Every community is unique, and promotoras are uniquely positioned to work with what the community needs. Previous literature has looked at how promotoras programs effectively work in communities, but little literature has examined effects of training on promotoras themselves. The purpose of this study is to explore the life experiences of promotoras. Using qualitative interviewing and grounded theory the narratives of ten promotoras were examined. The researcher focused on themes of empowerment and economic development and other themes that arose such as reasons for becoming promotoras, barriers and religious/spiritual beliefs. Promotora training and themes that arose such as reasons for becoming promotoras, themes of empowerment and economic development and other qualitative interviewing and grounded theory the narratives of

Promotoras: Economic Development and Empowering Women
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ABSTRACT

Every community is unique, and promotoras are uniquely positioned to work with what the community needs. Previous literature has looked at how promotoras programs effectively work in communities, but little literature has examined effects of training on promotoras themselves. The purpose of this study is to explore the life experiences of promotoras. Using qualitative interviewing and grounded theory the narratives of ten promotoras were examined. The researcher focused on themes of empowerment and economic development and other themes that arose such as reasons for becoming promotoras, barriers and religious/spiritual beliefs. Promotora training and themes that arose such as reasons for becoming promotoras, themes of empowerment and economic development and other qualitative interviewing and grounded theory the narratives of

METHODS

Participants
Hispanic female promotoras (N=10) age 18+ that completed a six month promotora training and six months of internship participated in in-depth interviews. Hispanic was defined as being born in Mexico or any other Latin American country. These promotoras are currently either working or volunteering in Los Angeles County. Their primary language is Spanish and their second language English. The participants were recruited using a snowball sampling method. The researcher contacted a promotora who works promoting good health. The promotora conducts workshops and trainings in Los Angeles, California and obtained contact information of other promotoras she came in contact with.

Data Collection
This study was approved by the California State University, Northridge institutional review board on December 3, 2012. The interviews were audio recorded. The researcher met the promotoras in a location that they felt most comfortable talking in. The researcher conducted the interview in the preferred language for the participant either in English or Spanish. The participants received a five dollar gift certificate to Target to thank them for their time.

Data Analysis
The researcher used ground theory to analyze the interviews (Rubin & Babbie, 2011). The audio-recording from the promotora interviews were transcribed by the researcher and listened to three times to get an accurate transcript then the audio-recording was erased immediately. Ultimately, the general themes and categories were determined by using line-by-line coding. The researcher read each interview and searched for meaning units which were coded and then organized into concepts and themes.

Study Limitations
There are strengths and weaknesses in a qualitative design. The weaknesses are subjectivity and generalizability. The findings of the research cannot be generalized to everyone and it cannot be replicated (Rubin & Babbie, 2011). Another limitation is that the researcher had a short time to build rapport with the participants that might have influenced their responses.

RESULTS

Reasons for Becoming a Promotora
There are many reasons and motivations that drove these participants to complete a training and become promotoras. The concept of helping and educating people about health and other issues that in low-income and primarily Hispanic communities are often ignored was a primary reason.

“...”

Community Involvement
Being involved in the community and making a difference in the community was a reason for becoming a promotora for several women. Many saw the need to be the voice for their community to see change. The sense of helping and being able to find and provide resources for the community is a joy for these women.

Purpose in Life
Many women explained how they were stay at home mothers some going through divorce, others through domestic violence and felt incomplete. They felt that they were missing something. Others mention that since they were small children they knew their purpose was to help others by working in the medical field.

Role Models
For some promotoras, it was admiration for other promotoras in their communities, friends, and in one participant, her own father, that was described as the reason for becoming promotoras. These women saw how promotoras in their community were knowledgeable about different themes and used that knowledge to educate others.

“...”

Lack of support and commitment
The lack of support and commitment from the community and lack of time is a barrier for some promotoras. The women mention that there are negative people that do not support or understand what they do in their community. The lack of support does not stop these promotoras from reaching their goals.

Lack of funds and recognition
The final barrier mentioned by some promotoras was the lack of funds in some organizations. There have been many budget cuts throughout the years and many promotoras have been highly affected. Many professionals are not aware of the promotora programs and they are not feeling recognized by other professions.

Change in Economic Development
Economic growth is something these women have gained. Many have attained stable employment or volunteer opportunities since becoming promotoras. The promotora profession has opened many doors in the job force for these women. Many are currently working in the same organization that trained them, in non-profit organizations, and in clinics.

Many were stay at home mothers taking care of the family and others had low wage paying jobs before entering the promotora profession.

Feelings of Empowerment
After going through the promotora training and becoming promotoras in their communities, all the women noticed a positive change in themselves. Feelings of empowerment were shown in many ways in these women’s lives.

Change in Self-esteem
An increase in self-esteem was felt by many women after becoming promotoras. Some share that before starting the promotora training they were shy and not social. After becoming a promotora they felt empowered to do things that they had never done before in their life like talking in front of other people, conducting workshops, and making a change in one person at a time. They learned how to grow as a person and become more open-minded.

“...”

Empowering Others
The women also mentioned how they felt empowered to empower others in their community. They empower others to attend meetings in the community, to receive services needed, and live a healthier life. They also felt the need and duty to educate the community about the many societal systems and encourage them to advocate for their rights.

Leadership Roles
Many promotoras were empowered to be leaders in their communities. Many of them attend political town meetings to be the voice in their communities and speak about the needs and rights of the people. They feel empowered to empower others in their community.

Spiritual and Religious Beliefs
Seven out of ten participants mentioned either religion or spirituality during the interview as well as a source that helps them to take care of themselves emotionally. Many give thanks to god for everything in their lives and others put everything that happens in their lives in god’s hands. For many god is the power that gives them strength to continue to do what they do.

DISCUSSION

It was important to hear the narratives of the promotoras themselves. There were many themes that arose from hearing their stories. It was interesting to hear their motives for choosing the path of promotoras. For many it was the calling to help others, as well as the dream that they always had for the medical field and one day becoming a doctor or nurse. For others it was the determination to increase their knowledge and seeing others in their community as role models. These women described the change they went through after wanting to work in their community, including a sense of empowerment and being able to empower others in their community.

There were women that after starting to work felt a sense of confidence and pride in what they were doing. Many felt complete, victorious, and happy with their profession. Economically most of the promotoras are doing better and for the ones that are still not employed they continue to advocate for better opportunities and recognition from other professionals. The barriers of language, lack of support, recognition and low pay continue, but some look at them as challenges instead of obstacles. Religion/spirituality was another theme that flourished and continues to strengthen these women in a positive way. During the interviews, all of these women always had a sense of pride and smile when talking about what they do for themselves and their community. They were happy to share their stories and be known for what they do every day to help their communities.

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