

Decolonizing Approach to Understanding Intimate Partner Violence in Belize

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Abstract

Countries like Belize, located in the Global South, often have limited financial resources to address problems such as intimate partner violence, and financial support from the Global North is often accompanied by the inherent problems caused by the effects of colonization. As violence is one of the leading causes of death for women in Belize, the need to understand the reasons is pronounced. A decolonized approach is utilized to center the voices of women who had been victims of intimate partner violence. In conducting this research, I address, the W questions: who, why, where, and how, in order to recognize my role in the research process and to center the voices of the collaborators. All collaborators, through sharing their stories, revealed the impact of colonization on how they see themselves and the world around them. These findings indicate the need for further research on the effects of colonization, as well as the decolonization methods needed in order to restructure how victims of intimate partner abuse are treated and provided support.

Keywords: Decolonizing, Belize, violence, women, abuse, gender

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Please do not come here and spend time with these women and find out about our program and then leave. We are spending our time investing in you. Please invest in us.

NGO Programme Director

Introduction

Intimate partner violence perpetrated against women is a significant health and social problem in societies across the globe. This violence not only affects a woman's physical well-being, but it also affects her ability to parent, maintain a job, and be a productive member of society. For women in countries that lack the financial resources to provide the needed medical, psychological, legal, and social support to combat this issue, the impact is a deep, systemic public health problem. The lack of educational, physical and emotional resources to support women leaves them vulnerable to continued abuse. That abuse is transmitted generationally to their children, leading to various emotional and psychological forms of trauma from witnessing the abuse (Bombay et al., 2009; Trickett et al., 2011). Research that provides insight into the nature and extent of intimate partner violence requires understanding the cultural gender power differentials and other inequalities that are nationality, ethnically and geographically specific. Countries like Belize, located in the Global South, often have limited financial resources to address problems such as intimate partner violence and find themselves relying on financial support from countries in the Global North in their development of understanding social problems. However, this financial support is often accompanied by a set of inherent problems.

Using methodological practices rooted in ideas from the Global North to analyse cultures in the Global South creates inaccuracies and facilitates misinterpretations that demote the experiences of those people as 'other' and creates policies that do not reflect the needs of those people and communities. These flawed attempts are due to the colonizing approaches used in understanding the various aspects of social problems starting with inaccurate assessments, and then applying the culturally desensitized micro-level responses and policy suggestions that mar the Global North ideology. Within this article, I seek to contribute to the work of those who have taken on the task of disrupting the Western European narrative that continues to be constructed while doing research in the Global South. To create an understanding of intimate partner violence, which is initiated, developed and centred around the women of Belize, I captured the voices of



Belizean women sharing their lived experiences of being in abusive relationships.

Gender-based violence in Belize

Belize, a country formally occupied by the British, is known as one of the most ethnically diverse countries in Latin America. The country is comprised of seven ethnic groups: Creole, Mestizo, Garifuna, Maya, Mennonite, Chinese, and East Indian (McClusky, 2001). The official language is English, yet most inhabitants use Belizean Creole and/or Spanish in their daily lives. According to Ragsdale et al. (2007), although

Belizean society has a strong tradition of shared culture with Great Britain and the Caribbean, it also shares many cultural aspects of its Spanish-speaking neighbors (such as Mexico, Guatemala, Honduras, and El Salvador) including traditional gender constructs, machismo, and sexual silence (p. 28).

Understanding the impact gender constructs have on social problems such as intimate partner violence relies on accessible, reliable data which is often limited due to a country's lack of financial resources to operate and maintain robust data gathering systems over significant periods (World Health Organization, 2013). Understanding the extent of intimate partner violence in Belize is limited being based on a few reports on the state of women in Belize produced by NGOs and government departments. These reports provide some insight into the number and extent of female victims of intimate partner violence. Belize reported a total population of 324,528 in 2018 and 2,061 calls to the police reporting incidents of intimate partner violence with the vast majority coming from women (Women's Commission, 2019). That same year 124 women were killed, making homicide a leading cause of death for women in Belize.

Belize recognizes violence against women as a social problem and has enacted laws to combat the issue. In 1992, the *Belize Domestic Violence Act* was passed which criminalized intimate partner violence and led to the creation of personal and occupational protection orders. It was re-enacted in 2007, extending protection orders for up to three years, broadening the category of people who could apply for an order of protection and adding the option to include the requirement of child support. This re-enacted law included the requirement that the police confiscate any weapon used in a domestic violence incident and required more severe penalties for violating

protective orders. Along with working to make changes to the laws, The Women's Commission has been instrumental in working to change how people understand violence against women, and as a result, they changed the definition of domestic violence to include financial abuse (Beske, 2009; Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada, 2012).

Changes continued in 2010 when a domestic violence protocol for police officers was developed by the Women's Commission with the goal of improving the effectiveness of police investigative practices in addressing violence against women. The new protocol included guidelines for police response procedures, court orders, and directives on their enforcement, risk assessment, and procedures to submit complaints concerning inadequate police responses (Belize Judiciary, 2018; Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada, 2012). Although Belize is working to combat violence against women, it continues to be a major social issue that needs to be examined.

Research on intimate partner violence in Belize is often situated within the broader context of violence against women in the Caribbean or Latin America (e.g., Sagot, 2005), focusing on drawing connections between violence on an individual level and the broader Caribbean or Latin American communities. These studies focus on the types of violence and their occurrence rates (Bucheli & Rossi, 2019; Maydeu-Olivares, 2016; Sagot, 2005; Stewart et al., 2015), and the vast number of studies that focus entirely on violence against women in Belize is situated within an anthropological approach (Beske, 2009, 2014; McClaurin, 1996; McClusky, 2001). Although research focusing on violence against women in Belize is sparse, we know that it is a pervasive problem. However, there is still a need to understand this phenomenon from a decolonizing perspective that allows for the perceptions of the various races and ethnicities of the Belizean people to be taken into account throughout the research process.

Decolonizing framework

Working to disrupt the harms committed by past Eurocentric research practices on marginalized communities requires a shift in priorities. Disrupting both past and continued harms require empowering the community by centring it as the focus of the research and the research process. Decolonizing is a process that disrupts Western thinking and the colonial approach as it relates to the Global South, Indigenous populations, and marginalized people of North America.



A decolonized approach is utilized to disrupt Western rationality as it “seeks to make visible, open up, and advance” (Mignolo & Walsh, 2018, p.17) agendas that centre the voices of individuals in the Global South and marginalized communities of the Global North. Many forms of decolonization focus on providing frameworks for insiders to conduct meaningful research with their own social groups (Mignolo & Walsh, 2018; Smith, 2012). However, there is room for outsiders to conduct decolonizing research as long as meaningful relationships are developed that recognize the need and importance of empowering and centring participants and creating narratives that disrupt the colonial narratives that have dominated research in various disciplines (Bhattacharya, 2009; Mignolo & Walsh, 2018; Nicholls, 2009; Smith, 2012).

Mignolo and Walsh (2018) suggest that when conducting decolonizing research, the researcher should engage in self-introspection by addressing the “W” questions as they work with the community to develop their research agenda: “Who is doing it, where, how, and why” (p. 108). Stewart et al. (2019) suggest that addressing questions similar to these allows the researcher to, “engage in self-introspection” (p. 10) to guide and develop their research. Smith highlights the importance of “Getting the story right and telling the story well” (p. 226), using the researcher's voice to speak to the power structure that seeks to transform, alter and inhibit the voices of the community while taking into account cultural protocols, values, and behaviours. Throughout this process, it is critically important to establish trust and relationships with people in the community. Without this trust an outsider cannot conduct decolonized research, so the research should be centred and guided by the focus group, recognizing the ultimate goal is guided by the community. Focusing on “what does it mean to decolonize” as opposed to a strict “how to” conduct research within a decolonize gaze, is at the heart of decolonizing (Daza, 2008; Jacobs-Huey, 2002; Maldonado-Torres, 2007; Mignolo & Walsh, 2018). Utilizing a prescribed universal research plan would continue to exacerbate the Eurocentric ideology that has plagued the Global South, contributing to the long-standing imperial attitude that has dominated the academy. For the purposes of this study, I address the W questions to provide a foundation to better understand the process of my work as an outsider and to gain trust and acceptance while better understanding the problem of intimate partner violence in Belize.

Following the work of Nicholls’ (2009) critical reflexive method allows for the W’s to be addressed by examining participation and empowerment.

Nicholls states that “[r]esearchers need to engage with reflexive evaluation of collective and negotiated design, data collection, and data analysis to consider the interpersonal and collective dynamics during the research process, and any effects that the research may potentially have in the future” (p. 118). This allows outsiders to recognize their status before, during and after the research process, and in doing so “countering the situated power/knowledge of the researcher” (p. 118), which is an essential part of decolonizing methodologies. It also allows the participants to take on the role of collaborators as they actively participate in aspects of the research process.

Who?

As a self-identified Black, female, American mother, I recognize the issues that can be raised by my conducting research in a place that I have never called home. As an outsider, it is important that special care is taken when attempting to understand the lived experiences of Belizean women who suffered intimate partner violence and approaching this work from a decolonizing perspective was imperative. Decolonizing approaches work to include voices of the voiceless and to “displace Western rationality as the only framework and possibility of existence, analysis, and thought” (Mignolo & Walsh, 2018, p. 17). As such, I evoked a *decolonial attitude* while working with the women of Belize to understand violence against women in their country. A decolonial attitude requires intentional efforts to disrupt Western thoughts, assumptions, and theoretical applications (Mignolo & Walsh, 2018). This means the ways in which research is conducted and interpreted are not concerned with maintaining Western research rigour and standards. It also requires that Western assumptions be addressed prior to conducting research. As a result, I prepared myself as much as possible concerning cultural awareness and sought the support of the Belizean people to come into their space to work with them in conducting this research. I was able to have conversations with the Women’s Convey; Mrs Sparrows, the First Lady of Belize; and other officials and academics. I spent time with the directors of the two centres where the sharing of their stories would take place before meeting with the women to hear their stories. I also spent time enjoying the people of Belize and its rich culture. Working from a decolonial attitude allowed me to enmesh myself in the culture as much as I could as an outsider. Spending time speaking with and learning from the people of Belize who have been in the trenches fighting to address the problem of violence



against women also provided insight into the gaps that exist within the academic literature to understanding this social problem.

Why?

As previously stated, violence is a leading cause of death for women in Belize and the need to understand the causes of this is pronounced. In the fall of 2019, I was invited by Belizean stakeholders to collaborate with them in developing additional ways to address the problem of intimate partner violence in Belize. This group of stakeholders consisted of survivors of intimate partner violence, individuals who work to combat intimate partner violence and operate support programmes, university professors and administrators, and state and local elected officials. All stakeholders have been involved in community-based programmes to combat intimate partner violence. The purpose of this collaboration was to develop policy and programmatic interventions to combat violence against women. This collaborative project utilized a participatory action approach where I worked with community partners to finalize the research goals, to develop data collection protocols, and to interpret the findings. We also reached an agreement on how results would be disseminated (Johnston et al., 2016; Kirshner et al., 2011; Tuck & Fine, 2007). Participatory action research has been identified as a research method that fits with the goals of decolonizing research with Indigenous populations (Caxaj, 2015; Gill et al, 2012; Zavala, 2013). Participatory action research allows for the centring of community partners as it allows for the community partners to have the important role of providing guidance. This ensures that the research design reflects the goals of the community and that ethical values of the community are highlighted and taken into consideration when developing the rigorous research design (Caxaj, 2015).

Prior to committing to take on this project, I spent some time learning about the university system in Belize, as I wanted to understand why no Belizean academic took on this work. I quickly learned that while Belize has three four-year institutions of higher education none of them offers a degree programme that focuses on women in society. As such, few academics may be available to focus entirely on this issue. Also, my working and personal relationships with Belizean women allowed for them to get to know me and my previous endeavours, and they stated they felt I would be able to take on

various projects in Belize from a decolonizing perspective, centring and focusing on the people of Belize.

While evoking a decolonial attitude, I also operated from a perspective of 'stewardship'. I recognized that these stories were not mine, and I took great care in developing every aspect of the research process to ensure accuracy and empathy, as these women would be sharing with me some of the most vulnerable aspects of their lives. At various points in developing this paper, I sent copies to the women who shared their stories, as well as my collaborators, to ensure that I was not misrepresenting any aspects of the collaboration or the women's stories.

Where?

I met with the women one-on-one and asked them to share their story of victimization in their intimate partner relationships. All engagements with women took place at one of the two domestic violence shelters in Belize in rooms that provided privacy and would allow for no interruption and lasted 45 to 90 minutes. All of the women were given a university-approved Institutional Review Board (IRB) consent form presented in both English and Spanish. The forms did not require a signature, and the women were told that they did not have to take the forms with them if they were not comfortable. The culture in Belize considers it taboo to discuss private (home) matters with people who do not live in your household, and it was imperative to recognize the ramifications that could occur if one of the women was seen with the consent form. From this point on I will refer to the women who shared their stories with me as collaborators. All collaborators I met with shared their lived experience of intimate partner violence with me and consented to their storytelling being audio recorded. Audio recordings were immediately transcribed and reviewed by community partners to ensure the accuracy of interpretations. Community partners are Belizeans who I worked with in developing this research project and have been working in Belize to combat intimate partner violence. Names of collaborators were redacted and replaced using pseudonyms to maintain their confidentiality. All collaborators were also given the opportunity to review their transcripts if they chose.



How?

Before leaving for Belize, I needed to secure IRB approval. The approval process raised various tensions that have long existed between doing decolonization work and meeting university expectations of what is and how to conduct research (Smith, 2012). Within the IRB process, the committee had questions regarding how and where the sharing of stories would take place. The committee was concerned that having the directors of the two domestic violence shelters ask the women to share their stories with me would be perceived as a possible conflict of interest. I had to explain to the committee that the directors of the programmes would ensure that the women who spoke with me were emotionally able to share stories of the most vulnerable points in their lives. Also, having the directors recruit participants served as a validation for me as someone who could be trusted to hear their stories as I had very little interactions with the women before that point. Also, all women who participated and shared their stories were no longer receiving services from the two shelters.

Having a list of topics, which had been developed by my community partners and me, instead of a list of questions also required a more extensive explanation to the review board. As Smith (2012) points out, under some circumstances, the priorities of the community may not match the goals of the researcher, funders or other authorities. Hence, the roadblocks I faced were not unique to this project.

Eight collaborators shared their stories of being victims of intimate partner violence. During the time of story sharing, I went out of my way to create an environment that was sufficiently comfortable to allow the women to feel free to share with me what they wanted about their lived experiences of being in abusive relationships. In keeping with decolonizing practices, the directors, community partners, and I worked together to develop a list of topics that we wanted to be covered during the time in which the collaborators were sharing their stories. If one of the collaborators veered off-topic too much, I organically asked them a question to redirect them back on topic.

Before analyzing the transcripts, the community partners and I met to discuss and reflect on the interviewing process. We then met again to begin the process of analyzing the transcripts (Nicholls, 2009). Thematic analysis was utilized to determine the range of concepts related to intimate partner violence as this process allowed for the development of important

understandings of the impact of being a victim of intimate partner violence for the women of Belize and included an analysis of the underlining meanings that may have been present. A three-stage process of reading, rereading, and theme development was utilized to code the transcripts (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005; Redman-MacLaren & Mills, 2015; Rice & Ezzy, 1999). Thematic analysis allows for the development of commonalities while ensuring that the collaborators' voices were not manipulated in a way that did not represent the authenticity of their voices. As a collective, the following themes were identified: motherhood, lack of government support, and staying silent. Having the community partners participate in this aspect of the research process ensured that it kept with the expectations of the people in Belize who invited me to take part in this project. In keeping with critical reflexivity as part of the decolonizing methodology, I also interwove my reflexive thoughts into the analysis, presenting my reflexive experiences along with the lived experiences of the collaborators to represent the single authorship of this paper.

As the collaborators shared stories of intimate partner abuse it was the responsibility of the community partners and me to manage their stories with care work (Nash, 2019). Recognizing that the stories shared do not belong to anyone but the storyteller requires a commitment to disavow ownership and articulating that there is an obligation to ensure the stories are handled in ways that preserve the authenticity of the stories.

Findings

Motherhood

Time was spent connecting with the women before the start of their sharing their stories. All women had children wide-ranging in age, like me, and I connected with the women as we shared stories regarding motherhood and having children who ranged from infants to teenagers, the challenges this situation presents, and we shared pictures of our children. Although I had previously met some of the women, we had not had the opportunity to have one-on-one conversations.

All women shared experiences of physical abuse occurring in the presence of their children and discussed the fear of the impact that witnessing the abuse was having on their children. Susan, who is 38 years old, discussed the emotional impact the witnessing of her physical abuse



had on her son. She conveyed that she is fearful that her adult son will eventually become abusive toward his wife.

He used to see my husband hit me and he called the police once. He is so quick to anger. I try to talk to him about it and he does not want to hear what I have to say. I'm concerned. He has a wife and they have a baby. When I go to visit I get the feeling that he is angry, and I just try to talk to him about why he is so angry. I just worry about him.

Sara, a 52-year-old collaborator, expressed frustration with herself in regard to her interactions with her daughter who was sexually abused by Sara's husband. Her husband had been physically abusive for years, and her daughter kept asking for Sara to leave the marriage and take her away, but it wasn't until Sara learned that her husband had been sexually abusing their daughter that she had her husband removed from the home. Sara expressed her concern for her daughter. She stated

She gets mad at me and will say, "why didn't you leave?" [crying] She gets angry and will yell at me. I know I should have left but I didn't know he was touching her. I thought it was just hurting me. I thought she wanted to leave because he was hurting me. I just didn't know. She is so mad.

Collectively, all collaborators spoke about motherhood being the impetus for leaving their abusive relationships. Sara explained that she stayed with her husband up until she realized that her husband was also abusing her daughter. Once she learned of the abuse of her daughter, she took immediate steps to secure a safe environment for her and her daughter. Michelle, a 47-year-old mother, discussed leaving her abusive husband after he began abusing her in front of her children. She stated that "He hit me while I was holding my baby. I knew we had to leave."

Lack of Government Support

There was a consensus among the collaborators that they perceived government support to be lacking at best. All collaborators spoke about being reluctant to seek government support regarding the abuse in their relationships, and all of the collaborators mentioned having negative outcomes with the police regarding receiving support. Ava, a 39-year-old

woman, discussed the negative outcome of an encounter with the police regarding intimate partner violence victimization.

He was hitting me in the parking lot. Someone must have noticed and called the police. When the police arrived he had me up against the wall and was choking me. The police separated us and after a few minutes, they took us both to jail. The officer said, "that we both needed to cool off and learn a lesson." I will never call the police again.

Fear and hesitation regarding relying on the police for support resonated throughout the stories shared by the collaborators. Another collaborator shared, "Yeah, I never called the police. It didn't matter, they wouldn't do anything anyway." Michelle, the 47-year-old mother, shared her experience. "I would call the domestic violence hotline and tell them to send the police because someone was in trouble. They would never come. I was too afraid to call them and tell them it was me." For some of the women, the distrust was manifested in the belief that many of the police officers and government officials were also abusers. Michelle also stated, "[t]hey are all beating their own wives. So, they won't help me if they are doing it to their wives." All collaborators expressed frustration, feeling that the system could not, and would not, support them as victims of interpersonal violence.

Staying Silent

All collaborators discussed not telling friends, family, or others about being in abusive relationships. Some of them revealed that family and friends knew of the abuse occurring, but not discussing the abuse even after seeing physical indications on the collaborators. A few of the collaborators spoke in terms of you "just don't talk about it," whereas as two women stated, "If ih noh beat mi, ih noh lov mi" [If he doesn't beat me, he doesn't love me]. Collaborators also discussed growing up and hearing the phrase in regard to abuse. Some of the collaborators expressed that they had internalized this phrase to mean that abuse of women by their male partner was expected, and that speaking about it was frowned upon because it was happening to most women. Carol, 42 years old, stated, "I grew up hearing that. I just always thought that it was the way it was. Girlfriends and abuse all that." Staying silent points to the culture of violence that exists with regard to interpersonal relationships in Belize.



Discussion

A discussion of decolonization is not complete without discussing the impact colonization has had on the social structures of Belize. All collaborators, through sharing their stories, discussed the impact of how colonization shaped how they see themselves and the world around them through thematic analysis.

Although the concept of motherhood is universal, how motherhood is carried out is based on cultural norms and expectations (Collins, 1998). Within Belizean culture, motherhood is intertwined with colonized beliefs in Christianity and heteromascularity (Beske, 2016; McClaurin, 1996). Most of the collaborators spoke of attending church and/or having religious training in school. According to Relehan (2008), part of the British colonization effort that is ongoing is the Christian mission groups that provide schools in Belize. Within their curriculum is a hidden curriculum that reinforces what they perceive to be acceptable gender roles, and that pushes girls into jobs that have been traditionally seen as appropriate for women while at the same time provides them with very little opportunities for the financial security to be independent (McClaurin, 1996; Relehan, 2008). This curriculum also reinforces heteronormative gender roles. For example, according to Relehan (2008), if a teenage girl becomes pregnant, she is required to leave school. However, no action is taken against the male student, reinforcing expected Euro-patriarchal and machismo/ machismo gender roles of males and females within society (Beske, 2016; McClaurin, 1996).

Motherhood and providing a safe environment for their child was the catalyst for the collaborators exiting their abusive relationships. All collaborators articulated frustration with seeking and receiving government support to stop the abuse in their relationship. This belief that intimate partner violence is such a pervasive problem that they felt the government would not provide them with the support they needed in addressing the abuse. Even when discussing the laws that are in existence, the collaborators did not think that the laws would protect them from future abuse. Most of the women discussed that the only recourse they had was to leave the situation without support from government agencies. None of the women referred to people working for the police and government agencies as female. The pronoun 'he' was used in the shared stories when referring to people who work in agencies that could provide support. The male domination of these agencies, and the lack of trust that they will provide

support to the collaborators, is rooted in the patriarchal power structure that exists within the country (Patil, 2013; Wilk, 1993).

Keeping silent about the abuse was a common thread throughout the stories. Many of the women recognized the cultural expectation of not speaking about the abuse as a form of obedience toward their partner. The idea of keeping silent was also discussed in terms of embarrassment and shame. As 47-year-old Samantha stated, "I was so beautiful. This it was he did to me. I was so pretty." She went on to discuss how her family saw her and did not ask about her scars, contributing to the embarrassment and shame. Ideas of beauty within the Belizean culture are very much associated with the Global North's ideals around femininity and ideas of beauty (Wilk, 1995). Anderson-Fye and Becker (2004) note that satellite television arrived in Belize in the early 1980s and US television spread rapidly throughout the country, resulting in American values infiltrating Belizean belief and value systems. Along with the importing of US television entertainment, Belize has also become financially dependent on US tourism as a major source of income for Belizeans. Around 80% of Belizeans financially benefit either directly or indirectly from tourism with the vast amount coming from the US (Chow, 2019). Tourism creates opportunities for Belizeans to engage with tourists, and such engagements often serve to confirm media stereotypes (Anderson-Fye & Becker, 2004). According to Anderson-Fye and Becker (2004) taking in US television and engaging with US tourists has contributed to personal distress in relation to body image among some Belizean girls and women.

Concluding Thoughts

This project is rooted in a decolonizing framework as the work is guided by community members in Belize. Tuck and Yang (2012) argue that decolonizing work aligns itself with the goals and interest of the peoples of the community and culture. The goal of the research project was to centre the voices of women who have been victims of intimate partner abuse in Belize. As an outsider who was invited into this sacred space of hearing the women's stories, I recognize that this does not make me an expert on the topic. I also acknowledge that no matter the amount of time I spend with these women, or the number of my professional presentations and publications about it, I will never proclaim expertise in this area as that would perpetuate the continued colonization of Belize and the Belizean people, and I'm thankful for the opportunity that the people of Belize



provided me with. Ensuring that the participants' voices are not misrepresented or being appropriated will ensure that this research contributes to the Belizean knowledge base, and, at the same time, ensures that the research was ethical. As this project and others like it continue to add to the decolonized knowledge base the research will grow. This will allow for deeper and more broad-based understandings for and about the people of Belize. Although the themes in this study are similar to those found in research regarding intimate partner violence in the United States and other parts of the world (DeKeseredy, 2011; Potter, 2008; Tjaden & Thoennes, 1998). It is important to examine the theme through the lens with which Belizean women live as their experiences and responses are framed by the cultural context of living in Belize.

This study was constrained by the lack of available published research on violence against women in Belize, although this study contributes to filling that gap. As it is considered taboo to discuss family matters outside of the household, obtaining information about the extent of intimate partner violence in Belize is limited. Although activists and community leaders are working to combat the problem of violence against women, there are few academic scholars in Belize studying the phenomenon resulting in few published studies. Future work in this area should continue to focus on highlighting the voices of the women in Belize who have been victims of intimate partner violence. Researchers who are working from an outsider position must continue to seek invitations from victims and community members along with their guidance as to how and in what medium they want their stories to be told. Future research should also focus on parenting practices. There is a clear need to understand how the cycle of violence is socialized from one generation to the next. Focusing on parenting practices will help to support women who are no longer in intimate partner violent relationships who are working to support the trauma that their children endured while witnessing their mothers in abusive relationships. Individuals wanting to do work in Belize should also be aware of the Institute of Social and Culture Research which is a statutory body that aims to promote, retrieve, supervise, document and carry out research in various forms. The institute also serves as a depository for published research. Upon publication, this article will be sent to the institute for the people of Belize to have access to it. I will also send copies to all those who participated in various aspects of this work to ensure that they have access.

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