ABSTRACT

LATINAS’ USE OF SPIRITUALITY AS A COPING MECHANISM FOR IPV

Ashley Lauren Faytol, M.S.

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Intimate partner violence (IPV) is a widespread public health concern with consequences that negatively impact many areas of survivors’ functioning (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention [CDC], 2017, 2019; Ellsberg et al., 2008; Gorde et al., 2004; Kelly, 2010a). The negative impacts of IPV are more severe for Latinas than their White counterparts (e.g., Bonomi et al., 2009; Kelly, 2010b; Stockman et al., 2015), causing IPV to be considered a health disparity within the Latina community (Caetano et al., 2005). While spirituality has been shown to be an effective coping mechanism for many stressors in Latinas’ lives, it has not received sufficient exploration of its efficacy in the context of coping with IPV (de la Rosa et al., 2016). To address this gap in the literature, the current constructivist grounded theory study sought to develop a theory of how Latinas used spirituality as a means of coping with IPV. Individual, semi-structured interviews with nine Latina IPV survivors about their experiences of using spirituality to cope with abuse were analyzed by a collaborative research team. Results revealed the place spirituality had in the lives of Latinas as well as how the abuse they experienced influenced their choice to use spirituality to cope, when they used it, and how it was helpful. Ultimately, spirituality was found to provide support, help manage emotions, help positively reforge their identity, and provide clarity/perspective about the nature of their relationship. Implications, limitations, and directions for future research are described.