and somewhat sad.

Figure 1-1 depicts a theoretical model illustrating five major influencing factors that had helped six Vietnamese women in this present study in their process of empowerment and intolerance of partner abuse.

Figure 1-1. Major Factors Contributed to Participants' Empowerment Process.



Discussion

The literature considering Vietnamese immigrants and refugees in the United States is a developing area of specialty. However, very little has been written about Vietnamese family violence issues. Unlike in the past, Vietnamese people in America have begun to address this very serious social issue. As domestic violence issues in America become recognized and supported by the government, people will feel the freedom to voice out their problems with the hope of getting help for themselves and their spouses. This

research only touched the surface of the dynamics that had driven these women to become empowered and to maintain that mentality in spite of the tremendous oppositions they faced. These women also wanted to maintain a balance between their own “life-giving” healthy cultural values and those of the dominant culture. It seems like these women wanted the best of both worlds and they had to pay a price for it. Again, according to Leung and Boehnlein (1996), one of the factors that contribute to confusion of role identities for the Vietnamese families in America is the matter of survival; that all able family members have to participate in the workforce. And as women have increased their contribution to the family’s financial well-being, they also have become increasingly forceful in demanding that their status in the family and in society be elevated. As a result, this can create stress between family members, especially between the husband and the wife.

With respect to financial stability and domestic violence among Vietnamese men, Nguyen (2002) found Vietnamese wife batterers were less financially secure than their Vietnamese non-batterer counterparts. What the data in Nguyen’s study suggested was that power shifts had taken place in the Vietnamese family due to financial circumstances. The power to make decisions in the family no longer resides in the husband alone, but in the wife to a large degree. In some cases, children are perceived to be more knowledgeable than the father due to their proficiency with the English language. Furthermore, through Nguyen’s study it was found that the relationship between being a Vietnamese male batterer and having less support systems was statistically significant.

Throughout the time of collecting data for this research study, I felt that the women were comfortable with me because rapport had been established months ago from our counseling sessions and because of the trust in our relationship, this author believes what the women had reported was accurate to the best of their knowledge at that time. It would be interesting to see this research replicated by a Vietnamese woman researcher so the two results could be compared. Some potential benefits which this research study’s participants reaped included validation for their positive changes in intimate relationships through exposure to other Vietnamese women like themselves; a sense of universality in their common flight. The participants’ participation in the project may have added strain in their intimate relationships because like never before their new behavior had been reinforced and affirmed by the group and the study itself.

It should be noted that the focus group format in this study has both advantages and disadvantages that are likely to affect the data collected. The pros of focus groups include: 1) an opportunity for a researcher to hear consensus among participants who have experienced a similar phenomenon, 2) they generate speedy results and offer flexibility for probing (Rubin & Babbie, 2001), and 3) group dynamics may bring out aspects of a phenomenon that researchers may not have anticipated (Rubin & Babbie, 2001). The cons of focus groups include: 1) group pressure may make participants want to conform to the group, despite of how they feel or think about a particular topic, and 2) group members may not be representative of individuals who have experienced a certain phenomenon. As a result, results are neither generalizable across target populations nor are they the ultimate truth, but they are interesting and informative and gleaned from the experts.

Some questions for prospective researchers to ponder upon as they venture to expand the knowledge base of this topic: 1) Specifically, why some Vietnamese abused women become less tolerant of partner abuse, while others remain unchanged in their new environment, 2) For the Vietnamese women who have become less tolerant of partner abuse in the new country, do they remain less tolerant in the long range, and 3) Which major influencing factor has the most weight in helping some Vietnamese abused women to become less tolerant of partner abuse, and why?

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