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# Violence Against Women and Machismo A research study of how Machismo justifies cases of violence against women and the psychological process that influence women to remain in abusive relationships in the city of Fortaleza

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## **Violence Against Women and Machismo**

A research study of how Machismo justifies cases of violence against women and the psychological process that influence women to remain in abusive relationships in the city of Fortaleza

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## Acknowledgments

Before I begin my work, I would like to acknowledge all of my participants who have made this research possible. Violence against women is a very complex issue and it deals with extremely personal and traumatic experiences and I thank my participants for being courageous in sharing those experiences with me. Not only do I want to acknowledge the participants that face violence but also the participants who deal with cases of violence against women and are working towards creating dialogue around this issue, working towards combating and diminish rates of violence against women in the city of Fortaleza, and lastly who offer support and love to women facing violence.

I wouldn't have been able to conduct this research if it weren't for my advisor Janaina Zaranza who helped me tremendously with the language barrier that I confronted. My advisor being next to me made it easier for me to communicate with my participants and others who I spoke to along the way. Due to her knowledge and networks, through her previous work and research on violence against women, I was able to interview women and recognized and important professionals who deal with the subject, which I probably wouldn't have had the chance to do if she wasn't with me.

The organizations *Centro de Referencia da Mulher Francisca Clotilde* and the *Delegacia de Defesa da Mulher* is also another reason why I was able to conduct this research. I was able to speak and interview professionals at both organizations and observe how the organizations works, which was a crucial factor that made my research a success. Lastly, I would like to recognize my academic director, Bill Calhoun, SIT's program assistant Oélito Brandão, and Neylianee Almeida for being able to make this research a possibility for me and thank them for their unconditional support and hard work towards this research.

## **Abstract**

This research is a study on the phenomenon of violence against women that the city of Fortaleza is currently experiencing. Violence against women is an issue that is affecting women worldwide, however in the context of Fortaleza it has become extremely prominent. This study looks whether or not the socialization process of men and women influence rates of violence against women, if institutions are giving life to this violence, and how violence is manifesting in the lives of women in Fortaleza through the eyes of three professionals at *Centro de Referencia*, one professional at the *Delegacia de Defesa da Mulher* and lastly, three women currently experiencing violence. Another important component this research focuses on is the psychological process/violence women experience and how that influences them to remain in abusive relationships. The methods used in this study were formal and informal interviews and observations which concluded that the socialization process does indeed influence rates of violence against women and how different social factors often times forces women to remain in abusive relationships.

## **Resumo**

Esta pesquisa é um estudo sobre o fenômeno da violência contra as mulheres que a cidade de Fortaleza está experimentando atualmente. Violência contra as mulheres é um problema que está afetando as mulheres em todo o mundo, no entanto, no contexto de Fortaleza tornou-se extremamente importante. Este estudo analisa se deve ou não o processo de socialização de homens e mulheres influenciam os índices de violência contra as mulheres, se as instituições estão a dar vida a esta violência, e como a violência está se manifestando na vida das mulheres em Fortaleza através dos olhos de três profissionais no Centro de Referencia, um profissional na Delegacia de Defesa da Mulher e da violência, por último, três mulheres experimentando atualmente. Outro componente importante desta pesquisa centra-se na é o processo / mulheres violência experiência psicológica e como isso influencia-los a permanecer em relacionamentos

abusivos. Os métodos utilizados neste estudo foram entrevistas formais e informais e observações que concluíram que o processo de socialização, de fato, influenciou as taxas de violência contra as mulheres e como diferentes fatores sociais pois muitas vezes os obriga as mulheres a permanecer em relacionamentos abusivos.

## **Introduction**

### **Statement Problem**

The research I conducted was on the macho attitude in Fortaleza and the psychological violence women face when involved in an abusive relationship, but also how that psychological violence ultimately influences a woman's decision to stay (or not) in an abusive relationship and the factors that contribute to that decision. The questions I sought to answer were, what socialization processes do men and women in Fortaleza experience that justifies violence against women in terms of machismo and how does that influence women to stay in violent relationships? I started my research with statistics of the 2013-2014 year rates of violence against women from the *Delegacia de Defesa da Mulher*, to understand how extreme and problematic the rates of violence against women are in Fortaleza and the actions taken to combat this issue.

I also explored how Brazil's colonization and construction of gender roles impacts violence against women to frame the discussion of machismo in Brazil and how that macho attitude has been widespread and normalized being a male and female in the Brazilian society. This historical context will also offer a look into how not only manhood has been constructed but womanhood as well. This will create a foundation for understanding why women accept machismo, possibly reinforce machismo and why they decide to stay in violent relationships.

### **Justification for study**

Violence against women is a phenomenon that is affecting women worldwide. In the context of Brazil, not many studies have been conducted that focus in the city of Fortaleza, regardless of the fact that Fortaleza has the third highest rate of assassinations of women (Lecture. 16 Sept. 2014). This research of violence against women is important because it's necessary to look into the psychological reasons why women decide to stay in violent relationships and how their socialization process often times influences women to remain in violent relationships and men to violate women (whether

it's mental, sexual or domestic). It's also important because we, as a society, need to deconstruct the macho attitude, in order to reconstruct our ideas of gender roles and masculinity, to move towards gender equity and slowly start shedding away from the rape culture promoted in our every day lives that primarily affects women.

Even though violence against women is an issue worldwide, it is extremely important in terms of the Brazil context because violence against women is a "natural law", where a woman's world unfolds in the home and is almost impossible for women to escape this reality. Violence against women is also a social issue that goes beyond the idea of class and it's a reality that hasn't changed despite the different organizations and laws that have been implemented to work towards ending this issue.

According to, "WHO multi country study on women's health and domestic violence against women: Initial results on prevalence, health outcomes and women's responses", 54% of the population in Brazil who were interviewed in this specific study, know a woman who has been assaulted by a partner, 56% know a man who has assaulted a partner, and 7 out of 10 interviewees claim that women suffer more violence inside the home than in public spaces (p. 3-19). Why is it that women suffer more violence inside the home than outside the home and what is causing this in the context of Brazil? Violence against women is a very complex phenomenon among the Brazilian population (and worldwide), however given the historical context in terms of colonization in Brazil, it is important to look at the socialization processes of men and women in order to start understanding why these rates are high and how violence affects a woman psychologically, making it harder for a woman to break the cycle of violence.

### **Aims of Study**

The aim of this study was to understand how the socialization process of men and women is currently, and has been (or not), justifying violence against women and why this issue is so predominant in the context of Fortaleza. For people who live outside this reality, it's easy to victim because we think that the common sense solution is to leave the abusive relationship, however I sought to go deeper into the social, economic, emotional and other

factors that complicate a women's decision to leave an abusive relationship. My main objective was to discover whether or not machismo justified violence and offer another view, one different from victim blaming, when women decide to remain in abusive relationships to those living a different reality to understand how violence manifests in their lives and why violence against women is high Fortaleza.

### **Definition of Terms**

Machismo- Strong or aggressive masculine pride.

Machista- A strong or exaggerated sense of masculinity stressing attributes such as physical courage, virility, domination of women, and aggressiveness.

Phenomenon- A fact or situation that is observed to exist or happen, especially one whose cause or explanation is in question.

Socialization process- A term used by sociologists, social psychologists, anthropologists, political scientists and educationalists to refer to the lifelong process of inheriting and disseminating norms, customs, and ideologies, providing an individual with the skills and habits necessary for participating within his or her own society.

## **Literature Review**

### **Introduction**

In 2006, the government in Brazil put in place a new law called *Maria da Penha*, with intent of reducing domestic violence within the country. The *Maria da Penha* law, punishes men who practice domestic violence by increasing the maximum sentence from one to three years, provides measures ranging from removing the abuser from the home to banning them from close proximity of the woman and children attacked. Due to the case of Maria da Penha, the woman who was abused by her ex-husband who ultimately became paraplegic due to that abuse, Brazil received a lot of punishment for its practice of domestic violence, which then caused president Luiz Inácio da Silva to implement new laws to protect women from domestic violence. However, regardless of the implementation of the *Maria da Penha* law, the rate of violence against women in Brazil is still high. The *Maria da*

*Penha* law does not set specific procedures of implementing urgent protective measures after the attack, which often times causes judges to interpret the situation from their own opinions thus leading to legal uncertainty.

Furthermore, the number of employees to meet the demand of processes is insufficient, resulting in cases of violence against women not being handled efficiently because many workers are not qualified to deal with this type of issue (Soares dos Santos, 2014, p. 84).

### **Socialization Process of Men and Women in Brazil**

In Fortaleza, there is a principle that is fundamental to women when it comes to romantic relationships. There is an idea that “it’s better to be with a man who’s abusive, than to be without a man at all”. The rate of violence against women in Fortaleza is extremely high regardless of the laws implemented to decrease those statistics. Malvina Muszkat, in “Violência e intervenção”, speaks on the socialization process that men and women undergo in Brazil and how that socialization process influences violence against women by their romantic partners in the private/domestic sphere. Given this image of the “perfect family and perfect relationship”, Muszkat argues that, “Women do not undergo violence just because of their condition of oppression, but as a practical adaptation and negotiation between the sexes in order to satisfy the desire of preservation of the domestic space” (2002, p. 49). There is a desire to conserve a “functional domestic space” in Brazil within the female population, however Muszkat doesn’t explore the reasons why such beliefs are reinforced and why women deal with violence just to fulfill an image imposed by society even if that means overseeing violence.

One of the main questions I sought to answer in my research was, how much of a role does the socialization process of men and women have in this way of thought in the population of Fortaleza? As previously mentioned, in the context of Fortaleza, there is a “natural law” that exists within men and women, which is where a woman’s world unfolds in the home and no where else. This “natural law” has been reinforced by society and my goal was to research why at *Centro de Referencia da Mulher* in terms of violence against

women by speaking to women who have experienced violence and what factors contribute to that reality.

Violence against women is a worldwide phenomenon, however not many studies have been done in the context of Brazil, nevertheless in the context of Fortaleza. It is necessary to look deeper into the reasons why Fortaleza has the 3<sup>rd</sup> highest rate of assassination of women and why the state of Ceará only has two specialized courts for cases of violence against women. In a study done in Rio de Janeiro, “Where the Boys are: Attitudes Related to Masculinity, Fatherhood, and Violence Towards Women among Low-Income Adolescent and Young Adult Males in Rio de Janeiro” conducted by Gary Barker and Irene Loewenstein, results show that there is a shift in the way men think about women and machismo for the better, however there is still a machista attitude, predominantly in younger males who come from low-income communities. Machismo in Latin America has been known for a “deep structure of masculinity”, which “...is generally equated with bravado, sexual prowess, protecting one’s honor, and a willingness to face danger, among other traits” (Barker and Loewenstein: 1997, p. 169). The socialization process of men and women in Brazil have taught women to be passive and men to be assertive, usually forcing men to be the opposite of hypersensitive, which ultimately leads to men using violence as a outlet or a form of expressing feelings.

In the context of Fortaleza, working with *Centro de Referencia da Mulher*, it was crucial to explore the different factors that contribute to violence against women and how that violence manifest in their daily lives. If men are socialized to be aggressive and assertive, how does that contribute to the rates of violence against women? In Brazil, men have been known for having the right to beat women if a woman disrespects a man’s honor (and in other cultures as well). Barker and Loewenstein mention that in the context of Rio de Janeiro, “When men feel frustrated or powerless, they sometimes turn to violence as a way to express these emotions” (1997, p. 171). If violence against women is an issue worldwide, but very predominant in the context of Brazil, there must be a deeper reasoning as to why men violate women and why women accept violence/machismo. Violence against women then becomes a very complex issue due to the fact that men and women are

learning societal norms at an early age (from family, school, church, politics, etc.), which ultimately results in a negation of violence from both actor's men and women that primarily affects women psychologically, emotionally, physically, etc. The creation of societal norms from colonial times is allowing and creating a space that permits this type of venting to be taken out on women and I explored that further at *Centro de Referencia da Mulher* and the *Delegacia de Defesa da Mulher* after I conducted interviews.

When speaking about the socialization process of men and women in relation to violence, it is also necessary to explore and keep in mind how societal norms came to be in Brazil, as Brazil, in terms of sexual relations, has a long history of a slave owning colonial society and abusing women of color (Baldwin and DeSouza: 2001, p. 11). The history of colonial times in Brazil, gives an idea of why gender roles are prominent in Fortaleza. John Baldwin and Eros DeSouza in "Modelo de Maria and Machismo: The Social Construction of Gender in Brazil", explore the history of how machismo, marianismo, and gender roles came to be in Brazil using several frames like history, labor/economics, religion, law, psychosexual attitudes and so on. Like Barker and Loewenstein, Baldwin and DeSouza argue that women from low-income communities, who are usually of Afro descent, are prone to more violence from their male counterparts (2001, p. 12) even though violence against women is an issue that goes beyond the idea of class, there is a higher chance that women of color suffer more violence, which is something I explored through different frames of socio-economic status, alcoholism, poverty, etc., at *Centro de Referencia da Mulher Francisca Clotilde* and the *Delegacia de Defesa da Mulher*.

Baldwin and DeSouza argue that, "...women are socialized to be passive, receptive sexual partners, while men are socialized to pursue, to penetrate, and to dominate" (2001, p. 21). While I conducted my research, an important question I wanted to answer was if women in Fortaleza possibly reinforce the macho attitude onto younger men through the way children are raised. Tied back to the ideal image of family, Baldwin and DeSouza mention that, "...both law and society still appose divorce as it threatens the cultural belief in the sanctity and stability of the marriage" (2001, p. 21). As previously mentioned, there's a certain population of women in Fortaleza that would

rather be in an abusive marriage/relationship than being alone without a man. We can see how the socialization process and history of colonization in Brazil influence violence against women, justifies violence, and ultimately normalizes and internalizes it as Brazil has historically encouraged patriarchal structures based on a system of privilege (Baldwin and DeSouza, 2001, p. 22).

In Brazil, there is about 374 specialized prosecution centers specifically for women facing violence and about 72 shelters, however the judicial system is extremely slow when it comes to helping women dealing with cases of abuse (Lecture: 9/16/2014). In Ceará alone there are two specialized courts and 9 *Delegacias da mulheres* (Women's police stations), which many times, doesn't deal with cases of abuse in the appropriate manner (Lecture: 9/16/2014). In a submission of the government of Brazil with respect to confronting violence against women, it resumes that the services offered to women who experienced or are experiencing abuse, "are insufficient to meet the needs of the population, and they are concentrated in state capitals, particularly in the South of the country" (p. 3-4). This submission also resumes the statistics of violence against women in Brazil and other parts of the world in terms of sexual harassment, sexual tourism and trafficking of women and youth, but also sheds light on some of the issues aid programs are currently experiencing.

### **Psychological Violence**

A large number of the population in Fortaleza live in the city, as many of them are forced to migrate, however there is still a large population who live in the countryside. If programs implemented are concentrated in large capitals of South Brazil, how are women in the countryside, who most likely come from low-income communities with a low quantity of resources, facing and dealing with the issue of violence in Northeastern Fortaleza? Many of the judicial systems in Fortaleza do not have qualified individuals to deal with the issue of violence against women, which ultimately influences the high rate of cases of violence against women. In terms of psychological violence, because the help given to women isn't sufficient enough, it is likely that women aren't recuperating from the trauma of violence, which can possibly

make it harder for women to break that cycle. “Studies show that people in situations of violence face difficulties, obstacles that characterize a path of comings and goings, circular paths covered over and over without solutions and, especially, energy spent, which leads to emotional stress and to the recurrent feeling of being victimized” (*Submission of Government in Brazil*, p. 2).

When abuse becomes prominent in the domestic space, there is a psychological violence that women go through, ultimately affecting their decision to stay in abusive relationships (which could possibly tie into the socialization process as well). Tied back to Barker and Lowenstein’s article and raising the idea of the right to beat a woman if the domestic space isn’t preserved “the way it should be”, women are believed to be “bad mothers and bad wives”. The blame is concentrated on the woman, which ultimately leads her to believe that she is no longer accepted by society and therefore, making it harder for women to leave an abusive relationship nevertheless, break the cycle of violence within a family (Lecture. 9/19/2014). In interviewing women at the *Delegacia de Defesa da Mulher* and professionals at *Centro de Referencia*, I was able to explore the different factors that contribute to this psychological violence and whether or not, the socialization process of women and men in Fortaleza justifies cases of violence against women.

To speak further about the psychological violence women face, in the article “A Violência Doméstica contra a Mulher por Companheiro e a Lei Maria da Penha” written by Karen Mirella Soares dos Santos, she explains in detail the types of violence women face like physical, psychological, moral, sexual, and patrimonial and how the law *Maria da Penha* has shown no decrease of eradicating cases of violence against women since it was implemented. When speaking about psychological violence, Soares dos Santos mentions that psychological violence is understood as, “any behavior that causes emotional damage and decreased self-esteem or that [one] harms and disturbs the full development or seeking to degrade or control their actions behaviors, beliefs, and decisions by threats, embarrassment, humiliation, manipulation, isolation, constant surveillance, exploitation...” and so on (2014, p. 83). Keeping in mind what Soares dos Santos argues about psychological

violence, I analyzed how women in Fortaleza experienced psychological violence and how it's manifesting or how it manifested in their lives.

When thinking about violence, plenty of times populations living a different reality, usually consider violence to be physical or sexual, disregarding that psychological violence does exist, which ultimately transforms psychological violence into something invisible to the victim, the attacker, and society as a whole because it's not something that is seen physically. Muszkat argues that, "Such violence is difficult to identify because it is cloaked by actions that seemingly do not relate to violence in a broad sense, also by affective bonds that exist between the victim and the offender, or because many only consider violence in the home when there is physical violence" (2014, p. 83). After I spoke to women and professionals, I was able to explore the ways in which violence is ignored due to the psychological trauma that women go through and whether or not that influences women to report cases of violence. If psychological violence is negated thus unreported, how does that come into play when speaking about the high rates of violence in Fortaleza? Another factor that has to be taken into consideration when thinking in terms of psychological violence is whether or not women submit to this type of violence if it's not seen as an actual form of violence like physical or sexual violence.

Tying psychological violence and the socialization process of men and women, if violence is seen as "acceptable" in terms of machismo that creates a type of violence that is obscured, which might camouflage violence as "love" or something that is simply normal when thinking of romantic relationships in Fortaleza. In the article, "Violence against Women: A statistical overview, challenges and gaps in data collection and methodology and approaches for overcoming them" written by Ana Flávia Pires Lucas d'Oliveira and Lilia Blima Schraber, they articulate on the studies done on violence against women in Brazil and the factors that contribute to this reality, but also how methodologies taken by other researchers often times affects the results of such sensitive topics like violence against women.

Lucas d'Oliveira and Schraber conclude the outcome of the study conducted and results show that, "...49% of the women who reported some act of physical or sexual aggression did not consider that they had suffered

violence during their lives” (2005, p. 5). Women who experience sexual, domestic, or any other type of violence fall into a cycle of violence in which the aggressor has the power to degrade and manipulate the woman’s actions. In doing that, there is a fear set upon women which could range from economic dependency, safety of children, citizenship status and so on. This causes women to experience psychological violence, which ultimately becomes negated and internalized. I analyzed how different factors contribute to cases of violence given that violence against women goes beyond the idea of class and the range of demographics at both *Centro de Referencia* and the *Delegacia de Defesa da Mulher* how women internalize, justify, or normalize violence against women through the socialization process and the psychological effects of a woman’s decision to remain in an abusive relationship.

We can see that several studies have been done, although not enough, around an issue that is extremely important in the Fortaleza context. Analyzing these studies have made it clear that even though laws and the government have tried to attack this issue hurting a specific population the most, it still isn’t enough to combat this phenomenon of violence against women. Another relationship that is clear within these studies, is how the creation of manhood and womanhood (socialization process/machismo) influence and disguises cases of violence against women, making it seem like it’s something normal and giving men the green light to violate women given the long history of gender roles and colonization in Brazil. Studies of violence against women have been conducted in the bigger and most commonly known places of Brazil, but never in the context of Fortaleza, even though Fortaleza is one of the cities in which cases of violence against women occur the most. My goal in this research is to explore the reason why dialogue hasn’t been created around this issue in Fortaleza and how the city itself justifies violence against women, in terms of gender roles, socialization process, and machismo, and also what the consequences of that justification is on women, who are the population that is being affected the most.

## Methods

I conducted my research at *Centro de Referencia da Mulher Francisca Clotilde* and *Delegacia de Defesa da Mulher* both located in Fortaleza. *Centro de Referencia da Mulher* is a non-profit organization that works towards ending and combating the issue of violence against women by offering resources to women facing violence, from social assistance to judicial assistance, to breaking the cycle of violence, however they do not help women heal from the trauma. The goal of *Centro de Referencia da Mulher* is to help women and give them the resources needed to break the cycle of violence. The *Delegacia de Defesa da Mulher* is a women's police station that strictly focuses on cases of violence against women, which mainly deals with the judicial process more than the social and psychological process of women facing violence. The *Delegacia de Defesa da Mulher* works towards reinforcing the law *Maria da Penha* in which women can file a police report, exercise their rights as women under this law, and receive judicial assistance to go onto a hearing.

I chose to conduct my research in these two locations because they both offered a different look of violence against women in terms of the work they do. I chose *Centro de Referencia da Mulher* because I originally wanted to interview women who came to this organization for help to learn more about their socialization process and to hear their experience with violence. Because *Centro de Referencia da Mulher* offers psychological help, I wanted to interview women who had already experienced an abusive relationship because I didn't want to interview women who were in situations of tension, anxiety, and cause them more depression. A major part of my research was also to explore the psychological process/violence women face when in an abusive relationship so I planned to speak to psychologists at *Centro de Referencia da Mulher* as well. Due to the recent move of location of *Centro de Referencia da Mulher*, that was very difficult to do. The move caused some things to be unorganized and *Centro de Referencia da Mulher* didn't have a set schedule for women to come because they came in whenever they could. Even though I couldn't work with *Centro de Referencia da Mulher* in that sense, I still wanted to speak to women because their participation in my

study was crucial, so I ended up interviewing women at the *Delegacia de Defesa da Mulher*. In the end, I still worked with *Centro de Referencia da Mulher* by interviewing professionals there and observing the type of work they do.

During the first day of my research I was able to interview the *delegada* (delegator) at the *delegacia* about the work that is done at there and why violence against women is so predominant in Brazil. After realizing that interviewing women at *Centro de Referencia da Mulher* wouldn't be possible, I decided to conduct my interviews at the *delegacia*, even though I was against that because women at this location are full of tension, depression, and anxiety but unfortunately that was my last resort. The *delegacia* then offered a more political and judicial view of violence against women and how crimes are handled in relation to the law *Maria da Penha*.

When I conducted my interviews at the *delegacia*, I chose random participants. The reason they were random was because different women came in every day and I didn't have enough time to build a relationship with the same participants like I originally wanted to do in the beginning. In the beginning it was difficult for me to get women to participate in my study because many of them didn't want to share their experience with me (mostly due to shame and the fact that I was an outsider), however once I was able to get one participant the rest of the interviews went smoothly in the sense that they were more open to being interviewed after seeing one person participating.

One of the limitations that I had, regardless of the fact that my advisor was with me when I conducted the interviews, was the language barrier. I had all of the questions that I wanted to ask women written down but it was still hard for them to understand what I was asking. Even though having my advisor with me was an advantage because she repeated the question for my participants so they could understand, it was still a limitation because at times my advisor wouldn't ask the correct question or frame it differently to the point where I wasn't able to receive the information that I needed. Due to the language barrier I wasn't able to correct my questions because I couldn't communicate that with my participants or my advisor. Another limitation I experienced was the fact that even though my participants decided to

participate in my study, they were still short in their answers not divulging much into their situation. I had to ask them follow up questions in order for them to answer my questions more in depth but again, I was faced with the language barrier so I had to work with the limited Portuguese that I knew.

I collected my data on November 4<sup>th</sup>, 11<sup>th</sup>, 12<sup>th</sup>, 13<sup>th</sup>, and 20<sup>th</sup>. All of my data was collected by conducting interviews and observations from the times that I visited *Centro de Referencia* and the *delegacia*. I wanted to interview women who have faced violence because I wanted to analyze how the socialization process influenced them or not to remain in abusive relationships and also how that influenced violence against women in Fortaleza. I wanted to be able to speak to those who are at the forefront of this issue and not just professionals. When I conducted my interviews I made sure that my interviewees were fully aware of what my research was about and whom I was going to disclose this information out to. I received written consent from my interviewees to disclose any information they gave me, I explained to them what the nature and objective of my research was, which included an explanation of how that data will be used and I let them know that they could over turn their decision to participate in my research at any time (women and professionals). Since I dealt with very sensitive and personal issues, I protected the data from being accessed by others due to the sensitive topics mentioned above by using pseudonyms, excluding dates, times, and places of my interviews from the public. The exposure of my participant's identity was also optional. The interviews conducted in my study were semi-formal structured, informal structured (research conversations) interviews, and observations. Not only did I spend time at *Centro de Referencia* but also at the *delegacia* to observe that specific environment, the space and the type of interactions that were taken place, and what population of people walked in and out and the roles they obtained within that space.

I conducted 7 interviews total, three of them were victims of violence by their male partner and the other four were professionals. Out of the four professionals three work at *Centro de Referencia* and one works at the *Delegacia de Defesa da Mulher*. As previously mentioned, my participant's identity was optional however the professionals I interviewed (two social assistants, 1 psychologist and the delegator at the *delegacia*) were okay with

releasing their identity. My other three participants were women who have experienced or are experiencing violence but I will be omitting their identity from my research for confidentiality reasons. The two social assistants were Kamila de Sena Rodrigues and Raylka Frankin Sousa de Freitas. They were able to give me a concrete idea of how *Centro de Referencia* works, the issues they deal with in trying to combat this issue, and a view of the psychological process and factors that play into a situation of violence against women. The psychologist, Priscila Holanda Paula e Sousa was also able to give a deeper look into why women decide or are forced to remain in abusive relationships and the factors that contribute to that as well. Rena Gomes Moura is the *delegada* (delegator) at the *Delegacia de Defesa da Mulher*, where she handles cases of violence against women in the more judicial side. The last three participants offered a look into what it is like to live in a machista society and how their socialization process influenced their way of thinking about women, men and violence. The way I analyzed the data I received was by searching for trends that arose in all of my participants to answer my question, how does the socialization process influence and justify cases of violence against women and what are the deeper and problematic factors that influence women to remain in abusive relationships? I analyzed every interview to compare and contrast every situation and find where all of the three situations connect, given that violence against women is very prominent in Fortaleza. I also analyzed interviews I conducted with professionals to get different point of views as to why this issue is so prominent and what issues arise in the city of Fortaleza that make it difficult to combat this issue and diminish the rate of violence against women.

## Results and Discussion

### Macho culture and violence against women in Fortaleza

One of the main topics that I wanted to focus on was how much the construction of womanhood and manhood and the socialization process of both men and women, influence violence against women and whether or not that justifies violence. Baldwin and DeSouza argue that, “Since Brazil’s ‘discovery’ in 1500 by the Portuguese, such an image has framed Brazilian women as self-sacrificing, submissive to males, and ‘good’ mothers and wives” (2001, p. 11). I focused on asking professionals how the construction of gender roles impact rates of violence against women because they offered an unbiased view, given that a certain population of women ignore the violence they’re facing inside their home in Fortaleza. When I interviewed Rena, the delegator at *Delegacia de Defesa da Mulher*, I asked her how the socialization process of men and women influence this phenomenon in Fortaleza. She mentioned:

*What we are observing in reality is that it is necessary to deconstruct the machista culture. Today, men think that they are owners of women, that they have power over women, he can dispose of her body, her life, that is what he understands. He doesn’t have that notion of respect towards women as a human figure equal as him. He always understands that she is inferior to him and he can do whatever he wants with her.*<sup>1</sup>

In Fortaleza, Appendix A, figure 1 shows what the rates of violence against women in Fortaleza are currently; the total number of threat occurrences for the year of 2014 are 3,252, which is currently the highest. This becomes important when thinking about the construction of gender roles and thinking back to Rena’s answer about the mentality men in Fortaleza have about women because we can see how men use threats as a way to control a woman and her body. If a woman is threatened to be killed or her children are threatened in a situation of violence, then there is fear installed upon them that is successful at controlling her actions because she’s either scared for her life or scared for her children. All three of the participants I

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<sup>1</sup> Gomes Moura, Rena: Interview, November 4, 2014, Fortaleza, Ceará, Brazil, ISP Field Journal, page 5.

interviewed were never physically abused by their partners, however all three participants were all threatened of murder, so we can see how the idea of control, owning, and seeing women as property is playing out in Fortaleza. In the year 2013, the *Secretaria de Segurança Pública e Defesa Social Polícia Civil Delegacia de Defesa da Mulher*, shows that the total occurrences of threats were 5,223 (2013). Even though the statistic is lowering, comparing today to one year ago, the number is still high and threat is still the number one occurrence currently taking place in Fortaleza. So does the socialization process of men and women justify violence against women? The answer is yes, women and men are taught at an early age what their roles in Brazilian society should be, to be more specific in the Northeastern state of Ceará. At an early age, women are taught to be feminine and feminine is thought to be passive, taking care of her children, and taking care of her husband by fulfilling sexual and domestic duties. Men on the other hand, are taught that being a real man means to be violent, passive, and dominant.

In “A construção do masculino: dominação das mulheres e homofobia”, Daniel Welzer- Lang (2001) explains how men are socialized to perform their masculinity through sports and violence, who are usually taught by their elders like older men in the home (father, uncle, grandfathers, etc.). He argues, “[Learning] how to play hockey, soccer, or baseball is initially a way of saying: I want to be a man therefore I distinguish the opposite (being a woman). I want to disassociate myself from the world of women and children” (Welzer-Lang, 2001, p. 463). Raylka, one of the social assistants at *Centro de Referencia*, also expressed her opinion on how the socialization process of men and women influence violence:

*It directly affects women because how are we socialized? We are socialized inside a machista ideology, we are socialized to learn what a woman does and that means that women occupy a space of inferiority, no privileges. For me, that violence, domestic violence, is an expression of machismo in our society today and I think that several institutions have a huge role in our socialization. One thing that always appears [is] the role of religion.<sup>2</sup>*

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<sup>2</sup> Franklin Sousa de Freitas, Raylka: Interview, November 14, 2014, Fortaleza, Ceará, Brazil, ISP Journal, page 25.

Muszkat argues that in the Brazilian culture there is always a desire to preserve the domestic space and maintain an image of the ideal family (2002). To complicate her argument however, Raylka sheds light on why there's a desire to uphold the image of the ideal family that has been deeply embedded in social institutions that influence women and men every day. Fortaleza, and all of Brazil, is known for its strong ties with religion and Raylka argues that the church does:

*A disservice because they reinforce 'that' place of a woman. That principle that they have about the family, of everything, doesn't reflect what type of family that is, it doesn't reflect on the fact that it produces violence. It only reflects the 'ideal family' and today, in reality it doesn't exist.<sup>3</sup>*

Given that Brazil is a country where religion is very prominent, with churches located on almost every street corner, women are often shamed of leaving their husbands, regardless of the fact that he's abusive because leaving her husband is not what an ideal family looks like. The socialization process of women in terms of religion then influences them to remain in abusive relationships and blinds women from the issue at hand, which is violence. Due to the long history of gender roles, tied back to colonization and the creation of manhood and womanhood, women don't see the violence they face as what it is—violence, because they feel that they have to negotiate and oversee violence to please priests in the church and others in society as well. Women believe that even though their husbands are violent, this is what a relationship should look like because that's the only reality they have been exposed to. Violence is then manifesting itself within homes in Fortaleza by being ignored due to that creation of gender roles, which leads to patriarchy at bigger levels, which ultimately creates and justifies hierarchies within gender relations. Baldwin and DeSouza argue that, "*Machismo*, both describes a behavioral and social hierarchy of men over women and provides an ideological justification for the maintenance of that hierarchy by articulating males as superior to females in performing certain social tasks" (2001, p. 11). Because men are often shamed by the larger society if they do not perform their masculinity, violence in the private sphere then becomes a way for men

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<sup>3</sup> Franklin Sousa de Freitas, Raylka: Interview, November 14, 2014, Fortaleza, Ceará, Brazil, ISP Journal, page 25.

to perform that masculinity and also as a way of “resisting or reacting to their loss of power in the household” (Barker and Loewenstein, 1997, p. 171). To explore further how violence manifest itself in the lives of women in Fortaleza, I spoke to psychologist Priscila Holanda de Paula e Sousa, who works at the *Centro de Referencia da Mulher*, and she too, agreed that religion plays a role in the perpetuation of violence against women from the previous cases she’s worked with. She mentioned:

*Another factor is the church. Their religion often times influences them to remain [in abusive relationships] as well. They think that they have to forgive him and say, ‘what will God think of me? What will others think of me if I leave him?’<sup>4</sup>*

Not only does religion play a role in perpetuating gender roles and violence but also other major influential institutions like the family. All of the three participants that decided to be a part of my study answered the following questions: What was your participation or responsibility in the domestic space when you were younger and what was your socialization process like? My first participant was in her mid 30’s; she was raised in the interior, completed high school and has her own career as a nurse technician. She explained:

*I would be the only one who did domestic work around the house (laughs). I would help my mother around the house. I always helped her with chores around the house, always. I cleaned the house, I washed clothes.<sup>5</sup>*

The second participant was 24 years old; she was also raised in the interior and came from a lower economic status, had completed high school and is currently working at a coffee shop. She mentioned:

*When I was younger, the man was the man of the house. He worked and the women stayed in the house, she couldn’t leave, she had to take care of the children, take care of the house. I learned at an early age but I have a different way of thinking. I don’t have a religion but I do believe in God but I don’t have a religion because all of those religions have a patriarchal power...[I] also helped my mother a lot. I started helping her at the age of 10. I used to clean the house. I helped her with whatever domestic work needed to be done.<sup>6</sup>*

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<sup>4</sup> Holanda de Paula e Sousa, Priscila: Interview, November 19, 2014, Fortaleza, Ceará, Brazil, ISP Journal, page 30.

<sup>5</sup> Participant 1: Interview, November 12, 2014, Fortaleza, Ceará, Brazil, ISP Journal, page 12.

<sup>6</sup> Participant 2: Interview, November 12, 2014, Fortaleza, Ceará, Brazil, ISP Journal, page 16-17.

My last participant was 31 years old. Unlike the previous participants she was raised in the city, came from a lower economic status, had not completed high school and currently wasn't working. She mentioned:

*I learned that women have to respect, know how to raise children, set a good example, and well pass on only good things. I used to always wash clothes (laughs) and I always swept as well. I never cooked because I was too young. But there were seven women in the house.<sup>7</sup>*

When I asked my participants this question, I observed that all three of them didn't understand my question and my advisor had to reframe it in a way where they understood, like "When you were a little girl what did you do around the house?" I then realized that there was a possibility that my participants had never thought about their socialization process or that they never reflected on their lives as women living in a patriarchal, machista society. It was almost as if to them, there was no such thing as the socialization processes of men and women.<sup>8</sup> From the responses that my participants provided however, we can see how gender roles are and have been taught to women and men at an early age by parents and other major institutions. Because these gender roles are imposed on both men and women, violence becomes ignored because an idea is created inside a woman's mind about how men are supposed to react if the domestic space isn't preserved the 'way it's supposed to'. If a man becomes violent towards his female partner because she's not cleaning the house, because she doesn't cook for her children, because she's fulfilling her duties as a wife, then he automatically has the right to beat her and the majority of the women in Fortaleza don't challenge that because that's what they've been taught; that a husband can beat her if she doesn't complete her tasks as a woman. We can now see how the justification of violence inside a home is kept and how that violence has successfully become 'normal' in the lives of men and women in Fortaleza due to the creation of gender roles.

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<sup>7</sup> Participant 3: Interview, November 12, 2014, Fortaleza, Ceará, Brazil, ISP Journal, page 18-19.

<sup>8</sup> Observation: November 12, 2014, Fortaleza, Ceará, Brazil, ISP Journal, page 11.

When I started my research I told myself, violence against women is a worldwide phenomenon but why are the rates of violence against women extremely high in Fortaleza? Not only are gender roles an important issue in this phenomenon but machismo also becomes a prominent key component. Machismo, of course, has been a domino effect of gender roles. Men are taught to be aggressive towards women if she defies his honor and machismo allows this type of venting in the domestic space. Women in Fortaleza are raised in a machista society, they are surrounded by machismo imbedded in social institutions, which makes it almost impossible for women to believe that there exist another reality for them than that of violence. Violence is then internalized by women, thinking that this is what is supposed to happen in a marriage—men hit their wives and wives are supposed to endure that. The majority of women facing violence also come from families whose mother's were also mistreated by their fathers, so this reality stems at an early age for women. In a study done about inter personal violence in different regions of Brazil, "Factors associated with intimate partner violence against Brazilian women", Ana Flavia Pires Lucas d'Oliviera argues that violence "in most cases, have started at an early age, which is confirmed by the finding that there is a greater risk among young women for recent episodes (Lucas d'Oliveira, 2009, p. 9). Rena, in relation to machismo, mentioned that:

*[Women are also machista] without doubt. Women...since they are the result of a machista society, they are also machista. They think that they have to put up with everything, that they have to submit to men when it comes to sexual relations in relation to marriage, sexual violence. They also think that, many mothers primarily, women that are victims of violence, think that they have to endure this because it's 'normal'. Her parents were also violent, her dad was violent towards her mother, so it's really also the culture in which they live in that interrupts the breakage of the cycle of violence.<sup>9</sup>*

The reason why Fortaleza has the third highest rate of assassinations of women is because violence against women has become 'normal' that nobody (until the implementation of the law *Maria da Penha*) has challenged or asked why these rates are so high. Both actors, men and women, think that this is how life is supposed to be for them and the fact that social

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<sup>9</sup> Gomes Moura, Rena: Interview, November 4, 2014, Fortaleza, Ceará, Brazil, ISP Journal, page 6.

institutions reinforce this also complicates the process of trying to change the mindset of womanhood and manhood. Another important factor is that the dialogue around violence against women has been extremely recent. Due to the attention and criticism the case of Maria da Penha caused in Brazil, this topic became an important issue of discussion. The recognition that violence against women is an issue by people in society and politicians began with the implementation of the law *Maria da Penha*. The law was implemented in 2006 (eight years ago), which means that people have only started to recognize that this problem actually exists but even so, violence still dominates the homes of women in Fortaleza.

The machista culture is extremely strong in Fortaleza, that regardless of the laws and policies implemented by the government, rates of violence against women haven't diminished in these eight years. So what is keeping the Brazilian government from lowering these statistics? According to all of the interviews that I conducted, the real issue becomes the machista culture and the history of gender roles of men and women. One of the issues Fortaleza is facing in regards to combating this phenomenon is that authorities and politicians themselves are machista, so how will this issue be addressed if it's seen as a women's issue only that doesn't deserve much importance? Rena, the delegator, explains how the law *Maria da Penha*, isn't working in the sense that it doesn't attack the root of the problem—machismo. She mentions that:

*In these 8 years we have not had those policies implemented to be able to destroy this machista culture...No one is investing in the causes of machismo, it is not combating those causes. Because the people are not modifying that, the people are not seeing that modification of attitude to change violence against women...We need to work on those causes of violence, machismo, the feelings of ownership, the question of equality between the sexes, gender issues, that is not being worked on that's why the rates of violence haven't diminished and they won't diminish if we can't combat the causes.<sup>10</sup>*

Even though the law *Maria da Penha* helps women by removing the abuser out of the home and obligates him to confront legal consequences, this law is not combating the real issue at hand. The law is not changing the

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<sup>10</sup> Gomes Moura, Rena: Interview, November 4, 2014, Fortaleza, Ceará, Brazil, ISP Journal, page 5.

way people see women, it is not portraying or advocating for women as what she is—a human being. Even though the law *Maria da Penha* has begun the dialogue around this issue in Fortaleza, it still portrays women as victims instead of trying to empower women. Another problem, in relation to machismo that Fortaleza faces, is that government officials (primarily machista men) don't give this issue the priority and importance that it needs because men feel that there are bigger issues that Brazil needs to worry about.<sup>11</sup> Machismo has then manifested in Fortaleza, because the primary actors being damaged are women and the government isn't advocating or mobilizing for that population; there's a lack to prioritize this question within politics. The issue not only becomes the machismo within the government, but women perpetuate machismo as well. To make myself clear however, I am not blaming women for the high rates of violence in Fortaleza or accusing them of being the cause of the problem. What I am arguing however, is that how can women not perpetuate violence in the way they raise their children, in the way they chose their partners, etc., if this is the only reality that women have been exposed to? This machismo is coming from years and years of history, it is being given life to by social institutions, men are forced to perform their masculinity or else they are shamed, and so on. Women have long been placed in this position of inferiority to the point where they subconsciously reinforce machismo and never consciously reflect on the oppression they face. When speaking to Raylka about treating patients at *Centro de Referencia*, she mentioned that before coming to *Centro de Referencia*, women never even thought about reflecting about machismo, it's not something they ever knew or were asked to do in their life, to reflect on her position in society or the home<sup>12</sup> just like I observed within my participants. Raylka mentioned:

*They are. Women are machistas because they learned from society. I don't remember the name of the author but she says that in order for an ideology to sustain itself, it has to convince the oppressed that it's real... So machismo convinces women, through institution, education formal and informal, family, church, what her role is, the role of the mother, to reproduce,*

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<sup>11</sup> Franklin Sousa de Freitas: Interview, November 14, 2014, Fortaleza, Ceará, Brazil, ISP Journal, page 28.

<sup>12</sup> Franklin Sousa de Freitas, Raylka: Interview, November 14, 2014, Fortaleza, Ceará, Brazil, ISP Journal, page 26.

*a woman who can't be bold, the one who has to endure, and they pass that onto their children...I think that women shouldn't be blamed for that [reproducing machismo]. We hear a lot of discussions about women contributing to machismo but of course she is because she lives in that society.*<sup>13</sup>

## **Psychological violence and why women remain in abusive relationships**

In order to understand why women decide to remain in abusive relationships, we have to keep in mind how gender roles, machismo, and social institutions deliberately work against women when thinking about this phenomenon in Fortaleza. Without speaking on the psychological process/violence women face when in abusive relationships, we know that gender roles, machismo, and social institutions in Fortaleza are already influencing women tremendously to perpetuate gender binaries. Not only are women already forced to remain in these relationships (by social factors) but other issues also come into play that complicates the process of breaking the cycle of violence. Two people very close to me experienced domestic violence and my first thought was, "Well why doesn't she just leave him?" There's a certain population, including myself, who think that the solution to ending an abusive relationship is by simply leaving the abuser. After analyzing why this was the first thought that came into my head, I started to realize that my first instinct was to victim blame because I was blaming my sisters for the violence they were both experiencing but I never asked why their male partners were abusing them or more importantly, why they had the need to do that? What was happening inside of them that was causing them to be violent? This became important to me, the need to move away from victim blaming and what I wanted to do in this research was to explore the deeper reasons why women decide to remain in abusive relationships and what factors come into play when she makes this decision because society as a whole, needs to move away from blaming the victim and start seeing this phenomenon from a different dimension. As previously mentioned, I spoke to psychologist Priscila Holanda de Paula e Souza to understand what

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<sup>13</sup> Franklin Sousa de FreitasRaylka: Interview, November 14, 2014, Fortaleza, Ceará, Brazil, ISP Journal, page 25-26.

psychological process/violence women experience that stops them from breaking the cycle of violence. In relation to gender roles, we already know that the church often times influences them to remain but Priscila, like Raylka, also mentioned that:

*A lot of it has to do with the history of gender roles and institutions. Many of them think of him first, they say, "How will he survive without me? I take care of him, I feed him, I do everything for him, how will he be okay without me?" Another part is the blame and the shame. They blame themselves...there are others that are attached emotionally. For example, I had a patient who didn't want to leave him, he wanted to leave her but she didn't want to leave him. She wanted a life with him. There are women who think that they're kids will be better off and have a 'better life' [if she stays with him]. Another thing is cultural/machismo and patriarchy, because that's the society they live in. Some women can't even perceive abuse and plenty of times it's also depression and sadness. Women tend to have very low self-esteem.<sup>14</sup>*

The majority of the women in abusive relationships have already experienced violence at an early age<sup>15</sup>, which causes them to enter a relationship with a self-esteem that has already been damaged. In the article, "The Impact of Specific Battering Experiences on the Self-Esteem of Abused women", Rudy J. Aguilar and Narina Nunez Nightingale argue that, "Whether women of low self-esteem are likely targets for battering relationships or that battering relationships cause low self-esteem is not entirely clear. What is apparent, however, is that low self-esteem (whatever the cause) may contribute to the difficulty many women have in leaving battering relationships" (Aguilar and Nightingale, 1994, pg. 35). Two of my participants in their early 30's were together with their partner for about 20 plus years, while the other, 24 years old, was only with her partner for about 2 years.

In relation to the control of a woman's body by a man, the psychological violence they face has a huge impact on their decision to remain. The two participants who stayed in an abusive relationship for 20 plus years are a good example to what Aguilar and Nightingale argue, because if they endured violence for 20 years that means that their husband was successful at what Aguilar and Nightingale call creating a, "feeling of

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<sup>14</sup> Holanda de Paula e Souza, Priscila: Interview, November 19, 2014, Fortaleza, Ceará, Brazil, ISP Journal, page 31.

<sup>15</sup> Franklin Sousa de Freitas, Raylka: Interview, November 14, 2014, Fortaleza, Ceará, Brazil, ISP Field Journal, page 25.

powerless to change their situation” (Aguilar and Nightingale, 1994, page 35). Another important factor that Priscila mentioned in her response is shame. This is a very important factor because women are led to believe that their peers won't accept them if they admit that their partner is abusive. It's a question of social shame and embarrassment as women create shame of themselves by realizing that the person they chose to spend the rest of their life with, isn't the person they thought he would be and instead goes against all expectations so women are often times ashamed of sharing their situation with others.

In relation to Priscila's analysis as well, my two oldest participants didn't take action until after their husband had threatened their children. Both never took action when their husband threatened them because they didn't perceive that as violence, which means that women don't see themselves as victims but as soon as the abuser threatens their children, then they take action. This is an example of how women see violence as something normal and how this could possibly influence women not to report their case to authorities. Raylka also mentioned how a low self-esteem can hurt women in several ways. She mentioned:

*I think that this violence destroys her self-esteem because so many of them come [to Centro de Referencia] weak emotionally; I think that's actually a small word. That complicates the pericycle. It's necessary to work towards strengthening [women], to help them reflect so she can think about herself. We tell them, 'I want you to think of yourself, forget your children, forget your mom, forget your dad'...I think that violence slowly kills people, and all that process of psychological violence, of low self-esteem, and that emotional that weakens, all of that complicates things because she gets to a point where she's weak, without strength to laugh, nothing.<sup>16</sup>*

Low self-esteem causes women to think that they're not worthy of something better and this is caused by verbal and psychological violence. When a woman is told that she's not enough, just like she's been told that she was made to endure violence, she'll believe it. Other important factors that we have to take into consideration when asking why women decide to remain in abusive relationships (on top of the low self-esteem and depression) are economic dependency, fear of their life/threats, lack of family or peers in close

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<sup>16</sup> Franklin Sousa de Freitas, Raylka: Interview, November 14, 2014, Fortaleza, Ceará, Brazil, ISP Journal, page 24-25.

proximity to help, fear of losing their children, lack of implementation of other policies by the government, and so on. Two of my participants (30 year olds) decided to ask for help because their abuser was threatening them in front of their children. The other participant however, didn't have any children and decided to ask for help because she didn't want to live her life in submission to her abuser (she was also being forced to have sexual relationships and wanted to end that as well). Even though each participant left for a different reason, all three participants were threatened of murder. When I asked each participant why they decided to ask for help or leave the relationship these were their answers:

Participant 1, early 30's:

*Because I have a son with him, I asked to have him come here (delegacia) to the hearing that way we can have a conversation because he threatened me in front of my son. That's why I came, because this had happened before and I never came.<sup>17</sup>*

Participant 2, 24 years old:

*Well he was very aggressive but it never got to the point where he hit me. It was always verbal, his words. He also ignored me plenty of times, he wasn't affectionate. I also found out some things about him, that he was with another person, that betrayal hurt me in a certain way...I wasn't getting along with him well, in the question of sexual relations I was basically forced to have sex with him...In [this] situation I'm trapped because his mom lives in the same condominium that I live in and his dad is the security there. I can't do anything because he knows every step I take.<sup>18</sup>*

Participant 3, early 30s:

*He's two faced, one minute he's someone and the other he's another. That's how he is, I don't even know how to explain it...I left, I'm not going to live with a person who is threatening me in front of my kids.<sup>19</sup>*

Participant one and three decided to leave because they were being threatened in front of their kids and they were also the two participants who had endured violence for about 20 years or so in comparison to participant

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<sup>17</sup> Participant 1: Interview, November 12, 2014, Fortaleza, Ceará, ISP Journal, page 14.

<sup>18</sup> Participant 2: Interview, November 12, 2014, Fortaleza, Ceará, Brazil, ISP Journal, page 17-18.

<sup>19</sup> Participant 3: Interview, November 12, 2014, Fortaleza, Ceará, Brazil, ISP Journal, page 20.

two. Participant two was somewhat more empowered than participants one and three because she took immediate action, she was more aware of her social position as a female in Fortaleza, and mentioned that she was against gender binaries and didn't want to conform.<sup>20</sup> An important factor to take into consideration here however is economics. Participant one has her own career as a nurse technician, so she was able to leave her house without worrying about financial burdens. Participants two and three however, were having a rough time financially because they depended on their male counterpart in that sense. When asked about how their economic situations are either helping or complicating the decision to remain or not, participant two mentioned:

*...Now that I'm separated [I depend on my job] a lot because I need it. I'm on my own; I have nobody to help me out financially. So I depend on it...I've always worked, even when I married him. Now that I'm separated I actually need [my job].<sup>21</sup>*

Participant three, even though she asked for help and was going to file a police report against him, she was still living with her abuser because she didn't have a job or the financial resources to leave her house. When participant three was asked whether or no she was employed she mentioned:

*No. [My economic situation is weighting] on my current situation right now.<sup>22</sup>*

For two of my participants economics was also an issue that was complicating their decision on whether to remain in an abusive relationship or not because one didn't have a job and the other worked but was still having a hard time financially. Unlike participant one, participant two and three also didn't have a career; they had only finished high school. According to participant one however, economics has never been the main reason why she stayed in an abusive relationship because she was always able to provide for herself and for her son. To complicate things further, the government isn't

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<sup>20</sup> Participant 2: Interview, November 12, 2014, Fortaleza, Ceará, Brazil, ISP Journal, page 16.

<sup>21</sup> Participant 2: Interview, November 12, 2014, Fortaleza, Ceará, Brazil, ISP Journal, page 16.

<sup>22</sup> Participant 3: Interview, November 12, 2014, Fortaleza, Ceará, Brazil, ISp Journal, page 18.

implementing other policies that compliment other policies that have already been implement to help women break the cycle of violence and leave an abusive relationship. When interviewing Raylka she gave me an example of a woman who wanted to leave her abuser but the lack of help from other social institutions were making it almost impossible because they didn't offer immediate action. Raylka mentioned some of the external factors that complicates the process:

*In a case like this, we need a housing policy, for example, she doesn't have anywhere to go and she can't go to a safe house because she wasn't threatened for her life. She could find a group home where she could go until her situation is resolved because we accompany her when she asks for food benefits [but another issue is that] they don't know where to ask for those benefits. If she can't leave the house where will she stay?<sup>23</sup>*

Even though the law *Maria da Penha* and places like *Centro de Referencia* help women facing violence, there's only so much they can do because other policies that are necessary to take immediate action aren't being implemented. *Centro de Referencia* is working towards creating a group home for women whom need immediate removal from their home but that process is taking them a while to be approved, so places like *Centro de Referencia* end up with their hands tied not being able to help further. I asked all of my participants if they had any family members that could help them or alleviate some of the stress and all three responded by saying that yes, they did have family members that could help, but all of them lived far away<sup>24</sup>. Therefore it wasn't that their families didn't want to help them, it was just that they couldn't because they live in the interior far from the city. Some of their families were also struggling financially so that was another factor that prevented families from helping their daughters. Participant three had other factors working against her as well. Her mother-in-law supported her son's actions; she supported her son in abusing his wife. If women don't have any family near them to help and her in law are supporting the violence in their home, who do women go to? This is an example of how women support machismo and the difficulty women face in trying to escape that violence. The

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<sup>23</sup> Franklin Sousa de Freitas, Raylka: Interview, November 14, 2014, Fortaleza, Ceará, Brazil, ISP Journal, page 27.

<sup>24</sup> Participants 1, 2, and 3: Interview, November 12, 2014, Fortaleza, Ceará, Brazil, ISP Journal, pages 12-21.

last factor that needs to be mentioned is that a good population of women never follow up with their legal cases or stop attending their sessions at *Centro de Referencia*. When I observed *Centro de Referencia*, Kamila the second social assistant, had an appointment with a two patients and she both never showed up. One of them didn't show up because she lacked transportation and her child was sick but the other just didn't show up.<sup>25</sup>

The issue of violence against women, from the interviews and testimonies that were collected, we can conclude that this is an issue that goes beyond the idea of race and class. The three participants that I interviewed all came from different backgrounds. Two of them didn't have a career, one did. Two of them came from a lower economic status; one of them was able to provide for herself. One of them had a more progressive way of thinking in terms of gender roles and equality of men and women and they were all of a different race. I was able to receive different answers from each woman that came from different backgrounds. The problem then is not economics, the problem is not race even though women of color are more prone to experiencing violence, the problem is not drugs or alcoholism, even though drugs or alcohol might trigger violence, the real issue women in Fortaleza face is the issue of machismo.

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<sup>25</sup> *Centro de Referencia*: Observation, November 19, 2014, Fortaleza, Ceará, Brazil, ISP Journal, page 30.

## Conclusion

Fortaleza is currently facing a lot of issues that work against ending violence against women. Machismo has become so normal in the lives of men and women in Fortaleza, that not many people started challenging machismo until the implementation of the law *Maria da Penha* eight years ago. Up until eight years ago, women never took the time to reflect on their position, how they're treated by their male counterparts, and the problems that machismo is causing in their lives because machismo is so ingrained in the lives of people in Fortaleza and social institutions reinforce it. The law *Maria da Penha* is being successful in the sense that it is now opening up the eyes of women in Fortaleza and realizing that this is actually a problem, that many of them do indeed face violence and women are now seeking help. However, even with its positive reactions from women and society (the little reactions its had), in order to end violence against women in Fortaleza and the rest of Brazil, there's still a long way to go. Aside from the law *Maria da Penha* there has to be other laws and policies that complement this law; laws that offer immediate action because that's what a large population of women need. Like Raylka mentioned, there needs to be housing policies, food assistance that is more accessible, financial assistance, psychological assistance, and most importantly healing and empowerment for women who have and are experiencing violence.

Even though Fortaleza has begun to dialogue about violence against women, there needs to be dialogue created around the macho culture that is primarily affecting women. In order to end the problem, the problem has to be attacked at its root and what is giving life to violence against women are the social institutions that are permitting machismo to take over the lives of women in Fortaleza. The law *Maria da Penha* started dialogue that will hopefully spark and shed light on the bigger issue—machismo. The population in Fortaleza (all of Brazil and the rest of the world as well) needs to start deconstructing the mentality of machismo, the mentality that men are superior to women if we really want gender equality and this change of mindset needs to begin at an early age. Through education, through empowerment of peoples, through moving away from the idea that men can't

be feminist, rates of violence against women will diminish not only in Fortaleza but the rest of the world as well.

## Recommendations for Further Study

Violence against women is an extremely complex issue. It deals with powerful, emotional and traumatic experiences and for that reason I believe that this topic should be explored with more time and larger access to resources. Even though I was able to collect some data to conclude this study, I would've liked to have more time to conduct this type of research because it deserves and needs more time. I wasn't able to build a relationship with the three participants like I wanted to do in the beginning. If I had participated in some type of early intervention, like volunteering, this research would be a lot richer.

Another factor that complicated this study was the fact that *Centro de Referencia* was in the process of a physical move, which made it difficult to find participants. Regardless of the move however, I was never able to find participants at *Centro de Referencia* because professionals don't allow outsiders to speak to women due to the current situation they're experiencing and *Centro de Referencia* don't want their patients to be ambushed with questions in a time of tension and stress. *Centro de Referencia* also wasn't aware that I wanted to conduct research at their organization until the first day I arrived, which made it difficult for them to work with my schedule as well. It would have been helpful to contact *Centro de Referencia* before the start of the research period to figure out what kind of access to information the researcher would have beforehand.

The last factor that made this research difficult was the language barrier. In order to conduct in depth, successful research and to be able to analyze interviews and the data received, the researcher needs to be able to communicate with participants. Due to the heavy dialogue around this issue, I believe that there needs to be more practice, from the researcher's part, to learn the language past the survival level.

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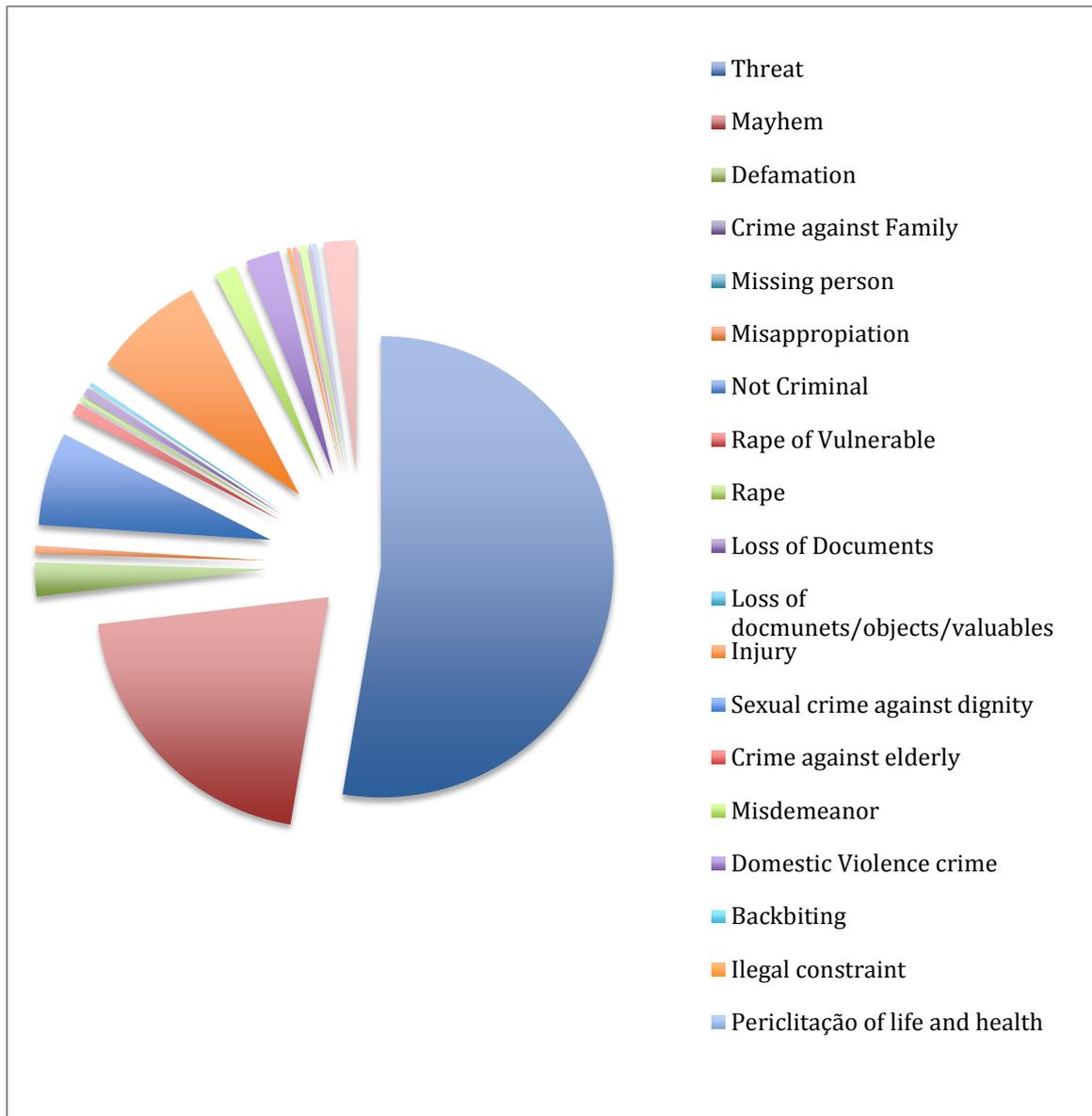
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## Appendix A

Figure 1  
Secretary of public safety and police civil social defense- *Delegacia de Defesa da Mulher* overall statistics for the year 2014



## Appendix Questions

1. Could you have done this project in the USA? What data or sources were unique to the culture in which you did the project? I would've been able to conduct this research in the USA because violence against women is an issue affecting different populations worldwide. However, the study I conducted was special in the sense that violence against women is an issue that dominates the homes of people in Fortaleza, which resulted in access to specific places trying to combat this issue only and that was unique. Even though it was difficult to find participants in the beginning, the places that I visited were unique in the work they do that I haven't seen in the US.
2. Could you have done any part of it in the USA? Would the results have been different? How? I think I would have been able to do some parts in the US because there are also cases of violence against women there. I think that the results might have been different depending on the culture and background of the participants. The rate of violence against women is also not as high as it is in Fortaleza, so that might've influence the study in some way as well. Machismo seems to be related to culture in Fortaleza and how men and women are raised, which could differ depending on culture and are in the US.
3. Did the process of doing the ISP modify your learning style? How was this different from your previous style and approaches to learning? The ISP did modify my learning style because it showed me the different ways that I can learn and study a topic, instead of the traditional classroom lecture or research. I've done research in other parts of the world but it's never been in depth field research with interviews like the ones I conducted during the ISP period. The way in which I collected was also different because I used primary sources when usually data collected are from secondary sources. The personal interaction was something different than from what I'm asked to do at my home university.
4. How much of the final monograph is primary data? How much is from secondary sources? About 80% of the final monograph is primary data. The other 20% is from secondary sources.
5. What criteria did you use to evaluate your data for inclusion in the final monograph? Or how did you decide to exclude certain data? After I transcribed my interviews, I looked through them to see which patterns appeared and what part of those patterns answered the questions that I raised in my problem statement. Most of the data collected was relevant to my research, however the data that wasn't I excluded from my monograph but included in my field journal.
6. How did the "drop-off's" or field exercises contribute to the process and completion of the ISP? The "drop offs" didn't really relate to my field

research and they were also not near the location where I conducted my research so those exercises didn't contribute much. We also didn't have any field exercises that related to my topic as well. The lectures on violence against women gave me a concise look of what violence against women looked like in Fortaleza (and Brazil), which helped me narrow my problem statement and purpose of research.

7. What part of the RME most significantly influenced the ISP process? For me the research methods part of the RME period influenced my research because it helped me learn how to frame questions for participants in a study with sensitive issues. It also allowed me to narrow down my research by asking myself what type of information is needed and how I will ask for that information given that we only had a limited amount of time. We also went over how to analyze and record our data, which was something new to me.
8. What were the principal problems you encountered while doing the ISP? Were you able to resolve these and how? The principal problems I encountered were that I wasn't able to interview women at Centro de Referencia due to policy procedures they are required to meet. Another issue was that women facing violence came to Centro de Referencia whenever they could, so I wasn't able to observe much either because women, patients, professionals, were almost never there when I went. I was never able to resolve this issues, I had to change my plans and find interviewees at another location.
9. Did you experience any time constraints? How could these have been resolved? I think that violence against women should be a topic that should be researched with time. I was able to collect data but the issue itself is so complex that it deserves more time. Three weeks was not enough time to conduct research on a very problematic and traumatic issue. These issues could have been solved if early intervention would be an option. If I would have met professionals at *Centro de Referencia* beforehand, I think that I would have been able to build a relationship with professionals and patients as well.
10. Did your original topic change and evolved as you discovered or did not discover new and different resources? Did the resources available modify or determine the topic? My topic changed before the ISP period began, however it didn't change at all during the ISP period.
11. How did you go about finding resources: institutions, interviewees, publications, etc.? I researched for additional articles online and through my home university's database, I emailed professors at my home university, and I also conducted seven interviews to get different points of view.
12. What method(s) did you use? How did you decide to use such method(s)? The methods used were formal and informal interviews and observations. I recorded the questions that were necessary for my

study but I also added other questions along the way to divulge deeper into the information given to me as far as possible. I decided to use these methods because I thought that would be the best way to conduct this type of research on a sensitive subject. I eased into the interview instead of bombarding my participants with questions so I started a conversation before and jumped to the interview after.

13. Comment on your relations with your advisor: indispensable? Occasionally helpful? Not very helpful? At what point was he/she most helpful? Were there cultural differences, which influenced your relationship? A different understanding of educational processes and goals? Was working with the advisor instructional? My advisor was occasionally helpful. Even though she had connections from her previous work with violence against women, it was still hard to find interviewees and so I had to do that myself. She helped me with the language barrier, which was the point where she was the most helpful and referred me to some texts as well. We didn't have any cultural differences or anything of that sort. I wouldn't say it was instructional working with my advisor, instead she only helped me with the language barrier somewhat.
14. Did you reach any dead ends? Hypotheses which turned out to be not useful? Interviews or visits that had no application? The only issue I ran into was the fact that I couldn't find any participants for about two weeks but after I was able to interview participants everything worked out well and I received the information I needed.
15. What insights did you gain into the culture as a result of doing the ISP, which you might not otherwise have gained? From the lectures we had, I knew that the Brazilian culture, specifically Northeastern Brazil, was strong in reinforcing the macho culture, however I would've never realized how strong and imbedded it is, to the point where people see it as normal. I always knew what machismo looked like, coming from a culture that is also machista, but I've never seen it as strong as it is in Fortaleza. I think that if I wouldn't have done this research I would've never realized how much violence dominates the homes of women in Fortaleza.
16. Did the ISP process assist your adjustment to the culture? Integration? I think that the ISP period helped me with my adjustment just because I had the chance to speak more Portuguese and get around the city on my own.
17. What were the principal lessons you learned from the ISP process? The principal lesson that I learned from this process was that you can't conduct research in such a limited amount of time. Even though I was able to collect data, everything seemed rushed and not as rich as it could be, especially with such a complex topic. The language barrier was also an issue; I think that if a student wants to conduct research it

should be done once a language is mastered or learned past the survival level.

18. If you met a future student who wanted to do this same project, what would be your recommendations to him/her? It's really difficult to conduct research in a one-month period, no matter what the topic is, but if a future student wanted to pursue this topic I would recommend that they contact whatever organization they're planning on working with to make sure that they can actually interview people. Another recommendation would be to make sure that the organization also has events in which the student can participate/observe, because that's also an issue I had. One last recommendation would be to try to do early intervention and get involved with the organization beforehand so they can get to know future participants at a one on one level.
19. Given what you know now, would you undertake this, or a similar project again? I would undertake this research again because it's an important issue that needs to be addressed and it's also an issue that's important to me but I would make sure that I have the time necessary to conduct research around this topic.