¡AYÚDAME! HISPANIC IMMIGRANTS AND THE DOMESTIC VIOLENCE CRISIS IN OHIO: RECONCILING REALITY WITH THE LIBERAL POLITICAL ORDER AND THE PUBLIC SERVICE SECTOR

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# Table of Contents

List of Figures .............................................................................................................. 4
Acknowledgements ........................................................................................................ 5

**Introduction** .................................................................................................................. 6

1. Practical Assessment of the Hispanic Population & Domestic Violence Services

   13
   Overview of the Hispanic Immigrant Population..................................................... 13
   The Prevalence of Domestic Violence...................................................................... 17
   Disconnect Between Intervention Services & Hispanic Immigrants...................... 19
   Cultural Concerns and Domestic Violence Dynamics.............................................. 25
   Institutional Barriers and Domestic Violence Intervention.................................... 35
   Publicly Funded Educational Resources for Domestic Violence Intervention........ 45
   Conclusions ............................................................................................................... 50

2. Literature Review ......................................................................................................... 51
   Political Liberal Theory and Domestic Violence ..................................................... 52
   Western Feminist Theory & Domestic Violence...................................................... 55
   Radical Feminist Theory......................................................................................... 58
   Conservative Feminist Theory................................................................................ 60
   Liberal Feminist Theory......................................................................................... 62
   Tensions Between Liberalism and Domestic Violence Intervention...................... 68
   Multicultural Feminist Theory................................................................................ 70
   The Reality: The Voices of the Women ................................................................... 76
   Conclusions ............................................................................................................... 89

3. My investigation of the issue ....................................................................................... 92
   Background on my research base: Athens, Ohio ...................................................... 92
   The Hispanic Community in Athens ....................................................................... 93
   Context of Ohio......................................................................................................... 94
   Research Methodology ........................................................................................... 97
   Conclusions ............................................................................................................... 99

4. Findings ........................................................................................................................ 102
   Theme #1: The Growing Population Of Hispanic Immigrants has Made Little
   Use of Shelter Services............................................................................................ 103
   Theme #2: Most Shelters Have Made Some Effort to Increase Their
   Accessibility to and Knowledge of the Immigrant Population ......................... 105
   Survey Theme #3: The Prominent Explanation Offered for Underutilization
   was that of Culture ................................................................................................. 107
   Interviews With Full-Time Professionals............................................................... 108
   Conclusions ............................................................................................................. 110
   Analysis .................................................................................................................... 113
   Recommendations................................................................................................. 120

References ....................................................................................................................... 124
List of Figures

Figure 1. Comparison of demographic markers for immigrants born in Latin America and Native-Born U.S. Persons. This data was extrapolated from US Bureau 2010 Census American Community Survey.................................16

Figure 2. The Power and Control Wheel in English.................................21

Figure 3. The Power and Control Wheel adapted for immigrants..................48

Figure 4. Spanish translation of the adapted Power and Control Wheel............49

Figure 5. Hotline Worker/Shelter Interviews were performed at shelters spanning the state of Ohio.................................................................98

Figure 6. Frontline Worker’s Perception of Growth of the Hispanic Population Locally.................................................................103

Figure 7. Frontline Worker’s Perception of the Frequency with which Hispanic Population Seeks Services.............................................104

Figure 8. Language Access at Domestic Violence Shelters by Type................105

Figure 9. Shelter Workers’ Responses When Asked if Services Are Tailored to Latino Population.........................................................106
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But ultimately, there is one true reason that I insist upon the unorthodox inclusion of acknowledgements in a paper that hardly requires them…

"There is in every child at every stage a new miracle of vigorous unfolding."

Erik Erikson (1902-1994)

They all told me about the miracle, but Dr. Joan Safran taught me. I can imagine no greater gift. My love and gratitude are strong as a river, wide as an ocean, and warm as a summer day on the lake at Coolville Ridge. This is for me, but it is because of you. Your investment will have ripple effects on all I reach in my unfolding career and life, you have my promise.
Introduction

I came from Colombia because he promised me we would never have any more problems. Fifteen days afterwards he told me “I’m gonna leave you, I’m gonna find another woman that is from United States, I’m gonna have a child from United States and then I’ll have documents.” And he started every day, every day he would give me a bad face with people I didn’t even know. And he is the perfect person in front of everybody’s face…I have a year and two months separated from him, but I will not forget that every single day he is behind me and he can kill…I’ve had moments when I’ve felt in jail. (Mariana, Alliance for Immigrant Women focus group, May 21, 2005)

The growth of the Hispanic population in the state of Ohio significantly outpaced national growth from 2000-2010, amounting to 63.4% growth in Ohio as compared to 43% growth nationally (“Ohio Hispanic Americans,” 2010 n.d., p. 1). The Department of Homeland Security estimates that the population of unauthorized immigrants in the US grew from 8.5 million in 2000 to 11.5 million in 2011, with 59% coming from Mexico (Hoefer, Rytina, and Baker, 2011, p. 3-4). During this period of remarkable population growth, I was a hotline receptionist and frontline worker at a domestic violence shelter in rural Athens, Ohio. I was majoring in political science, pursuing licensure in Spanish education, and leading an English tutoring program for local Hispanic immigrant laborers. Numerous times during my employment at the shelter, we received calls from Spanish-speaking women yet failed to respond. Our primary clientele were women of Appalachian heritage living in the impoverished outskirts of our college town. Thus, we were only prepared to accept

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1 Names of focus group and interview participants have been changed to protect anonymity
2 Number inclusive of unauthorized immigrants of all nations, not Latin America alone.
3 A client is the term commonly used in most domestic violence intervention settings to refer to any person using domestic violence services, whether as a shelter resident or a non-resident seeking an outside service such as court advocacy, counseling, etc.
calls in English. The calls in Spanish were fairly rare, but based upon census trends it can very reasonably be surmised that they would soon increase (“Ohio Hispanic Americans,” n.d., p. 1) and that we would not be prepared to work with women whose exit options would be limited by their sociopolitical status, such as “Mariana”, who is quoted above. We were, however, instilled with the notion that “Everyone has the right to be safe”. I have little doubt that my coworkers believed this, as they showed me how to work tirelessly- day and night in this case- to extend this right to our clients. It thus became clear that an unintended and significant disconnect between policy and practice in the field of domestic violence intervention existed. The research component of my thesis, which was approved by the Institutional Review Board, is an investigation into the ways that conventional domestic violence intervention strategies have or have not worked to guarantee the right to safety for unauthorized Hispanic immigrant women in the state of Ohio.

The specifics of this multicultural feminist project pertain to unauthorized Hispanic immigrant women to the US who were born in Latin America. “Multicultural feminism” is a term I will use for the theoretical framework that seeks to liberate marginalized women through a critique of hegemonic forces, particularly white/Western feminism. While the themes of my analysis are of relevance to other minorities living at the margins of the mainstream, especially authorized Hispanic immigrant women, I will focus on unauthorized victims of domestic violence on account of the additional political barriers they experience with domestic violence.

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4 The broadly-encompassing term of “unauthorized” is used in this paper, rather than “undocumented”, as many migrants who lack legal status may possess false documentation, expired documentation, or partial documentation. (Passel & Cohn, 2011).
5 From seminal work, “Under Western Eyes” by Chandra Mohanty.
In keeping with the feminist sociological theory of intersectionality (Crenshaw 1994), it is of paramount importance that attention to cultural differences as outlined in this paper not trump structural causes of abuse, namely gender, race, and class. Sokoloff (2005) argues that we must expand the current framework to be more inclusive of and responsive to differences, but we must not allow them to eclipse systematic disparities. Doing so will cause us to lose sight of the most fundamental sources of inequality. If we wish to effect social change, it is imperative that any and all cultural-sensitivity inquiries be contextualized within this broader framework. Ultimately, cultural distinctions must be made to deliver optimal services on an individual and community level. However, sweeping progress is dependent upon unification and mobilization, which requires us to recognize and build upon the commonalities that exist across our differences.

This paper is an examination of the current state of domestic violence services in the United States as they relate to the unauthorized Hispanic immigrant woman with a research focus on Ohio. According to the Center for Disease Control, domestic violence is defined as violence occurring between intimate partners, particularly physical, emotional, sexual, and psychological, although domestic violence can take many forms, some unmistakable and others covert (“Intimate Partner Violence,” n.d.). It is my aim to evolve the work of the battered women’s movement rather than undercut it. Significant progress has been made by domestic violence advocates over the past four decades on both the state and national levels. The Athens domestic violence shelter was founded in the seventies and has truly been not only a life-

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6 That same sex couples rarely came up in both my research and experience is evidence that this is a silent problem deserving of focused attention.
saving resource for countless women, but a trail-blazing, female-affirming organization. Like many shelters founded in the seventies, it is a direct product of the battered women’s movement that became prominent during the second wave feminist movement in the US. It is important to note and commend the great surge our nation has seen in domestic violence treatment programs, public policy, and research. However, as evidenced by my experience as a shelter employee, it is equally imperative to recognize that conventional intervention efforts have been premised on the Caucasian, middle-class, heterosexual paradigm. Richie (2005) argues that gender inequality is the primary and sometimes single source of violence for such women, which creates a dilemma for the increasing population of women who do not fit the mold. Unauthorized Hispanic immigrant women are amongst the many minority groups who are subject to multilateral forms of oppression, which serve to complicate and compound the experience of abuse. Like most modern studies of domestic violence, this thesis is preoccupied with the unequal distribution of power, not only in the male-female relationship but also in the public service sector.

To embed this project within its broader context, it would be erroneous at best to imply that minority women alone are poorly served by our current domestic violence intervention system. Despite the formal progress that has been made, domestic violence continues to be common amongst women of all classes, races, and ethnicities. It was a hard reality that the rate of return to a violent relationship was very high for the majority of clients we served at the shelter. My experience was that our clients commonly “went back”, despite the fact that our social work and legal services were explicitly designed to help women become independent from the abuser. As a
shelter aide, I was trained on the dynamics of domestic violence and was taught that most women would leave seven times before finally establishing full independence from the abusive relationship. My experience paralleled this theory, as does broader investigation as to the prevalence of domestic violence (Berlinger, 1998, p.4). The statistics on domestic violence in the US are similarly humbling. According to the Center for Disease Control (CDC) and Prevention’s 2010 survey on intimate partner violence, more than 1 in 3 women (35.6%) have experienced rape, physical violence, and/or stalking by an intimate partner in their lifetime (Black, Basile, Breiding, Smith, Walters, Merrick, Chen, Stephens, 2011, p. 2). The CDC cites the annual death toll at 1300 women (p.19), or more than three daily, and also finds that the annual health-related costs of domestic violence are in excess of $5.8 billion. About $4.1 billion are for direct medical and mental health care services, and upwards of $1.8 billion are for the indirect costs of lost productivity or wages (“Costs of Intimate Partner Violence Against Women in the United States”, 2003, p.32). Clearly, our efforts at preventing domestic violence are inadequate and/or ineffective to devastating degree, not only for unauthorized Hispanic immigrant women but for all. During the course of this project I have gained insight into the grassroots work that has been done to help immigrant women escape domestic violence outside of the mainstream services, causing a second question to emerge: In what ways has the immigrant population creatively combated domestic violence at the grassroots level, and what can the broader battered women’s movement learn from these community-based strategies? I believe that the conclusion is applicable to overall efforts to decrease domestic violence for all women.
Before we can understand how to better serve a minority population, it is important to understand the nature of current services and the relationship of the minority population to the services. Chapter one provides background information on my involvement with the issue of domestic violence and offers an overview of conventional domestic violence intervention methods. These methods are then measured against the needs of the unauthorized Hispanic immigrant woman population. Finally, I will conclude with an overview of the work that has been done to make domestic violence services and legal resources accessible to immigrants. This chapter will produce questions that my research will later attempt to answer.

This paper is written from a feminist perspective, addressing the ways that women have been systematically subordinated by a traditionally patriarchal social structure. If all intervention models are fundamentally based in theory, in order to propose a new model, the theoretical underpinnings of our liberal political order as well as the prominent feminist responses to it must be considered. Of particular relevance in this inquiry is the multicultural feminist reaction to white/Western feminist work. Chapter two is therefore an overview of foundational liberal political theory, second wave feminist theory, and third wave feminist theory. My conclusion of this study is that consensus exists that patriarchy is universal, and that in order to unite womankind in a movement against it, white middle class feminists must not only lead but also be led by minority women. We must also continue to challenge the public/private divide, questioning not only the ways that it can disadvantage women,

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7 “Western feminist” is the term used by postcolonial theorists to describe middle/upper middle class European/American feminists who have traditionally dominated feminist discourse and held hegemony in the first and second waves of feminism and are often critiqued in the current third wave. While some Hispanics would identify as Western, this branch of feminism is defined as a distinct product of privileged Europeans/Americans (Mohanty, 2003).
but minorities as well. In effort to follow with the recommendation of prominent thinkers in multicultural feminism, who often urge Western/white middle class feminists to refrain from speaking for minority women, I end the chapter with an overview of a focus group in order to tie in the voice of the unauthorized Hispanic immigrant woman residing in Ohio.

Chapter three contextualizes this issue within the state of Ohio, providing a background for the research I conducted throughout the state. With the approval of the Institutional Review Board, I was able to interview workers at shelters statewide to determine if this disconnect was specific to Athens or was occurring across the state. I then transition into an explanation of the methodology I used to learn more about the availability of services and the attitudes of social service providers toward serving the unauthorized Hispanic immigrant woman population.

In chapter four, the findings of both my quantitative and qualitative research will be explored. The prominent themes that emerged from my firsthand research with frontline shelter workers will be shared using exemplary quotes and representative tools. This is followed by an overview of the themes that emerged in my in-depth interviews with professional advocates. Finally, a synthesized analysis of the practical state of affairs (Chapter 1), the literature (Chapter 2), and my firsthand research (Chapters 3 and 4) will bring us toward a conclusion. Although I will focus on my interpretation of the results of my research, I will also discuss my personal learnings throughout this process, the limitations I experienced, and my recommendations for further research.
Chapter One

1. Practical Assessment of the Hispanic Population & Domestic Violence Services

Overview of the Hispanic Immigrant Population

After a year at the domestic violence shelter, I left to take a position as an Undergraduate Research Scholar at the Voinovich Center for Leadership and Public Affairs, where I worked on community needs assessments and program evaluations for nonprofits in various Appalachian counties of Ohio. My experience revealed the importance of surveying and understanding the community demographics, cultural composition, and existing services when implementing social policy. This section thus contextualizes my inquiry with essential demographic and cultural information on the Hispanic immigrant population in Ohio, with a focus on the interplay of domestic violence with the unauthorized Hispanic immigrant experience. Background information on existing conventional domestic violence services and the impact of The Violence Against Women Act (VAWA) upon these services are the other key elements of this assessment.

While it is commonly known that the Hispanic population has experienced swift growth in the United States in recent decades, the Hispanic presence is typically most associated with U.S./Mexico border states, New York, and Florida. However, the population is growing and has been dispersing since the nineties (Fry, 2008, Fig. 2).
As mentioned in the introduction, the growth of this population in the state of Ohio outpaced national growth by 20 additional percentage points from 2000-2010. The U.S. Bureau of the Census indicates that the population has tripled since 1980, putting the total population of Hispanics in Ohio at now just over 350,000 (“Ohio Hispanic Americans,” n.d., p.1). This is a minimal estimate given that sampling is biased downwards because of the surveying error for unauthorized persons on census surveys.  

While immigrant groups of all races and ethnicities are likely to experience common obstacles to overcoming domestic violence, the heterogeneous nature of the immigrant population and the limited scope of this thesis necessitate that the focus be narrowed somewhat. Thus, this paper pertains to Hispanic women who are living in the US but were born in Latin America, with an emphasis on unauthorized persons. While optimistic estimates indicate that 80% of immigrants living in the US are authorized, and 1/3 of permanent residents were previously unauthorized (Orloff, L., Lin, J., Baran, A., Angel, C. 2006, slide 10), this thesis will focus on the unauthorized population due to an interest in the way that political status affects the realization of the right to safety. It is also a practical response to the rapid growth of the unauthorized Hispanic population in our nation and the state of Ohio and the limited understanding of this group. While the unauthorized population may seem homogenous relative to the population of the U.S. at large, diversity exists within this group (Passel & Cohn, 2009, 4th paragraph), and generalizations will inevitably have

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8 According to the Department of Homeland Security, annual estimates of the unauthorized immigrant population are subject to sampling error in the ACS and considerable nonsampling error because of uncertainty in some of the assumptions required for estimation. (“Estimates of the Unauthorized Immigrant Population Residing in the U.S”, 2010).
to be made. Although domestic violence among same sex couples is an important issue, I will focus on heterosexual couples given that my experience at the women’s shelter did not happen to include same sex couples.

Although census bureau statistics on unauthorized persons are only estimates arrived at indirectly, as the 2010 census did not ask about immigration status, it is generally agreed that a large majority of unauthorized Hispanic immigrants are Mexican, with the Central American countries of Honduras, Guatemala, and El Salvador combined also accounting for a large portion of the population (Hoeffer et. al, 2011, pp. 3-4). The Ohio Department of Development survey showed that half of Hispanics living in Ohio are Mexican, just over one quarter are Puerto Rican, and the presence of Central-American born Hispanic immigrants is rapidly increasing (“Ohio Hispanic Americans”, n.d., p.1) . The American Community Survey of the 2010 census released data that offers an in-depth statistical portrait of the foreign-born population (Grieco, Costa, de la Cruz, Gambino, Gryn, Larson, Trevalayan, Walters, 2012) with a breakdown by region of origin. It is important to note that this data is not specific to unauthorized persons but includes all data gathered about Latin American-born immigrants to the U.S., both authorized and unauthorized. Although this data lacks the specificity that would be most helpful to this project, there is a lack of reliable statistical information regarding the unauthorized population. The following data is a firsthand extrapolation of statistics from the 2010 census on the foreign-born Latin American population and the general native-born population (includes all
ethnicities) to provide a frame of reference.

Figure 1. Comparison of demographic markers for immigrants born in Latin America and Native-Born US Persons. This data was extrapolated from U.S. Bureau 2010 Census American Community Survey (Grieco, Costa, de la Cruz, Gambino, Gryn, Larson, Trevalayan, Walters, 2012)

In extrapolating and comparing data on the Latin American born population and the Native-Born population, I came to the following key demographic facts about the population emerge as important:

- Hispanic immigrants are young, particularly in Ohio where the average age is 24.5 years as compared to 38.9 years among the population at-large.
- Hispanic immigrants have a significantly higher birthrate.
- Households are significantly more multigenerational.
• Hispanic immigrants have significantly lower levels of educational attainment.
• Hispanic immigrants are significantly less likely to have health insurance.
• The poverty rate amongst Hispanic immigrants is significantly higher.

Further relevant statistics not captured in the chart above are:
• One-third are naturalized: 32% of the foreign-born Latino population have gained US citizenship. Half who entered since 1980 are now citizens, while 8.9% of those who entered after 2000 are now citizens.
• Households are larger in number, with an average of 4.2 people living in a Hispanic immigrant household compared to 3.2 percent in the native-born population.
• The population is more concentrated, with half living in just four states (Texas, Florida, New York, California). In Ohio, most live in the urban areas of Columbus, Cleveland, and Cincinnati, and there is a concentration in the northern part of the state in both rural and suburban areas. However, it is widely believed that they are dispersing to other areas in the state. (Fry, 2008, Fig. 2)

The Prevalence of Domestic Violence

In October of 2006, I attended the annual Alliance for Immigrant Women (AIW) conference in Cincinnati, Ohio. Under the auspices of the YWCA, the mission of the AIW is to fight domestic violence in immigrant communities. Leading advocates from the region were present to speak about the conference theme, which
was “The Invisible Among Us: Parallels & Intersections of Human Trafficking &
Domestic Violence in Immigrant Communities.” The organization Legal Momentum
stated that 22.1% of women suffer from domestic violence in the U.S. in general,
compared to 30-50% of immigrant women (Orloff et. al, 2006, slide 13). As
mentioned in the introduction, the Center for Disease Control states that 35.6% of
American women have experienced domestic violence at some point in their lifetime
(Black et. al, p. 2), where the lifetime abuse rate in a survey of 279 Hispanic
immigrants was found to be 49.8%, with 64% of the women surveyed being married
to U.S. born citizens (Orloff et. al, 2006, slide 17). Not only is the rate found to be
higher, but also the severity. Research has found that immigrant victims stay longer,
have fewer resources, are often dependent upon their spouse for legal immigration
status, and sustain more severe physical and emotional consequences of abuse as a
result. Male dominance in relationships is a significant risk factor, and is often higher
in international marriages, particularly when the abuser is a spouse with legal
residency and his partner does not have residency. (Orloff et.al, 2006, slides 12-18).
On the other hand, when both partners are immigrants, it has been noted that abuse
may increase after arrival to the United States. The stressors of the new environment
coupled with losing status in the new workplace can be damaging to the self-esteem of
some male immigrants, who may become more financially dependent on their working
female partner and may compensate for their loss of self-respect by domineering at
home, with domination resulting in violence. Women may be under heightened
pressure from their male partner, family back home, and immigrant community to
preserve cultural traditions within the family and to keep the family together,
increasing a feeling of submission. Furthermore, some experts report that the American culture is exceptionally violent and can therefore negatively influence the behavior of immigrants. (Costa-Crowell and Oliveira, 1995).

**Disconnect Between Intervention Services & Hispanic Immigrants**

While there are many domestic violence intervention methods, my experience and perception is that the primary method of intervention utilized in the United States is the law enforcement method. Victims or witnesses call police to report a domestic dispute, a mandatory arrest policy is enforced and the abuser is taken into custody, the victim is encouraged to file for a restraining order, known as a Temporary Protection Order (TPO) or Certified Protection Order (CPO). The victim may use a lawyer or use a publicly funded domestic violence advocate to help them prepare testimony against their abuser in the court of law, and if found guilty, the abuser will serve time, attend court-mandated counseling, serve probation, or all of the above. Utilizing the law enforcement method does not require one to be in a shelter. However, women who come to shelters are encouraged and supported in their utilization of the law enforcement method. Shelters typically work closely with police for referrals and rely upon police to keep their shelters secure and anonymous. Shelters also work closely with the publicly funded court advocate. It is clear from my survey research that Ohio shelters rely heavily on law enforcement, but most also provide safe housing, social work services, and counseling. The Athens shelter, like many mainstream shelters born of the battered women’s movement of the seventies, offer these services under the overarching philosophy of the empowerment model, also referred to as the empowerment approach (Roberts, 2002).
The empowerment model is a social work philosophy that has been broadly used to encourage self-sufficiency rather than dependence in marginalized people. It is commonly utilized in the field of domestic violence intervention and intervention for domestic violence advocates and clients. Historically, domestic violence professionals coached clients, and sometimes took on the “rescuer” role, which could have the unintended consequence of creating dependency, exercising too much control over the victim, and not properly protecting the boundaries of either client or practitioner. This model was eventually replaced with the empowerment model, which encourages respect for the agency of each client. (“Best Practices Manual for Domestic Violence Programs,” 2000). Trained under this model, I learned that our objective was to provide the client with feasible exit options and the resources necessary to establish independence—particularly legal resources, counseling, and public assistance— but to accept her final decision whether she opted for exit or returning to the abuser. For frontline workers, it is typically accompanied by training in the Power and Control Wheel, the Equality Wheel, the cycle of domestic violence, myths surrounding domestic violence, and language of survivorship versus victimhood. Below appears a copy of the Power and Control Wheel that was used in my training as both a volunteer and Shelter Aide at the Athens shelter.
Figure 2. The Power and Control Wheel in English. This is a standard educational tool commonly used to train and educate those working in the field of domestic violence intervention, as well as those who are served. (Wheel Gallery, n.d.)

Whereas domestic violence breaks a woman down using the methods outlined in the Power and Control Wheel on the previous page, the empowerment model aims to build her up through validation of her experience, restoration of her self-esteem,
provision of resource and service options. This model is premised on the notion that domestic violence is a product of patriarchy, and women therefore emerge from abuse feeling both oppressed and helpless. By acknowledging and affirming her efforts to exit the relationship and encouraging the continuation of such, the empowerment model encourages each woman to see herself as agent rather than subject in her life, with independence and distance from the abuse being critical to the realization of full agency.

As shelters clearly cannot operate in isolation, in the field of domestic violence intervention, the empowerment model is associated with and complementary to the law enforcement approach, with collaboration occurring among law enforcement professionals and domestic violence professionals. In the Athens shelter, crisis intervention begins with meeting the client at the local police shelter to do intake paperwork. The shelter aide then transports the client to the shelter. Once there, the client works with the social worker and in cooperation with the court advocate seeks a restraining order first and later establishes financial resources, housing, and counseling. Throughout, the client is urged to use self-help practices to enable independence, with all of these resources assisting her in reaching the goal of self-sufficiency. The law enforcement approach has been a nationally yet inconsistently applied since the 1960s, when progressives demanded that law enforcement take domestic violence seriously by treating it as a crime punishable by law, effectively assigning public resources and censure to an issue that had previously been treated as personal and private (Roberts, 2002, p. 103).
In keeping with this philosophy, language of survivorship rather than victimhood is intentionally used. Essentially, the shelter staff emphasized, encouraged, and enabled women to choose independence, but refrained from criticizing an uncooperative client. Personal, individual choice is critical to the empowerment model, and so if a woman chose to return to the abusive relationship, we provided a safety plan, external services such as counseling, and an open door to return. Many women did indeed return to the relationship, which we were trained to expect as statistics indicate that it typically takes up to seven exits before a violent relationship reaches its final demise.

My understanding was that the empowerment model was the standard for domestic violence intervention. In retrospect, it seems that in the Athens shelter, our services and approach were informed by this philosophy, yet tailored our services to suit the needs of our clients, who were largely Appalachian. My observation in working with clients in Athens was that the greatest barriers to self-sufficiency were limited employment history, limited education, and limited opportunity for employment. The majority of clients needed financial support to make ends meet without a provider or dual income, so emphasis was placed upon setting clients up with public assistance to help cover expenses. Our social worker also assisted clients with job searching and education access when possible. Our clients and many outside community members also worked closely with our court advocate as well, who was from the area and intimately understood the cultural dynamics of the local clientele and the legal system.
While these methods could be considered eminently suitable for our average clients, and were intended to be and presumed to be suitable enough for all victims of domestic violence, my research into the unauthorized Hispanic immigrant woman’s experience of domestic violence shows that they were not suitable for this population. Not only were our services linguistically inaccessible as we did not have access to interpretation services, but they were ignorant of the common barriers immigrant women confront. For instance, caseworkers in Athens helped our clients to access public assistance, such as housing subsidies, childcare vouchers, and food stamps, to assist clients while they are establishing their independence. The employees and volunteers at the Athens shelter, like many of the county eligibility technicians themselves, were generally unaware that status as an unauthorized immigrant negates eligibility for most of these vital forms of financial assistance. Another example is that in training and weekly team meetings, we never discussed the ways that domestic violence dynamics change by immigration status and cultural context, which must be first understood in order to begin addressing the needs of the Hispanic immigrant population.

Dasgupta (2005) organizes the prospective complications that immigrant victims may experience into the following three overarching categories: personal, institutional, and cultural ideology. This applies to both authorized and unauthorized immigrants, although unauthorized immigrants are likely to experience greater barriers in all three categories. Personal barriers are inclusive of issues of shame, fear, poverty, paucity of a network of support, and lack of survival skills in the new country, such as ability to drive, read help-wanted ads, etc. This category includes the more superficial
barriers that are most readily apparent. Institutional barriers relates to cultural insensitivity, stringent immigration and public assistance policies, child custody issues complicated by illegal status, and language barriers. Finally, 'cultural ideology barriers' pertains to the cultural pressure to tolerate abuse for the good of the family or social conformity. This section focuses on the cultural and institutional barriers that such victims of domestic violence face. Personal barriers are referenced throughout the paper but given most attention during the focus group analysis of Chapter 2

**Cultural Concerns and Domestic Violence Dynamics**

Perilla’s (1999) analyses of domestic violence within the context of Hispanic culture suggest that three distinct cultural norms are common amongst an otherwise heterogeneous matzo population. These include the centrality of the family, distinct gender roles, and the concept of respect. These variables are thought to continue to be of great relevance both pre and post-migration.

The importance of traditional gender roles and the impact of patriarchy within the family persists across borders, classes, and religious sects throughout Latin America. Perilla explains,

The family is a central focus for Latino people, and family members share strong feelings of loyalty, reciprocity, and solidarity…[today] Latino families are undergoing important changes in terms of family roles and responsibilities with a somewhat more egalitarian stance between the partners while still maintaining a marked gender difference in their ascribed roles…[yet] patriarchy continues to be the axle around which the family revolves. (1999, p. 114)

Perilla argues that the impact of migration, general shifts in social attitudes, and dual income family are making traditional gender roles more flexible both in
native Latino countries and in the U.S., yet there remains at continuing high levels for many an adherence to the maintenance of traditional gender roles, with men carrying head of household duties and women taking responsibility for childrearing and housekeeping. Children are socialized accordingly from an early age, and while parents are noted to be protective with all children, this practice of sheltering is extended more to girls than boys. The strong emphasis upon family solidarity and strict adherence to traditional gender roles make the Latino family a “sealed container” (Abalos ctd. in Perilla, 1999, p. 114) which serves to protect family members but at the expense of individuality. That Hispanics value family unity over individuality is highly important to domestic violence intervention in the Hispanic community. While gender-based socialization does occur and men and women thus follow separate spheres patterns, my observation from studying abroad and volunteering in Ecuador and Mexico is that based upon the level of engagement, men consider their involvement in the family (private sphere) and presence in the church community to be highly important; the level of intimacy I observed within both the nuclear and extended family was significantly beyond what is common for an American family.

In terms of the gender roles, Perilla (1994) addresses both the positive and negative aspects of *machismo*, or masculine identity in Latino culture, indicating that it is associated with honor, courage, on one hand yet sexual double standards, the tendency to interpret possessive or sexually aggressive behaviors as symbols of love, and a social sanctioning of heavy alcohol consumption. While this social construct is associated with Latino culture, it is not exclusive to Latin America; it exists as a stereotypical symbol or reality of male behavior in many cultures, including the
United States. On the other hand, a prevailing cultural norm of *marianismo* exists, which places value on the self-sacrifice women make for their families, to the point that suffering can not only be condoned but encouraged. This feminine complement to *machismo* stems from the image of the Virgin Mary/ *La Virgen Maria* in a largely Catholic Latin America. Rooted in conservative Catholic teachings on gender and reinforced through socialization, introduction to marianismo begins before marriage, influencing young women to remain celibate until marriage, and ultimately to become selfless, loving wives. Like machismo, marianismo has a positive side. It encourages social skills, compassion, and self-control. It has in fact been defined as “a code of behavior that underscores the spiritual superiority of women over men” (Yoshioka et al., 2003). However, given the pressure to organize one’s identity around the roles as wife, mother, family peacemaker and religious gatekeeper, Perilla and Yoshioka theorize that marianismo can act to increase vulnerability to domestic violence.

In terms of family dynamics, Perilla (1999) notes a strong cultural sense of *respeto* throughout Latin America. While children are socialized to respect all parents and elders both in the family and outside of the family, within a household the father is accorded ultimate respect, whether earned or not. This respect is often conflated with fear given the prevailing parenting technique of demanding respect rather than earning it, which has been found to carry over from father-child relationships into abuser-victim relationships. To put this in context:

Diaz-Guerrero (1996) reports the results of a cross-cultural study in which he explored the meaning of respect for Mexican and U.S. college students. He found that for U.S. natives, the concept of respect had to do with issues of equality, whereas for Mexicans it dealt with a highly emotional, interdependent net of obligations within an authoritarian pattern. (ctd. in Perilla, 1999, p. 117)
Respeto can increase vulnerability yet also serve as an advantage in domestic violence intervention, given that authority figures such as priests, counselors, or law enforcement officials may exercise greater influence and receive greater cooperation when treating batterers and victims (Perilla, 1999).

Religion is a strong force upon culture and in Latin America is highly influential upon family dynamics and gender roles. While the degree varies between countries and age groups, Perilla (1999) contends that Catholicism and Christian fundamentalism remain dominant forces in much of modern Latin American culture. Although these religions have traditionally urged people to view exit from marriage as sinful and have encouraged patriarchal familial norms as has the authoritarian style of governance, it is also important to note that parish life has a positive component that creates a rich emphasis upon community engagement and accountability in Latin America. The comfort with building community networks can be a great asset to unauthorized Hispanic immigrant women as they counter domestic violence. The Catholic Church has also in recent times made clear its opposition to domestic violence, emphasizing further that the church can be a community-based resource for the domestic violence movement (Ooms, 2006). Although it has often been associated with Rome, the church culture, like human culture, is rarely static. Finally, my experience within religious settings has revealed that many conservative Christian churches, including the Roman Catholic Church, explain their current adherence to traditional expectations of patriarchy as falling under a theory of complementarianism (“Complementarianism,” n.d.). Said to be biblically based, this is the belief that women and men have differing but equal (complementary) roles within the church and
within the family, with the family serving as a microcosm of the church. The male thus has the responsibility of guiding the family and the women and children of submitting, just as Christ guides and his followers submit. Also called a Traditionalist or Hierarchical view, man, like Christ, must love his wife and family as Christ loves the church, and thus adhere to biblical principles intended to serve the greater good of the family, as Christ’s leadership serves the greater good of his followers. This implies that gender dynamics within traditional religious families and cultures may not be adhered to on a simply pervasive and subconscious basis, but in a highly intentional way. Theoretically speaking, the concept of naturally endowed masculine leadership and female submission is fundamentally problematic to mainstream feminists, and realistically speaking this patriarchy can easily be abused. Churches that condone marital chastisement are condoning illegal behavior. My argument here is not to express agreement with this theory or its outcomes, but to suggest that the Hispanic male head of household may have a strong sense of loyalty to explicit external principles. This consciousness and accountability might help to explain the exceptional and persistent interest in male batterer treatment within the Hispanic community.

I want to point out that while Hispanic immigrants do cite privacy as a reason they do not always disclose abuse, Kelly (2003) makes it clear that this is likewise a major issue in the domestic violence intervention in the United States. When safety is compromised by abuse at home, the cultural force of familismo, or the centrality of the family as discussed above, may work against those victims who are encouraged by family to stay at all costs, but as we see in the focus group and in research, Hispanic
women report that they disclose the abuse to their partners’ families (Dutton, Orloff, and Hass, 2000). “Los trapos sucios se lavan adentro” may be an idiom in the Spanish language (Soriano-Soriano, n.d., p. 1) but translated to “Don’t air your dirty laundry in public”, this saying is not unheard of in the English language. Privacy is considered a universal human need. Thus, tension between protecting family and individual privacy and disclosing abuse to public entities exists across cultures. When given the choice between disclosing domestic violence to law enforcement and dealing with it privately, U.S. citizens often choose the latter. This is further discussed in the literature review of chapter two in which I look at Kelly’s (2003) reconceptualization of the public/private divide. What is important to note is that unauthorized Hispanic immigrant victims are at heavily increased vulnerability as they may fear that either themselves or their partners will be deported if they report domestic violence to police. As previously discussed in this section, most Hispanic immigrants, documented or undocumented, are subject to cultural norms that operate to keep the family unit central and intimate yet exceptionally hierarchical and patriarchal in nature, again increasing the vulnerability to domestic violence. So we see here that the unauthorized Hispanic immigrant contends with increased political and cultural barriers to overcoming domestic violence, but we also see that strengths within the family and community settings may put Hispanic immigrant women and men at an advantage in overcoming domestic violence, should they be in a position to build upon them.

So what becomes of these norms when a woman immigrates to the United States? Perilla (1999) feels that gender roles do loosen as a result, but are naturally more traditional relative to American counterparts, and in reaction to the admonitions
from family who stay behind and urge them not to shame their families. As a former caseworker for asylees and refugees, I can say that immigrant women of various cultures often carry the burden of maintaining the family’s cultural traditions after moving to a new country.

While Perilla’s writings note some political progress for Latin American women, the work of Colombian-born journalist Silvana Paternostro (1999) are less optimistic. Paternostro acknowledges the formal gains women have made in Latin America, such as entering the work force and governmental leadership but is adamant that these gains are empty, as the few women who are in leadership are only puppets, playing by patriarchal rules, and as such prolonging the oppression of women.

Furthermore, most women remain largely housebound. Says Paternostro:

The idea of what a marriage is seems to have changed little since 1914, when Ricardo Uribe Escobar, a young Columbian political science student who advocated women’s work outside the home, wrote, ‘Columbian women have always been kidnapped inside the home. And don’t tell us that because of that our families are ruled by calmness…this calmness is like the peace in cemeteries…She has no rights to a life, her activity is reduced to keeping up the household and to rendering humble homage to her husband. The man commands, directs, represents his home, the woman suffers and resigns herself, not even complains, and naturally, the house is filled with peace. (Paternostro, 1999, p. 106).

Paternostro acknowledges that awareness of the need to challenge machismo is high among well-educated persons, but mainstream Hispanic women have yet to integrate such feminist ideology into their lives:

That Latin American government institutions and sexual relationships are tainted by a ubiquitous machismo is hardly a revelation. Thousands of theoretical papers, pamphlets, books, conferences attest to the inequalities of the genders in Latin America…[but] are written in words that are educated, grandiose, and part of a jargon that excludes the average woman, who if raped is afraid to report it, if physically abused at home is scared to seek legal aid… (14)
My finding in the focus group is that average Hispanic immigrant women seem keenly aware of the impact of machismo on their relationships (see chapter 2). The focus group took place in 2005 and Paternostro wrote in 1999, indicating that the younger generation may be gaining increasing awareness. This leads me to believe that Perilla’s finding that the family is becoming more egalitarian; she cites migration and work outside the home as two reasons for this, both of which apply to the women who participated in the focus group. On the other hand, Paternostro’s take on the outcome of the immigrant experience sees less progress and is more critical:

…the women of Latin American descent who come here with dreams of freedom, of economic prosperity, of una vida major, are not free from male expectation and domination. They might leave the land of God and man behind but not its rules. The same outdated prejudices, the same antiquated practices come into their new homes, into their new lives in this land where other rules—ones that offer more choices, other role models—are possible. (Paternostro 272)

Again, we see a stark contrast here from Perilla. While Perilla is a community psychologist, Paternostro is a journalist, which indicates to me that the perception we have of Hispanic immigrant women from the media is likely sensationalized and stereotyped to some degree. My experience within the field and research reveals the great importance of taking an equitable and sensitive approach to this issue. Perilla’s work helps us understand how the Latin American culture is, not how it should be. Where Paternostro’s view is staunchly of a sensationalist Liberal feminist persuasion that focuses only on the “sexier” issues and is highly critical of machismo, marianismo, and familismo, Perilla’s academic approach recognizes not only the weaknesses but also the strengths, and the history of the Latin American family, and as such has become an advocate of programs created by Latinos for Latinos that give
families with a history of domestic violence the option of working on the problem
within the themselves and within the family. Says Perilla,

The issue of agency is an important part of the question of why abused
women do not leave their batterers. A failure to leave the relationship is seen
by many mainstream agencies and court systems as a woman’s failure to do
something for herself and her family. Agency is directly equated with leaving,
and staying is perceived as victimization. This simplistic way of viewing
the intricate and complex process in each battered woman’s life belies the
myriad ways she may be actively working on her own and her children’s
behalf (1999, p. 21)

My experience as a former domestic violence professional who helped women
under the empowerment approach is congruent with Perilla’s assessment of
mainstream agencies. As much as we talked about empowering clients to choose for
themselves, our services were focused toward setting up independent living
arrangements for the “survivors.” For women who went back to the relationship, our
insistence upon safety planning and offer to return to shelter implied that she was
falling back into victimization, but would have a way out when she was ready. After
all, if coming to shelter made her a “survivor” what is she when she chooses to return?
Implicitly, a personal failure. Although our training taught us that women are at
increased risk for stalking and homicide after leaving a relationship (Jewkes, 2002)
our primary goal in crisis intervention was to bring the victim into shelter—funding
was dependent on number of women spending the night—and then the caseworker
began helping her re-establish, and the legal advocate helped with the removal and
punishment of the abuser. Alternatively, an honest openness to reunifying the family
and eradicating abuse can be found in some notable treatment methods specific to
unauthorized Hispanic immigrant women. Given the statistics about increased risk of
homicide after leaving a relationship, it is sensible to consider alternatives to fleeing the relationship. Where Paternostro seems to advocate for an immediate liberal overhaul of Latin American family values and worldview, Perilla’s work indicates awareness that a sweeping paradigm shift from collectivist to individualist values is neither realistic nor necessary to countering domestic violence in the Latin American family. In my opinion, pressure to conform to American standards of liberalism constitutes deculturalization. As we will see in the focus group around domestic violence with Latina immigrants in Ohio, little interest is expressed in realizing liberal feminist ideals, while significant interest is expressed in protecting the children and the family, sometimes the abuser included. While no women express a desire to live under patriarchal rule, there is a clear preference for familial harmony over separation. The equitable recognition of strengths and weaknesses within both women and men in the Hispanic immigrant community facilitates dialogue that is productive to realizing these goals.

On the note of confronting weaknesses and building strengths of Hispanic men, psychologist Ricardo Carillo (2001) points out the sophisticated histories of his clientele: “…Latino men may come with a history of trauma—profound post-traumatic stress—because they’ve come from war-torn situations, civil war situations and horrible types of violence experiences…To deal with domestic violence exclusively and not attend to those issues really limits the utility and is not fair to the needs of those people.” (Garza, 2001, paragraph 17-18). Carillo is founder of El Hombre Noble (The Noble Man) curriculum for Latino male abusers. This group counseling curriculum helps men see, question, and heal from abusive tendencies in
order to become healthy family contributors. It is based in both indigenous spiritual teachings and feminist theory. Such programs recognize that domestic violence is a societal problem that requires both men and women to change, and as such, it can be possible and it can be right for families to bring an end to violence without ending the families. This stands in contrast to the law enforcement approach, which automatically removes the abuser from the home given the mandatory arrest policy. In the next section, we will analyze the myriad ways the law enforcement approach is ill-suited to the Hispanic immigrant woman, particularly the unauthorized.

**Institutional Barriers and Domestic Violence Intervention**

At most shelters, including the Athens shelter, the police and the courts are a strong if not leading source of referrals. Given that the police in the pre-1960s Progressive Era responded to domestic violence calls by treating them as a private matter, using either the “do nothing” approach or encouraging the abuser to just “cool off”, there are now mandatory arrest laws in the United States which aim to make enforcement of domestic violence consistent (Roberts, 2002, p. 103). Roberts notes the normative and universal nature of the prevalence of domestic violence and the legal sanction of it historically:

> Although domestic violence has been recognized as a pervasive social problem fairly recently, its cultural bases are deeply embedded in Western history and culture. Even a cursory review of that history reveals the extent to which law and society have traditionally served to implicitly support and perpetuate the subordination of women to their husbands. In some parts of Latin American and Asia, especially in the upper classes, killing a wife for an indiscretion has usually been acceptable, although the same privilege generally is not extended to women as perpetrators. Various cultures and societies have permitted or
Tacitly encouraged some degree of family violence as a means to maintain that subordination (Roberts, 2002, p. 103).

Thus, it was considered a major gain for the movement when domestic violence became broadly prosecuted starting in the seventies. Assigning legal protection to battered women sends a strong message to society about the individual right to safety (Kelly, 2003, p. 74) and the right of women to be treated with respect. However, the U.S. Office of Justice states that immigrant communities are significantly less likely to report domestic violence to police (Erez and Davis, 1998, p. 1). Hence, the *formality* is not functional. Beyond the obvious language barrier, reasons for severe underreporting are multiple. Three significant reasons I will explore in this section are the legacy of colonialism, the fear of US law enforcement, and the fear of deportation. Ultimately, it is clear that this approach is of limited utility here given the exceptional institutional barriers the unauthorized Hispanic immigrant woman must contend with.

Young (2003) introduces post-colonialism as the academic critique of the cultural impact left behind after a significant period of Western colonial domination. Those that have been devastated and subordinated by colonization are typically referred to as “subaltern” (p. 6). Because Spain exercised hegemonic rule over Mexico for some 300 years (Beezly and Meyer, 2010), it is through a postcolonial lens that one must understand the relationship of the subaltern, in this case Mexican migrants, to the state. Of particular relevance to my inquiry is the effect of post-colonialism on the relationship between unauthorized Hispanic immigrants (women and men) and law enforcement. Pakistani sociologist Hamza Alavi is referenced in Joan Mars work to
describe the contentious relationship between police and populace in a postcolonial society:

Hamza Alavi related the problem of repression and official violence in other countries that experienced the legacy of colonialism, such as Pakistan, to the historical development of their political arrangements during and after colonial rule. Alavi argued that with the imposition of British colonial rule came the creation of a state apparatus to exercise dominion over all the indigenous social classes. The colonial state relied on a well-equipped, bureaucratic-military apparatus to subordinate the native classes, and this over-developed state apparatus was inherited by the post-colonial state and used to continue the rule by repression and domination. (Mars, 2002, p. 12)

Such depictions of post-colonial “rule and domination” over native classes can allow us to reasonably conclude that unauthorized Hispanic immigrants (women and men) arriving to the US bring with them –at best-- a suspicion and discomfort with law enforcement. Multicultural feminist Shamita Das Dasgupta urges us to “…dissect the colonial histories of immigrants and comprehend the issues that have driven them out of their native countries to seek stability elsewhere. The postcolonial devastation of economy, politics, safety, and families that many nations of color have experienced need to be in the foreground…” (Dasgupta, 2005, p. 68). Even a preliminary consideration of the postcolonial tensions existing between the mestizo or indigenous unauthorized Hispanic immigrant women and the state reveals that the law enforcement method of domestic violence intervention is unlikely to be compatible with these victims. The effects of postcolonialism are likely to impact the relationship an unauthorized Hispanic woman has with not only the police, but any state-based agency, which includes most domestic violence shelters among other public intervention services, such as rape crisis centers or legal aid offices, which are the
primary places where policy affecting domestic violence takes shape and is administered.

Of great importance to the understanding of power structures in Latin America is the resulting development of authoritarian governance throughout Latin America. Lewis (2006) holds that the colonial Spanish regime brought a legacy of authoritarian style governance, which remains in place through much of the region today. This hierarchical style of governance is constituted by a powerful leader and submissive populace. Contrary to totalitarianism, it allows for general freedom of family relationships, community formations, and religion, provided the populace remain politically passive. Analyses of authoritarian societies such as Radcliffe and Westwood (1996) have revealed that the authoritarian governmental structure is influential upon family structure in Latin America, justifying a hierarchical arrangement in which the hierarchical nature of the private family is modeled by and justified by the public structure. Lewis (2006) holds that this conservative arrangement is “undemocratic” as it mandates that civilians be politically passive if they wish for freedom from governmental overreach. Civilians may be religious, have strong families, and strong communities, provided those formations are apolitical and supportive of this conservative governing structure. It can thus be surmised that a populace that has little say or trust in government might place greater trust in its local community formations. Treatment of domestic violence within community settings may be a key way to reach the Hispanic immigrant population, particularly the undocumented population, which not only fears deportation but may be accustomed to living under the intimidating and isolating influence of authoritarianism.
For the unauthorized immigrant, the fear of U.S. law enforcement may be rooted in post-colonial tension, but is greatly exacerbated by the treacherous experience of crossing the border. In 2008 I spent “El Dia de los Muertos” or “The Day of the Dead” in the Mexican border town of Anapra, outside of Ciudad Juarez. To memorialize the lives lost in crossing and advocate for humane reform of US border patrol, the El Paso archdiocese hosts a mass at the border, with cardboard tombstones erected on the Mexican side to symbolize the thousands of lives lost along the journey. Unbeknownst to me at the time, this mass has received national attention in recent history (“A Mass for Border Crossers,” 2004). Death by drowning, automobile accident, homicide, and environmental impacts (such as dehydration in the dessert) are risks for those crossing the border (Border-Crossing Deaths,” 2006). Those without adequate resources to cover the costs of crossing may be forced into prostitution or other black market activities such as labor trafficking along the way or upon arrival to the U.S. Some survivors recall seeing corpses along their journey. Given U.S. policy, the U.S. Homeland Security is conceived of as an abusive entity, particularly by the family members of those who have lost their lives in effort to escape poverty.

For those who do arrive to the U.S., police brutality towards immigrant communities can isolate Hispanic victims from legal resources. For example, in 2006, Sheriff Jones of Butler County in Ohio gained widespread attention for using controversial witch-hunt tactics to intimidate unauthorized persons, such as placing large public signs outside of businesses suspected of employing them, encouraging locals to boycott such businesses, threatening to raid businesses, and publicizing the costs of incarceration for unauthorized immigrants (Ludden, 2006). Police brutality
has served as a method of maintaining subordination of poor Hispanics to privileged Americans. This sort of intimidation directly discourages immigrants, authorized or not, from reporting crime, seeking police assistance, and ultimately exercising their basic human rights.

On the federal law enforcement level, Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) raids of Ohio employers and resulting mass arrests across the country makes a heavy impact on the perception of law enforcement within the Hispanic immigrant community (Hopkins, 2007). This phenomenon is related to that of mass incarceration, an important issue black feminists have used to explain why the law enforcement approach fails in poor urban African American communities whose growth and development are felt to be stunted by disproportionate rates of incarceration amongst all individuals and particularly amongst men. Richie (2005) argues that mass incarceration takes men away from the families they otherwise could support, contributing significantly to a widespread mistrust of police in poor communities of color, deterring victims from reporting domestic violence to local authorities. For the unauthorized Hispanic immigrant female victim, reporting domestic violence can easily lead to deportation of the abuser. My experience at the domestic violence shelter and the results of the focus group (see chapter 2) indicates that when women report domestic violence, they clearly want the violence to stop, but not necessarily the relationship. While it is possible for U.S. citizens to use law enforcement in this way, unauthorized Hispanic immigrant women who use law enforcement risk the costly loss of their partner to deportation, as illustrated by the following anecdote:

Cándida, a 35-year-old Mexican with a fourth grade education, had been arguing
with her partner Jorge, a 29-year-old Honduran, and he slapped her on the face twice… This time she dialed 911. The police came so quickly that she had not even put down the receiver when they were already at the door, she said. The police took the startled Jorge – with no more clothes than a pair of old shorts and flip-flops – and, to her surprise, turned him over to immigration officials because he is undocumented, and he was deported a day later. Cándida, who has documents, ended up making all the arrangements for him to return within twenty-four hours to the United States. She explained: ‘I didn’t know that’s what they were going to do. I wouldn’t have called because it was very expensive to bring him back.’ (Bejarano and Menjivar, 2010, p. 135)

The magnitude of this risk and the impact it has on underreporting within the Hispanic community cannot be underestimated. Cándida was fortunate in that her authorized status gave her the political power and financial means to have options. Many families lack these resources, resulting in severe limitations upon their choices. Says Orloff, “While there are multiple systemic barriers that prevent immigrant women from reporting domestic violence and accessing services; the fear of deportation is the primary barrier” (Orloff et. al, 2006).

**Governmental Responses to Institutional Barriers**

While the county I was working in, Athens, had a relatively small Hispanic population, my survey of shelters and professionals spanning Ohio (see Chapter 4), reveals that the majority of shelters statewide are likewise ill-equipped to respond to our state’s rapidly changing demographics despite higher numbers of Hispanics in other parts of the state (“Ohio Hispanic or Latino Origin Population Percentage”, n.d.).
Many of these women are citizens or legal residents, and those who are unauthorized are guaranteed protection from domestic violence and corresponding services under the Violence Against Women Act (VAWA). These women have the constitutional right to be safe, as citizenship is not a precursor to the guarantees of “life, liberty and property”. Most all government-funded agencies are accountable to some degree for the protection of vulnerable people; it is common knowledge in Ohio that all social service agency workers are mandated by law to report any child and elder abuse they become aware of on the job (“Mandatory Reporters of Child Abuse”, n.d., “Statistics/Data”, n.d.). Those who work in the field of public health and safety are obligated to protect this right for their clients, making it necessary that healthcare professionals, legal professionals, government officials, and community activists become cognizant of the unique legal and cultural needs of this vulnerable population.

Professional legal services were a major gain made by the battered women’s movement and have been at the forefront of intervention since the seventies. (Roberts, 2002). Criminalization of domestic violence made it clear that what was once conceived of as a family problem was to be recognized for the societal problem it truly is. This was accomplished largely through a mandatory arrest policy for reports of domestic violence, and easy access to restraining orders for victims. (Kelly, 2003). Federal funding has assisted women with the prosecution of abusers by providing low cost or free legal assistance, in addition to programming for victim’s assistance services and community violence prevention which have been doled out through a diversity of grants (“U.S. DOJ: Office of Violence Against Women,” n.d.). In the past decade, unauthorized immigrant women gained greater access to education, resources,
and legal aid through VAWA, which was enacted in 1994. Sponsored by then-senator Joe Biden, this act was a major victory for grassroots activists who had pushed for more comprehensive legislation since the early eighties. This act strengthened court protections for women by putting forth a rape shield law, providing mandatory restitution for offenders, and civil redress. It also had provisions specifically in place to meet the needs of immigrant women. (“Factsheet: The Violence Against Women Act,” n.d.). The act expired in 2011 and was not reauthorized in 2012. Different versions of the provisions were renewed in the House and Congress, with the Republican led House favoring a version that provided less support to unauthorized immigrants and LGBT victims, but in March of 2013 the act was finally renewed. Although funding was reduced by 17%, most provisions remain in place. (Helderman, 2013). In the year 2000, women gained the right to self-petition for temporary legal status through the aforementioned U Visa, which is filed through the VAWA unit of the Citizenship and Immigration services (USCIS), formerly known as the INS. The U Visa, introduced in 2000, extends temporary legal status (4 years) and the right to work to immigrant victims of violent crime who agree to help with the prosecution of the crime. During that time, holders may apply for a green card, or permanent residential status. This can be granted to both men and women; qualifying crimes include domestic violence but are much broader in scope (“ Victims of Criminal Activity,” n.d.). Only 10,000 U Visas are issued annually; for the first 8 years the U Visa was severely underutilized due largely to administrative delays; in 2008 only 50 were approved, but as of February 2013 the USCIS is inundated, having received 11,000 requests by February but only approved by Congress to grant 10,000 this year.
(Najera, 2013). This allows people who would otherwise not report domestic violence due to their unauthorized status an incentive to report crimes. To qualify, the victim must demonstrate “1) that she (or he) suffered substantial physical or mental abuse consequent to the crime, 2) that she (or he) possesses information about the crime, and, most importantly, 3) that she (or he) is being, has been or is likely to be helpful in the investigation or prosecution of the crime.” (“Questions and Answers,” n.d.)

Essentially, VAWA has helped the U.S. to better comply with its own Civil Rights guarantees, in this case particularly Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, which prohibits discrimination on the basis of race, color, and national origin in programs and activities receiving federal financial assistance. As President John F. Kennedy said in 1963:

> Simple justice requires that public funds, to which all taxpayers of all races [colors, and national origins] contribute, not be spent in any fashion which encourages, entrenches, subsidizes or results in racial [color or national origin] discrimination. (“Overview of Title VI,” n.d.)

Federal guidelines state that agencies receiving federal funding who do not make their services accessible to those with limited English proficiency are not in compliance with this act, and can thus have their funding revoked or be reported to the US Department of Justice for review (“Policy Guidance on the Prohibition of National Origin Discrimination,” 2003).
Publicly Funded Educational Resources for Domestic Violence Intervention

The good news is that educational resources are abundant for service providers and law enforcement personnel, made accessible through free grant-funded manuals and also through trainings that many mainstream shelters participate in. Within most legal aid departments, there is knowledge of and assistance with seeking protection through the Violence Against Women Act, which includes the U Visa. Legal aid programs have developed a multitude of resources to make it easy to understand and complete the application not only for advocates but for victims themselves; for example, Stanford Law School partnered with a local nonprofit agency to publish a particularly accessible free e-manual for legal advocates (“Getting a U Visa,” n.d.) and Legal Momentum’s e-manual is tailored toward law enforcement (Orloff et. al, 2012).

Since the late nineties, several national organizations have joined the ranks of Legal Momentum in taking a lead on educating and training legal professionals, social service providers and public health and safety professionals to recognize and respond to the unique barriers faced by immigrant women. For example, the “National Latino Alliance for the Elimination of Domestic Violence”, ALIANZA for short, has created culturally and linguistically appropriate resources for shelter social service providers and performs trainings for social service providers (www.alianza.org). Within Ohio, agencies such as the Alliance for Immigrant Women and the Ohio Hispanic Coalition have created resources and begun to organize the local communities around the issue.
Educational materials such as Orloff and Little’s (1999) manual *Somewhere to Turn: Making Domestic Violence Services Accessible to Battered Immigrant Women* were accessible and had been created to help domestic violence professionals and activists in their objective to better serve the Hispanic population. This thorough manual consists of detailed information on the distinct domestic violence dynamics immigrants experience, cultural competency training, cross-cultural interviewing, adapted shelter protocols, and relevant legislation. Where this manual provides guidance for adapting the existing institutions to meet the needs of the unauthorized Hispanic immigrant woman population, it is “top down,” intended for professionals who will treat unauthorized Hispanic immigrant women as clients. While it is important that existing professionals become culturally competent, it is equally if not more important, in my opinion, that Hispanic immigrant (authorized and unauthorized) women are active in the process. Konrad’s (2006) more recently developed manual is “bottom up,” serving as a resource for women for organizing at the grassroots level. This manual was funded by the Violence Against Women Act (VAWA). It is entitled *Domestic Violence: The Silent War Against Women: A Training Manual for Activists, Advocates and Latina Organizers.* This manual is premised on the belief that “There are laws and resources in this country to protect women against violent attacks…despite the availability of these resources, the social service providers in the United States are not providing competent services to battered immigrant women. This is our business. We need to change that situation.” (Konrad, p. 7). It goes on to list various ways that providers have responded inappropriately or ineffectively to immigrant women, such as police asking the children to translate the
details of the abuse, social service providers requesting proof of citizenship, police
being uninformed about the Violence Against Women Act, hospitals failing to provide
necessary referrals, etc. It then provides step by step guidance for forming a
Community Response Model, stating “Sometimes our community members aren’t
informed or don’t understand what domestic violence is because we have been
suffering in silence, as if it were a private matter. But experience shows that domestic
violence is a matter for the whole community.” (Konrad, p. 27) It also provides
guidelines for building a political campaign, training materials Latina community
advocates against domestic violence, details about rights, and guidelines for using
laws and benefits for victims of domestic violence and particularly immigrant women.

An example of increasing cultural competency for social service providers is
found in the manual and appears below in the form of the Poder y Control (Power and
Control) wheel, which is the Duluth Power & Control wheel adapted for the
immigrant population. When I initially began this project, it had been my hope to
revise shelter protocol and training materials to improve their cultural competency, but
the work has truly already been done, as exemplified in the manuals described above.
As you can see below, I would have been reinventing the wheel- quite literally- and
while I initially only found it translated into Spanish—which was clearly
insufficient—I have since found many adaptations for immigrant women and other
minority populations, such as victims of trafficking.
Figure 3. The Power and Control Wheel adapted for immigrants. This English version of the Power and Control Wheel is adapted with permission from the Duluth Model. It focuses on forms of abuse that are specific to immigrant women. Spanish translations are broadly available. Access at: http://www.futureswithoutviolence.org/content/features/detail/778/
Figure 4. Spanish Translation of the adapted Power and Control Wheel. This Spanish version of the Power and Control Wheel is adapted with permission from the Duluth Model. It focuses on forms of abuse that are specific to immigrant women. Spanish translations are broadly available. Access at: http://www.theduluthmodel.org/pdf/Poder-y-Control.pdf
Conclusions

Women have gained vast legal recourse and access to social assistance programs since the battered women’s movement of the seventies, and the 1994 Violence Against Women Act has been monumental to the development of resources specific to meet the needs of immigrant women. While the personal, institutional, and cultural concerns of immigrant women are complicated, intervention methods have become increasingly sophisticated in the aftermath of the civil rights movement. My survey of available services had a strong impact upon my work, changing the focus of my thesis from a question of adaptation to a question of utilization and efficacy. The question is not so much “How can we adapt shelter services to women?”, since the answer already lies in the many manuals and associated trainings that teach professionals, activists, and legal professionals how to do just that- but rather, “Given the multitude of resources available to adapt domestic violence services to unauthorized Hispanic immigrant women, why are these resources so underutilized? Does this shed any light on the high rates of domestic violence for all women, despite the profound increase of social and legal services over the past four decades?” In attempting to answer this question, I would like to take what I will call The Perilla Approach. Here, I seek to find not only the weaknesses but also the strengths of the Latino population; I listen to the voice of the Latina, and aim to be pragmatic first and progressive second. According to Perilla, “The community being the one that sets the agenda is a new idea. That has not usually been the case.” (ctd. in Garza, 2001)
Chapter Two

2. Literature Review

“You have the right to be safe,” was the mantra, the common refrain, the bumper sticker slogan of the Athens shelter. Countless times we said it, and I know that I said it with conviction each time. This was held as indisputable not only by those working at the shelter, but by nearly every woman I have encountered in my research, evidence that we all rely upon political theory in our daily lives, whether we are cognizant of it or not. My literature review is concerned with the origin of this right in Liberal Political Theory, the work that first and second wave feminists have done to extend this right to women, and the work that third wave feminists, including multicultural feminists, have done to extend this right to minority women. Feminists have also fought to protect womens’ right to privacy. The fundamental issue we run into with countering domestic violence and other issues affecting families is the tension existing between the right to safety and the right to privacy. In this chapter we will look at the origin of this tension and analyze its differential impact on women. In effort to bridge the gap between theory and practice, I will conclude this literature review by comparing leading feminist thought to the thoughts of Hispanic immigrant women (authorized and unauthorized) living in Ohio, which were collected in a focus group in Cincinnati.
Political Liberal Theory and Domestic Violence

When modern Americans think of rights, we typically think of the Constitution and the Bill of Rights, which guarantees “Life, Liberty, and the Pursuit of Happiness.” This phrase and much American revolutionary thought is most often traced back to the “Father of Classical Liberalism”, English philosopher John Locke. Kelly (2003) describes liberalism as a political philosophy that espouses the belief in equality and liberty for all mankind, rejecting the notion of the divine right of the monarch. The seventeenth-century English theory of society stated that monarchical political power was indistinguishable from paternal power, which was legitimated by the biblical story of Adam and Eve. Locke and other Enlightenment Thinkers countered this by designating the family as a nonpolitical unit so that natural, individual liberties could be protected from government intrusion. Locke argued that the populace, rather than divine or hereditary right, must legitimize the government. In other words, individuals are given by God the rationality required to govern themselves and consent to a government that is limited as compared to the absolute powers of the monarchy. On Locke’s account, the government exists to protect private property from outsiders, which requires that individuals sacrifice their right to punish violators. Men and women have autonomous control over their private property, and may oversee their children however they wish, who are subject to them in youth as they have not yet gained the rationality that comes with adulthood and legitimates self-government. Lockeian theory holds that all humans have the individual right to freedom, yet patriarchy within the family is maintained as it is assumed that the marriage contract is
theoretically voluntary, as all women would naturally wish to gain protection and material resources by following an “abler and stronger” husband. (“Classical Liberalism”, n.d., Kelly, 2003). Building upon the Aristotilean conception of the home (oikos) and the city (polis), woman’s place was seen to be “naturally” in the home, which later came to be known as the private sphere, while men’s place was naturally in the city, which later came to be known as the public sphere (DeCew, 2002).

Lockean theory was progressive for its times and was even considered anti-patriarchal given that it rejected the monarchical patriarch. However, Kelly (2003) holds that Western feminists have deconstructed liberalism and taken issue with Lockean theory because the protection of the private family from public intervention can endanger women by concealing abuse and other oppressions that stem from the concentration of power (DeCew, 2002). While liberal political theory rested on the assumption that men and women were naturally endowed for two separate spheres, Okin (1989) and feminists in general have since challenged this theory as being socially constructed, rather than biologically determined. Liberal feminism has its origins in challenging the assumption that women’s place is in the home. The seminal work “The Feminine Mystique” by Betty Freidan (1963) questioned the notion that women’s place is the home. This work is often attributed with launching the second wave of feminism.

Freidan and her Western feminist contemporaries, including Kelly (2003) argue that Locke’s assumptions about the family are flawed because: 1. It presumes that women are freely consenting to the marriage contract, and 2. It assumes that the family is inherently harmonious. Lockean theory holds that all humans have the
individual right to freedom, yet patriarchy within the family is maintained as it is assumed that the marriage contract was theoretically voluntary, as all women would naturally wish to gain protection and material resources by following an “abler and stronger” husband. In contrast, the common feminist position is that women in reality have long been “forced” by all practical purposes either to enter or stay in the marriage contract due to lack of economic alternatives and societal pressures. Moreover, at the time of Locke women rarely were legally entitled to divorce. So while Locke does excise a remedy for domestic violence by limiting the paternal power of the husband in one respect, as only government holds the right to life and death, in reality the exit options were extremely limited for women. Secondly, Lockean theory rests on the assumption that families are naturally peaceful and would therefore not require governmental intrusion to protect one family member from another. Locke does not acknowledge that this is an ideal for most and a reality for few. Clearly, family members’ interests will inevitably conflict. Hence, a fundamental flaw of Lockean society is that the strict protection of the right to privacy trumps the protection of the individual right to safety in incidences of interfamilial conflict (Kelly, 2003).

My research (see chapter 4) shows that Kelly’s critique of Locke holds true for unauthorized Hispanic female immigrants especially, whose options for exit and life choices in general are severely hindered by their sociopolitical status in the United States. Beyond Kelly’s critique, postcolonial feminists teach us that constructs of Western society, including the construct of private family and punitive state, and the strict delineation between, have often been imposed but rarely accepted by indigenous peoples. Multicultural feminists of the third wave describe the ways in which minority
women in the US continue to be marginalized by this arrangement. So, we will begin with Western feminism’s critique of liberalism and then progress into multicultural feminism’s critique of Western feminism.

**Western Feminist Theory & Domestic Violence**

Liberal Western feminists have attempted to deconstruct the concepts of public and private and rebuild them in a way that protects the family from government intrusion while also protecting women and children from abuse. We will now review three different reconceptualizations of public and private and then consider these theories in light of the unauthorized Hispanic immigrant woman.

Siegel (1996) places domestic violence in its modern historical context, explaining that common law in the United States originally upheld the right of “marital chastisement”, which stated that man had a prerogative to beat his wife just as his children, provided it not result in permanent injury. However, by the year 1870, chastisement doctrine was repudiated in most states within the U.S., yet anti-chastisement was inconsistently enforced:

“Judges no longer insisted that a husband had the legal prerogative to beat his wife; instead, they often asserted that the legal system should not interfere in cases of wife beating, in order to protect the privacy of the marriage relationship and to promote domestic harmony. Judges most often invoked considerations of martial privacy when contemplating the prosecution of middle-and upper-class men for wife beating (Siegel, 1996, p. 2120)

Thus, racial and gender inequities were often reinforced at the same time that chastisement law was challenged, which was typical for legal progress at that time. In the early 20th century, “first wave feminists”, a group that grew out of the abolition and temperance movements, would continue to pursue further formal rights for
women, particularly suffrage. While one camp of women was mostly concerned with political equality, another camp was concerned with the morality of society. The two camps worked together, arguing that suffrage for women was necessary to protect children and correct social ills (Ruttum, 2009). Siegel (1996) portrays these activists as well-meaning but misguided, as they blamed the social ill of domestic violence on uncivilized culture, alcohol abuse, or both. Statistics from this period indicated that “wife beating” (p. 2118) was most often prosecuted among the “dangerous classes” (p. 2139) of immigrant and African American men. Suffragists thus appealed to the racist and classist sympathies that were common among the middle class in the industrial era, arguing that the right to vote would enable them to correct the crudeness of the poor minority classes. On the ground level, they formed community education services in low-income immigrant communities with the intention to instill morals.

Ultimately, first wave feminists made huge strides toward formal political equality, but colluded in the concealment of the root causes of family violence. This treatment of domestic violence as a private family matter for the middle and elite classes and a social ill only among poor minorities would remain common for another century. While great gains would be made in the 1970s battered women’s movement (Roberts, 2002), my research findings show that judgment of immigrant culture remains common among mainstream domestic violence social service providers today (see chapter 4), and privacy concerns continue to prevent women from realizing the right to safety.
In the post-WWII era, Gelles (1980) explains that domestic violence continued to be treated as a private matter with social behaviorists and psychologists forming various theories about the conditions that would produce deviation in abusers. It was therefore considered to be very rare. Psychological theories surrounding masochism were likewise explored for battered women who remained in relationships despite the increasing availability of divorce. By treating domestic violence as the result of mental illness in men who batter and women who “stay”, it remained an individual issue and a deviant issue rather than a societal issue. By vilifying the batterer, the systemic forms of oppression and violence could be conveniently sidestepped and the incidence of domestic violence was mistakenly assumed to be infrequent.

According to the analysis of Krokolee and Sorenson (2006), the second wave of feminism coincided with the civil rights movement, growing out of consciousness raising groups held by female civil rights activists. Also known as “Women’s Liberation”, this movement is considered to have been a backlash to the return to domesticity following World War II. Where first wave feminists focused largely on political rights, second wave feminists fought against cultural discrimination both in the home and workplace, united to varying degrees by the assertion that “the personal is political”. “The personal is political” became an important phrase and slogan of the movement, originally the title of an essay defending “consciousness raising” groups as a form of legitimate political empowerment rather than just group therapy. “Political” is broadly defined here as a matter of power relationships (Smith, 2012). Reflecting on Kelly (2003), the protection of individualism is considered a defining feature of the classical liberal tenets upon which Western society has been built. It is often traced to
Lockean theory, which fiercely defended the boundaries between the private family and the public state in order to protect the natural rights of individuals from the overreach of government, yet has failed to protect vulnerable family members. Feminists generally argue that this ideology of the autonomous family simply displaced paternal power from the monarch to the husband, preventing women from exercising their rights in an equal and natural fashion. Thus, modern feminists hold that domestic violence is not a private family matter resulting from deviant or masochistic tendencies in individuals, but a societal problem stemming from patriarchy, and to varying degrees, from other sweeping forms of oppression. Feminist theory thus rethinks boundaries between the private sphere of the family and the public sphere of the state to address the ways that women have been disadvantaged by this arrangement and have not realized their natural rights. I will explore responses to this tension in work Kelly describes as liberal, radical and conservative feminism. All three conceptualize the public/private dichotomy in distinct ways, yet are bonded by their desire for a more egalitarian society.

**Radical Feminist Theory**

On Kelly’s account of radical feminism (2003), women’s liberation relies on the complete dissolution of the public/private divide. In radical feminism, the boundaries between the institution of familial sphere and the public sphere are problematic. It is premised on the belief that male patriarchy is the original and universal form of oppression against women and is the prototype for all forms of oppression. Radical feminists seek to dismantle patriarchal society by eliminating hierarchy in both the private and public spheres. Radical feminism has often been
associated with Marxist feminism, which postulates that capitalism creates hierarchy and has served to subordinate the female class to the male class. Catherine MacKinnon’s work exemplifies the logic of radical feminism. MacKinnon is a seminal thinker and activist in the radical feminist movement, known best for her work against pornography. MacKinnon (1982) argued that the act of heterosexual intercourse is the basis of female oppression; her position is that all heterosexual sex is inherently violence. Her activism against pornography has urged the government to make illegal any public depictions of heterosexual sex which she believes serves to put women at a political disadvantage. Radical feminists work to eliminate any inequalities that could result from reproduction, with many urging communal childrearing with equal responsibility divided amongst women and men (MacKinnon) For radical feminists, domestic violence results from the gendered bias toward male supremacy within the private institution of the family, with women’s liberation from violence lying in the elimination of the institution.

While many feminists agree that the private divide has served to disadvantage women, radical feminism is criticized as going too far, with many feminists feeling that the existence of a private sphere is necessary to women and society at large. In the case of the unauthorized Hispanic female immigrant, I find that radical feminism’s singular explanation of domestic violence does not fully illuminate oppressions outside of gender-based oppression. Hispanic women are contending not only with patriarchy in the family, but with the oppressions of colonialism, racism, transnational migration, and poverty. While the radical feminist might argue that patriarchy is the root and the prototype for all of the above, it overlooks the fact that gender-based
oppression may very well not be the leading form of oppression in the life of a marginalized woman. Furthermore, the solution is incompatible with the Hispanic cultural tendency to centralize and protect the family from outside intrusion, or in other words, to uphold boundaries around a private sphere.

**Conservative Feminist Theory**

Although Baehr (2009) points out that few feminists in academia identify as conservative feminists, for pragmatic purposes I will coin as conservative those feminists whose work emphasizes the value of the role and qualities traditionally associated with the feminine gender. On Kelly’s (2003) account, conservative feminists stand in stark contrast to radical feminists, advocating for a clear division of public and private that allows women to fully exercise maternal instincts for the benefit of children and society at large. This group believes that maternal qualities are essential to the prosperity of society and that is within the private sphere that the critical values of care and nurture are developed. Conservative feminists hold that women can have the greatest impact on society through their role as mothers. Given the emphasis upon nurture, I would like to extend this discussion to the feminist ethic of care. Fineman (2005) argues that individual independence is a mythical notion produced by liberal political theory which emphasizes individualism. In reality, conservative strains of feminism generally agree that vulnerability and dependency are universally present conditions of all human beings. Although Fineman is an authority of feminist legal theory and does not identify as a conservative feminist, her argument is aligned with conservative feminists in that she believes that the work of nurturing others-care-often associated with the maternal role- is critical to the function of society
yet when left to the free market results in poverty, and thus requires governmental support: “Properly conceived,” says Fineman, “privacy as a principle of self-government allows the caretaker-dependent unit to flourish, supported and subsidized by the larger society without the imposition of conformity” (p. 307). A feminist ethic of care does not require that gender roles are adhered to in exercising care ethics, where Gilligan (1982) and “difference” feminists might hold that the role of caretaker is intended for women because women are equal to yet different from men. However, it is a fact that traditional gender roles long stipulated that women performed care. Thus, in valuing care we are better able to value women and establish institutions that value, support, and protect not only women but women’s work, which is crucial to the healthy function of society. Notable care feminist Virginia Held puts it bluntly, “There can be no justice without care…for without care no child would survive and there would be no persons to respect” (Held, 2006, p. 17). Elshtain (1981) believes it is the masculine competition and aggression of the public sphere and its lack of maternal values that create domestic violence; it also holds that children who are raised without proper maternal care are more likely to form attachment disorders which could lead them to abuse others. If society were to value and support the care that occurs within the private sphere, these values would translate into the public sphere, thus eliminating the violence of patriarchy and replacing it with an egalitarian norm. For conservative feminists, this is achieved not by eliminating the private sphere but by affording it the privilege, respect, and support it deserves and which society requires. In Fineman’s model, this shift must not be simply rhetorical, but replies heavily upon legislature providing material support from government subsidy while simultaneously limiting its
regulation upon the family; it is over care that the government must take an active interest in, while maintaining privacy and individuality.

Kelly’s (2003) summary of the critique of conservative feminism holds that it is essentialist and reductionist, prioritizing women’s value as fully engaged mothers over their value as fully engaged citizens. Criticisms also warn that moving toward conservative feminist values could be a move backwards. In analyzing these arguments with the cultural norms presented by Perilla and my experience with the Hispanic population, I conclude that the branches of conservative feminism discussed here are relatively compatible with Hispanic women. By forwarding an ethic of care, I see a political embrace of the positive aspects of marianismo which represents a paradigmatic rebuttal of the negative aspects of machismo, holding that with societal support, marianismo essentially could overcome machismo. Generally speaking, of the three common strains of Western feminism discussed in this section, conservative feminism may lend the most insight into the mentality of the Hispanic immigrant. My interpretation is that it meets many women where they are and affirms and redeems them, seeking to promote their values, and unlike the conventional models of domestic violence that are not suitable for Hispanic women because of their emphasis upon independence, a conservative feminist might be more likely to look at ways that women and society can overcome domestic violence without sacrificing the family.

**Liberal Feminist Theory**

While both radical feminism and conservative feminism offer explanation and solution for domestic violence, and radical feminism is most associated with the
consciousness raising groups that gave direct rise to the early battered women’s movement, liberal feminism is better associated with current conventional domestic violence intervention methodology. Certainly the strains of feminism are diverse and complex, but they hold in general agreement the fundamental notion that patriarchal gender subordination is socially constructed and therefore illegitimate. The family both produces and is produced by external gendered institutions, reinforcing gendered power pervasively. In Kelly’s analysis (2003), radical feminists look to deinstitutionalize society and conservative feminists seek to infuse all institutions with more maternal morality, liberal feminists assert that the liberal social contract is a valid way to protect the natural rights of both women and men, and thus hold the state and its institutions accountable for correcting sexual domination. Liberal feminists maintain the public/private divide, but hold that women are equal to men and must be afforded the same options and choices that men have to move freely between the established public and private spheres. Individual choice and rights being of paramount importance to the liberal feminist, women are armed with state-sponsored exit options should specific private arrangements no longer be in agreement with individual needs and desires. Because the standard response to domestic violence that grew out of the shelter movement was to develop institutional resources for victims of domestic violence that would make it feasible to exit a violent relationship (restraining orders, mandatory arrest, and access to publicly funded confidential shelter), I postulate that our current response to domestic violence is most compatible with liberal feminism. We learn something about both the potentials and limitations of liberalism from an examination of this relationship.
Okin’s (1989) theory of the family is representative of the modern liberal feminist critique of marriage. Here, marriage is seen as limiting equal opportunity for women, understood as equal options for autonomous exit. It is exemplary of the way that liberal feminist philosophy has impacted the development of policy and cultural norms over the past forty years. Okin argues that the institution of the family heightens the vulnerability of women by channeling them into undervalued, unpaid forms of labor which decreases the ability to exit an unhealthy marriage. Women are not only vulnerable by entering marriage, but the mere “anticipation of marriage” (p. 142) which puts women in a weak position. Due to the widely shared expectation that a woman will marry a man who will carry the financial weight of the household, she is socialized to choose a “pink collar” (p. 141) career. A “pink collar” career is described as a dead-end, underpaid profession that has a disproportionate number of women working in it. Because the demand for such positions is high and society undervalues their worth, the pay is low. While some women do opt for higher paying careers, they must contend with a workplace that is premised upon the assumption that its employees are childless or supported by housewives. The demands of travel, long hours, a lack of paternity leave, lack of built-in daycare, etc have the effect of undermining the working mother’s success, often pushing her into part-time positions or into choosing between domestic life and work life. Countless institutions discourage a woman from seeking full-time employment, such as schools which have hours inconsistent with a full-time work schedule. Working part-time, a woman lacks the benefits and salary necessary to be financially independent.
Furthermore, working or not, women are expected to engage in a disproportionate amount of domestic labor, which equates to gender-based exploitation. Women who demand that their husbands share the burden of housework do so at risk to their relationship. Frustrated with sexist workplace policies, husbands’ resistance to dividing household labor equally, and in many cases, the lack of upward mobility in a pink collar career, women are often cornered into housewifery or part-time positions. Having children often makes this choice beneficial for the family, due to the husband’s higher income and the money saved on childcare and housekeeping expenses. However, as an unpaid laborer, the woman becomes economically dependent upon her husband. He gains “asymmetrical power” (Okin, 1989, p. 167) through his superior access to external resources, which are more respected than care in an individualist, capitalist society. Because our society devalues and neglects to pay for family caretaking, the working man has the ability to exit the relationship with general ease at the expense of his caretaking wife. While middle and upper class women may receive alimony, poor women are made especially vulnerable by marriage. In summary of Okin (1989), it is the institutional division of labor between the sexes in the workplace and the family, not feminine nature, that puts more women in poverty and prevents women’ prosperity in politics and the professional world. Thus, she is a proponent of maintaining the division but empowering women to be equal players in both spheres, where a radical feminist would push to eliminate the division and a conservative feminist would push to infuse the public sphere with the morality of the private sphere. Okin emphasizes equal exit options as inherent to a just family and a just society: “Differing respective potentials for satisfactory withdrawal
from relationships is one of the major elements making marriage, in its typically
contemporary manifestations in the United States, a morally unacceptable relationship
of vulnerability” (p. 137). Specifically, Okin focuses upon using the institutional
divorce court, demanding that they acknowledge and react to the fact that women do
not surface from a marriage on equal terms. Women are disenfranchised by the
institution, making an equal division of property unjust. According to Okin at the year
of her writing (1989), the first year after the divorce, the standard of living for the
divorced man increases an average of forty-two percent while his ex-wife’s decreases
by seventy-three percent\textsuperscript{10}. Women are thus disempowered by the anticipation of
marriage, the realization of it, and ultimately by having kids and then attempting to
leave the marriage. In effect, Okin asserts that equal rights are dependent upon equal
abilities for men and women to establish independence. Because families are the
fundamental social institution, a just and equitable society is contingent upon this and
one serves to reinforce the other. Okin determines that for public policy and law to be
indiscriminate they must be based upon and accommodating of this theory.

Today, it is generally agreed that we are in the third wave of feminism, which
began in the 1990s. Where the second wave challenged the patriarchal effects of
liberalism, the third wave is a continuation of the work of the second wave yet a
challenge to the essentialism of the second wave. Third wave feminists note that
prominent second wave work was largely premised on a middle class Anglo prototype
of woman yet portrayed as “universal”. This project being very much a part of the
third wave, I will naturally now compare an outcome of liberal feminist reform for

\textsuperscript{10} This statistic from The Divorce Revolution by Weitzman in 1985, has been contested; other studies
in its aftermath found that women’s income decrease post-divorce may be closer to 33%
white women to unauthorized Hispanic women. Since the time this article was published in 1989, most studies indicate that the economic consequences of divorce remain greater for women, but the gap is closing (“Managing Finances After Divorce”, n.d.). The wage gap has recently cited been cited to be around 77% for white women compared to white men, with African American women making only 53% of what white men and make and Hispanic women making only 44% of what white men make (Adams, 2013). Unauthorized immigrant women suffer a “double wage disparity” on account of their immigration status and gender status, making 71% of what male unauthorized immigrants make (Garcia & Oakford, 2013). In addition, unauthorized immigrants do not qualify for most forms of public assistance that women at the Athens shelter utilized to get back on their feet. All in all, unauthorized women are likely to suffer high economic consequences should they separate from a partner, meaning Okin’s arguments of relevance to the unauthorized Hispanic female immigrant today. However, because liberal feminist reform resulted in political and legal solutions, there is often little to no direct benefit to unauthorized immigrants. For example, unauthorized women are less likely to work in a place that follows fair wage compensation or sexual harassment policies. They are not entitled to childcare vouchers or Medicaid. Given that many will be partnered with unauthorized male immigrants, they lack access to court-ordered child support, alimony, etc. Aside from entitlement, authorized women are also less likely to use state-based intervention as it is less compatible with their philosophical underpinnings. Where the Western feminist is informed by liberalism, the Hispanic immigrant is informed by post-colonialism. Hence, liberal feminist reform has not been particularly effective for unauthorized
immigrants because they do not fit the universal prototype upon which liberal feminism was built. Furthermore, the emphasis upon increased “exit options” in liberal feminism will not carry the same weight in the Latino culture, where collectivist values trump individualist values.

**Tensions Between Liberalism and Domestic Violence Intervention**

Kelly (2003) addresses the tension between protecting the privacy of the family as a unit from government intrusion and protecting the rights of individuals within the family. In the case of domestic violence, our philosophical underpinnings are at odds with the right to safety. Says Kelly, “Although great strides have been made in various areas, such as…shelter provisions…domestic violence has proven to be extremely resistant to countermeasures…domestic violence has been criminalized, but very low reporting levels, police and judicial indifference, and a pattern of blaming the victim all suggest that many people, including some victims, continue to see domestic violence as a private matter that should not be subject to public scrutiny or intervention” (p. 4). Domestic violence is found to be commonly underreported, with only one-quarter of assaults, one-fifth of rapes and one half of stalking reported to police (Tjaden & Thoennes 2000). Kelly asserts that common domestic violence intervention methods are overly-reliant upon legal intervention and do not challenge “the powerful social norms that tell victims that they should be able to restore peace in their families without bringing the force of law into their homes” (p. 2). Modern intervention efforts correct the superficial, immediate effects of domestic violence, rather than “our deep-seated conceptual assumptions about public and private boundaries” (p. 4).
Kelly acknowledges the gains made by liberal feminism within the sphere of domestic violence, while the liberal battered women’s movement has clearly increased the visibility of domestic violence, the opportunities for protection from domestic violence and the options for exit. However, in relying so heavily on legal interventions, the systemic, cultural roots of domestic violence have remained untouched. The overreliance upon legal intervention means that cultural prevention has not been achieved. To put it simply, legal methods can be too individualistic, and too little too late when it comes to violence. Furthermore, with the emphasis being upon the criminalization of domestic violence, many women feel that they have to choose between protecting themselves and protecting their families. While activists fought hard for public censorship, and clearly domestic violence should not be condoned, this censorship can have a stigmatizing effect that prevents women from reporting abuse in the first place, increasing isolation in some cases. To outsiders, the blame then becomes misplaced upon the victim, as people will ask “Why does she stay? Is she some kind of a self-masochist?” Thus, in overemphasizing legal remedies we can have the unintended consequence of undermining the agency of the victim and obscuring the systemic nature of this social ill. Says Kelly, “The individualizing effect of legal intervention operates to weaken the impact of feminist interpretations of domestic violence, which are marked by their emphasis upon the collective, institutional, and political elements of this type of violence” (p. 127).

While my experience and research is fairly consistent with Kelly’s assertion that “domestic violence has been extremely resistant to countermeasures”, I would disagree with the *extremely* part of this. It was common for clients to drop charges
against the abuser and sometimes avoid the police altogether. The most startling issue was that of recurring episodes of victimization as noted through the anecdotes women shared and returns to shelter. While the amount of underreporting due to privacy concerns varies from about 35%-70% depending on the source, it is clear that domestic violence is chronically underreported and that privacy concerns are a leading reason for this. However, statistics hold that intimate partner violence decreased 60% from 1994 to 2010 (Catalano, 2012, figure 1). While Kelly does not deny that progress has been made, her analysis underplays the progress, finding far more wrong with our current system than right with it. She uses absolute statistics only to make her points, and does not look at relative statistics, which reveal more optimism. My experience and research agrees with Kelly’s rationale for underreporting, yet I find her description of the problem to be overly reliant upon outdated absolute statistics which misleads the reader to an extent. Despite the statistical discrepancy, I find her theoretical arguments will compel the movement forward, and her concerns are of strong relevance to the unauthorized Hispanic immigrant, who does truly experience greater resistance with countermeasures. Furthermore, the emphasis upon collectivism within Hispanic culture makes Kelly’s arguments about overreliance on the legal, individualistic approach particularly pertinent to this population.

**Multicultural Feminist Theory**

Clearly there is agreement among feminists that progress must be made to allow women to more fully realize their natural rights, yet there is great disagreement on how to best achieve this. Says Kelly, “The differences among feminist theorists concerning the public/private split can be traced to a fundamental disagreement among
them regarding the aspect of women’s lives most in need of liberation. Is it women as mothers, women as individuals, women as sex objects?” (p. 49) In this context, it is important to add: women as postcolonial subjects? Since the civil rights movement, much critical feminist thought has arisen from communities where women suffer not only from gender discrimination but a multiplicity of discriminations, with race, class, and national origin being of particular relevance to this inquiry. Crenshaw (1994) argues that gender inequality is not only not the singular nor the primary cause of injustice and violence in the lives of marginalized women. The numerous injustices are central to the work that has been done by multiracial and multicultural feminists, many of whom look at the ways that prominent liberal feminism has been informed by privileges of race and class, given that most feminist political thought was the product of middle class women of American and Western European nationalities. This “hegemonic feminism” took an individual-rights approach to equality of the sexes, where the third wave is interested in a justice-based approach to social change (Thompson, 2002, p. 337).

Jane Flax explains that hegemonic feminist ideology is premised on a woman who is a “self-sufficient individual adult”, as privileged feminists lacked the perspective of the subaltern:

The 'native female,' the object of colonialism and racism, is excluded because, in Flax's terms, white feminists have not "explored how our understanding of gender relations, self, and theory are partially constituted in and through experiences of living in a culture in which asymmetric race relations are a central organizing principle of society" (Flax in Nicholson, 1997, p. 289 ).

While the population we served at the shelter was largely Caucasian like the professional and part time staff who worked there, there was in general a divide
between staff and client in terms of socioeconomic status, with staff being largely college educated and middle class and client being largely of low levels of educational attainment and generally underemployed. My experience with interviewing domestic violence professionals who work with Hispanic immigrants or in communities which underserve immigrants mirrored this trend, although race and nationality also contributed to the divide. While my perception was that mainstream professionals generally gave their best efforts in earnest to their clients, our divide limited our understanding of the population, and therefore our abilities to adapt best practices to the population, with a general lack of self-awareness and discussion around said limitations. Although I did not conduct interviews on this matter, and we certainly were trained to understand that domestic violence does not discriminate along race or class lines, it was easy to fall into a pattern of seeing the issue as a personal issue for each victim given the individualistic way that each woman’s case plan was handled. Our training was color and class blind, which follows given the liberal feminist culture of the shelter. I will now present the reactions of several third wave feminists to this issue, all of whom point out different issues with liberal feminist practices.

Richie’s (2005) critique of the “anti-violence movement” reinforces this critique of hegemonic feminism in the context of domestic violence intervention (Richie 2005). A major feminist goal was to de-individualize domestic violence by emphasizing the empirical fact it can and does happen to anyone, and is thus a systemic social problem meriting a broad-based solution. While this was successful in raising consciousness and mobilizing government to allocate resources toward the social ill, it has had the dangerous side of effect of creating an “everywoman” (p. 53)
norm for domestic violence intervention. This norm eclipses the multiple oppressions of race and class which greatly complicate the anti-violence movement in minority communities. Richie urges for a rethinking of the law-enforcement approach, which “…parallels a broader apprehension about the expansion of state power in the lives of poor women of color in this country…while the anti-violence movement is working to improve arrest policies, everyday safety in communities of color is being threatened by more aggressive policing…our understanding of gender oppression must be broadened to include state-sanctioned abuse and mistreatment of women.” (p. 54) Richie’s belief is that the “persistent whiteness” (p. 55) of the leadership within the anti-violence movement is preventing its full functioning as a social justice movement.

In “Feminism vs. Multiculturalism,” Leti Volpp takes issue with the interactions between Western feminism and multicultural women. She bases this critique off an article by liberal feminist Susan Moller Okin entitled “Is Multiculturalism Bad for Women?” (Volpp, 2005). In this article Okin argues that because feminism and multiculturalism are both seen to be progressive, that they are often presumed to be compatible. However, she gives examples of cultural practices, such as clitoridectomy and polygamy, which violate a woman’s right to “self-respect” and are born of patriarchy. Okin argues that our legal permission of group rights has been intended to help protect cultures in the U.S. from being forced to assimilate, yet providing for group rights has permitted some minority cultures to preserve traditions that may not be in the best interests of the females within those cultures, even if it benefits the men. Volpp’s analysis of Western feminist reaction such as this create a dichotomy of “feminism vs. multiculturalism” which implies that minority cultures are
inherently more prone to patriarchal violence than Western liberal cultures. In the United States, domestic violence is not seen to be systemic product of culture, but rather a deviant behavior. Volpp argues that minority cultures are no different. For example, sati, or wife burning, is often considered in the Western world to be the cultural equivalent to divorce in India, then cites postcolonial feminist Uma Narayan’s statement that death by domestic violence in the U.S. is numerically as significant a social problem as dowry murders in India. A related anecdote is shared in an article by Shamita Das Dasgupta, who writes,

Once, I had gone to a New Jersey police station to pick up a South Asian battered woman who had been turned out of her home by her husband. She was a frightened young woman who did not speak much English and had already spent half a night on the streets in her nightgown. The two police officers had been extremely solicitous and had provided her with food and a warm jacket. When I entered the station, however, they let loose a tirade about my “culture” (I too, am a South Asian woman) and the approval of battering in it. Although sorely tempted, I judiciously decided to refrain from reminding them of the statistics on the batterings, rapes, and murders of American women by their intimate partners. I wondered whether the police officers would have as easily held the U.S. culture responsible for these atrocities against women! (Dasgupta, 2005, p. 61)

Positioning multiculturalism against feminism also implies that the culture of women in developing nations is static and situates minority women as victims rather than agents in their own lives. Additionally, by placing focus on cultural forms of oppression against women, the universal, highly common and highly relevant oppression of poverty is obscured by the sexier, more sensational issues of sati, female genital mutilation, etc. These issues receive more interest than the needs that are more severe, such as access to clean water or transportation, simply because they are “…most easily identifiable as concerns to relatively privileged women in the West” (p. 44). This is reminiscent of my concerns around the disproportionate attention received
by sex trafficking when I was working at the domestic violence shelter; although my
experience with both American and immigrants indicates that the prevalence of
domestic violence far eclipses the prevalence of sex trafficking, sex trafficking is a
more easily identifiable and profitable topic for Western media; it also distances the
typical consumer from the systemic issues by focusing on a problem that is perceived
as exotic, as other. Volpp concludes by urging feminists of privilege to examine “the
missionary impulse to save immigrant and Third World women”, asserting that “A
missionary feminist effort assuming West is Best triggers a defensive reaction from
members of criticized communities and thus plays into the hands of those who choose
to defend sex-subordinating behavior in the name of cultural nationalism….” (p. 46)
She urges Western feminists to remember their own cultures’ great struggles with
patriarchal violence against women, to see that our culture’s racism and
transnationalism are implicated in the oppression of minority communities, and to
seek to learn from women of other cultures who also confront such violence, rather
than seeking to condemn. “We need to learn to see and challenge the multiple,
overlapping, and discrete oppressions that occur both within and across white/Western
and Third World/nonwhite communities” says Volpp (p. 47). As we consider the
struggle of the unauthorized Hispanic immigrant woman, it is important to remember
that patriarchy as a universal affects us all, yet manifests itself differently from one
culture to another.

The original question I had around multiculturalism and domestic violence
was, “How can domestic violence professionals empower ethnic minority women
without subordinating their cultures?” As I gained perspective from multicultural
feminists, I questioned the question. Why did I feel that the establishment leadership, namely mainstream white, middle class women, are responsible for empowering minority women? Can we truly empower them given the historical and present power dynamics that exist between us? Is it right or is it wrong to try? The answer, I believe, lies in re-envisioning the client/provider relationship and corresponding power dynamic.

The Reality: The Voices of the Women

On that note, notable feminist thinker and critical race scholar bell hooks (1989) has long urged feminists to acknowledge their differences and to examine their projects with criteria that is conscious of racial and class privileges. Just as Volpp asks white/Western feminists to ask how they might be implicated in discrimination against nonwhite women (Volpp, 2005), hooks asks feminists to refrain from work that puts them in domination over other women. Says hooks, “even if perceived ‘authorities’ writing about a group to which they do not belong and/or over which they yield power, are progressive, caring, and right-on in every way, as long as their authority is constituted by either the absence of the individuals whose experiences they seek to address, or the dismissal of those voices as unimportant, the subject-object dichotomy is maintained and domination is enforced” (hooks 1989, p.3).

Through the course of conducting my literature review and doing my research, while simultaneously volunteering with the migrant worker population, I became increasingly conscious of the impact of my white middle class feminist identity upon my research and my role as a social service provider to minority populations. While
my positioning clearly presents limitations and challenges, which will be discussed in chapter four, it is important to note that I was initially interested in interviewing Hispanic women firsthand, yet chose not to pursue it given the complexities of gaining Institutional Review Board approval to work with vulnerable subjects. I instead sought secondary access to the voices of immigrant women living in Ohio. For months I was unable to find such information, but was fortunate that through one of my in depth interviews with a program coordinator I gained access to the 24 page transcript and summary of a recent focus group with Hispanic women that had been conducted locally. This was hosted by the Alliance for Immigrant Women in Cincinnati, formerly known as the Alliance for Battered and Abused Immigrant Women. Eight Hispanic women participated in the focus group, which was held at the social service agency Su Casa in Cincinnati. The women were from Mexico, Guatemala, Colombia, and Cuba and had been living in the U.S. from 4 months to 6 years, with the average length of time being 3.5 years. It was not asked whether the women were authorized or unauthorized, but context clues indicate that some were authorized and others were not. Questions and discussion occurred in Spanish with an interpreter present. The purpose of the group was to hear the women’ understanding of domestic violence, their experience of it, and their recommendations as to what should be done about it locally, and to gauge their interest in being involved in local efforts. To protect participants’ anonymity, names were omitted from the transcript that was provided to me, and thus they are emitted from this section.

• Who has helped you to adjust to the change of coming to the US?
• Who were the American people who helped you?
• What does “domestic violence” mean to you?
• A woman that is abused in your country, what happens?
Several themes have emerged from my analysis of the focus group content, which are reviewed below. It is important to note that while patterns did emerge, there was rarely consensus on an issue. Most topics were disagreed upon by at least one person despite the fact that the group was small, and each person present did not comment on each question. This focus group hits heavily on the “personal barriers” that Dasgupta describes (see chapter two).

FOCUS GROUP THEME #1: VICTIMS FEEL SILENT, RESIGNED

“Me for example, my husband, I never had problems with my husband, but I have seen other people, they do have a lot of problems. Sometimes I would talk to them and I would say something to them, but you know, they prefer to stay there and take it like that, the mistreatment and everything.”

“You know, it depends on the women. Cause there can be women who can be abused for ten years and you just don’t have what it takes to talk about it.”

“And, you know, the difficult thing is that, well, I don’t have this problem but, I think it’s, you need be the volunteer to leave, because, you know, I’m not going to do that to my partner, I don’t talk to anybody, I’m just gonna take it, so, how am I gonna know, how am I gonna leave if I don’t talk, that is the barrier.”

This focus group theme reflects both the cultural norm of family loyalty described by Perilla (1999) as well as the overarching hesitation of victims in the US to sacrifice privacy. Kelly’s (2003) work anticipates this privacy concern. My
interpretation of the focus group manuscript is that Hispanic female immigrants believe that tolerating abuse is problematic yet common. These statements are consistent with what I have found in my firsthand research: Hispanic female immigrants are not hesitant to access general services such as medical services, but they are hesitant to utilize shelter services and any services specifically relating to domestic violence. It can be inferred from these comments that an element of shame exists around domestic violence, given that the women in the focus group are explicitly careful to point out that they do not have such a “problem”. However, as acknowledged in the second quote, there are rarely absolutes in any culture; most human behavior is subject not only to cultural and societal influences but also personality. While most shelters do provide confidential location, the logistics of using a shelter mean it would be difficult if not impossible to do so without disclosing the abuse to numerous parties, not only to shelter employees but close confidants, those involved in a woman’s daily life, and one’s children. Entering shelter means overcoming denial and letting go of shame. This focus group indicates that the Hispanic immigrant woman may experience greater internal and possibly cultural barriers to doing so, which is also reflected in our next theme.

On a related note, when women in this group were asked who had helped them to adapt to the U.S., they mentioned a clinic, a church, family members, a Hispanic nonprofit agency, and their children’s teachers. None mentioned working with domestic violence advocates or police in the focus group, even when incidences of domestic violence came up. It is important to note that these women turn to community resources, rather than state resources, in times of need.
FOCUS GROUP THEME #2: FRIENDS AND FAMILY ARE NOT ALWAYS SUPPORTIVE OF EXIT FROM ABUSIVE RELATIONSHIP

“Why is there no end to domestic violence? Because of family. The machismo of the family. They’re always going to turn around and say, ’stay with your husband, he’s your husband, you have to stay with him.’ That always happens, from the richest to the poorest, everyone, and that is the Hispanic family.”

“Unfortunately, talking from experience from other domestic violence groups that I’ve done, the Hispanic community, and I’m talking from Mexico to Cuba, it’s that stereotype of machismo, and family will be with him 100%. That’s the biggest problem with domestic violence.”

“But I got home, and she saw me full of blood (after defending myself from my husband’s violence) and my kids crying, telling her about it, and my mom said, she put my luggage in the man’s car, and she said “you married him, you go with him.”

“You know, they gave me the name of an animal, they called me an animal’s name because I would help my friend that had this same problem. My brother would laugh because I had the courage to defend myself, for me and for my kids. My kids need me. I don’t know how I found this courage to do what I’ve done, but you know, I go anywhere, I do anything.”

“I wanted to take a step to go forward, but you know, that person that I talk to make it go backwards,” so then you would say, “Why did I say it?”

One of the women had a contradictory experience with family:

“I’m gonna be a year separated from my husband. My parents have said to me, whatever you decide it’s okay with us. What we want for you is for you to be happy, for you to be okay. And then the family of my husband said the same thing.”

While machismo and centrality of family had previously been discussed, it is interesting to note that one participant calls the tolerance of domestic violence an issue of the “machismo of the family”. Where it is sometimes assumed that conservative religious forces are to blame, these participants cited family pressure on maintaining a marriage at all costs, rather than religious pressure to do so. This is of relevance to
unauthorized Hispanic immigrant women, who are young and, given the strenuous nature of border crossing, often arrive in the U.S. with other groups of young people rather than with their nuclear or extended families. It is implied that the family’s maintenance of macho norms equates to a tolerance of domestic violence, but if the family is less present in their new lives in the United States, immigrant women may have opportunity to form a support network that rejects machismo. We also see the emphasis upon children here, also referenced in the aforementioned resource Domestic Violence: The Silent War Against Women: A Training Manual for Activists, Advocates and Latina Organizers (Parras Conrad, 2006). When victims insist they must stay in the relationship for the sake of the children, Latina advocates of domestic violence are trained to point out and emphasize that it is for the kids’ safety and healthy development that they must change the situation. While it is abundantly clear that these women have a critical awareness of the forces of patriarchy in their lives, it also seems clear that familial/cultural pressure to keep the family together can create shame around seeking the types of domestic violence services that might split the family apart.

FOCUS GROUP THEME #3: VICTIMS FEEL THEY LACK SUFFICIENT RESOURCES TO BE ON THEIR OWN

“Maybe a lot of women stay because of the kids. How am I gonna take care of my kids?”

“The refugee homes (shelters) would say, come here, leave him, but when you leave the refugee home, where would you go? Back to him.”

“Sometimes you have your friendship, but b/c there’s so many people who live there, you just can’t find a way.”
These statements are supportive of the multicultural feminist assertion that multiple oppressions are experienced by women who fail to fit the mainstream, white middle class paradigm around which services were initially designed, especially those shelters that came into existence in Ohio in the seventies (Sokoloff, 2005). Low income immigrant women who may lack access to resources such as education, the right to work in the United States, the legal right to apply for subsidized housing, will clearly experience greater options to exit. Even if they do enter shelter, there are greater barriers to establishing economic dependency upon exit, as mentioned in the second quote, making a shelter designed for citizens largely incompatible with a non-citizens and especially an unauthorized immigrant. Although Hispanic culture is considered more community-oriented and a strong social network can be the greatest resource for those who have become connected in the U.S., immigrant women may find themselves isolated upon arrival, depending upon where they end up. For example, when I was teaching English in rural Meigs County, the majority of the migrant farmworkers were male, so the few young women working in the community lacked support from established women. In this case, their primary mentor was an American social worker who lived 45 minutes away. Even though Hispanic culture is often very community oriented and this sense of community can provide a framework to work against domestic violence, immigrant Hispanics, especially those who are unauthorized, sometimes don’t have access to a community because they are in an area with few fellow Hispanics, are recently arrived, or are in an area lacking Hispanics from their own country; for example an immigrant from an urban part of
Cuba may not have much in common with an immigrant from a rural part of Honduras. Lacking an established network of social support means many immigrants also lack a safety net for material support; as one woman above says “…there’s so many people who live there.” meaning that the friends who might otherwise offer her refuge are already living in overcrowded housing. This calls into question the practical efficacy of the empowerment model for Hispanic immigrants. Even if the psychological component of the model were to be realized with such a client, the likelihood that the material supports could come together is slim in relation to citizens, particularly those with an accessible social network. These statements are strongly supportive of Kelly’s arguments as women will often tend toward keeping the family together rather than turning to the law. Given the “individualizing effect” (Kelly, 2003, p. 127) of law enforcement, which is likely to remove the abuser from the home, the victim is likely to experience further depletion of her limited resources.

FOCUS GROUP THEME #4: HISPANIC COMMUNITY LACKS INFORMATION ABOUT LOCAL RESOURCES

“Like I commented early, there are a lot of women that because they’re ignorant, because they don’t know what violence is, or they don’t know what people are gonna say. I think they need more information about this…”

“There are Hispanic people that really don’t have channels, that don’t have cable, and they can’t see cable shows.”

“Even if someone wants to leave, you just don’t know where to go.”

The comments around this theme are reminiscent of the old adage “information is power”, and so I had originally focused on the lack of language accessible informational resources at domestic violence shelters. I learned that organizations such
as the Alliance for Immigrant Women, which organized the focus group, make brochures available online in numerous languages. Additionally, many shelters participate in cultural diversity training, even if it is only to satisfy a requirement, and through this exposure should gain broad access to informational materials. While my research proves that informational materials are abundant, it is clear that this information is not always reaching its intended clientele. Why is this? My experience from working in the nonprofit sector is that projects and day-to-day work are largely driven by funding mandates, and if reaching specific underserved populations is not a mandate of funding, it is unlikely that a nonprofit will divert resources accordingly.

The Athens shelter did little advertising beyond word of mouth, both due to operating on a low budget and being an established entity and having virtually no competition from other shelters within the county. Materials had not been translated into any other languages, given that the majority of the population served was English-speaking. Even if our materials had been translated linguistically, our services had not been translated culturally. My perception from working on the frontline was that our funding was dependent upon the number of nights women spent in shelter. While grants do exist through VAWA to better serve diverse clientele, in the Athens shelter there was never an emphasis upon diversity, only upon overall numbers and providing safe and competent services.

Although focus group attendants did not express fear of police, none mentioned the U Visa or T Visa, which indicates to me that they were likely not aware of the powerful legislation that exists to protect the unauthorized. My interpretation of this is that is due to a confluence of factors: a lack of outreach done by the federal
government to publicize VAWA’s protections, immigrants’ poor levels of information access, as well as a general lack of understanding around rights and dynamics of domestic violence in some parts of the immigrant population.

FOCUS GROUP THEME #5: BELIEF THAT ABUSE CAN BE BLAMED ON OR LINKED TO ALCOHOL USE

“For example in my country, there’s things, the men do hit their women, because they get drunk…”

“Me, when I came here, I was very happy with my husband, I didn’t have any problems…. I never had to go out to work. I don’t even know what is working in a factory…but it got to the point that my husband started drinking and drinking and drinking, until one point he would leave the house, he would be out for two or three days, he would come home, drinking, he would say a lot of bad words, and then it got worse, and then he gave me hits in the face, slaps in the face.”

“Because even though the men love their wives, because of the addiction and the problem that they have they make them be violence because they’re males and that make ‘em mean.”

Alcohol abuse and domestic violence have a long and contentious history in the United States. As mentioned in chapter two, during the temperance movement, alcoholism was held as a root cause of domestic violence, blinding activists to the systematic issues of patriarchy and the myriad sociopolitical oppressions discussed in chapter two (Siegel, 1996). Hence, this perspective has often been unpopular in mainstream discussions of domestic violence intervention. According to Bennett (1997) a focus on alcohol abuse is theoretically problematic in that it can eclipse these broader issues, and practically speaking, many men who abuse their partners do not abuse alcohol, and many who abuse alcohol do not commit domestic violence. As such, in conventional trainings for shelter workers, this correlation is dismissed as a myth. That said, this was one of the most prominent themes in the focus group, yet in
the summary that was put forward by the nonprofit, it was not cited as a survey theme. I find it highly problematic that the interpretation of the focus group was either filtered or censored by mainstream expectations. Clearly, Hispanic immigrants are interested in this issue. Also, while drug and alcohol abuse is not causal, studies commonly show that regular abuse is a risk factor (“Domestic Violence and Substance Abuse,” n.d). Dismissing their serious concerns is disrespectful and counterproductive. This is exemplary of how well-intended nonprofit employees operating under mainstream leadership may see their minority clients through a lens which distorts the understanding necessary to design effective services for the immigrant population.

FOCUS GROUP THEME #6: WOMEN INDICATE THAT THEY ENCOUNTERED DOMESTIC VIOLENCE LESS IN THEIR HOME COUNTRIES

“I come from a country where you don’t see a lot of violence. Cubans are very united. I really never met that violence. Since I got here I’m terrorized with everything that I hear and see.”

“It’s because in other countries it’s different. In my country, you cheat on me, and it’s goodbye, you’ll never see me again.”

“In Colombia there’s a lot of protection…They’re called the Comisarias de Familias (Family Police).”

While these comments work to dispel stereotypes about “underdeveloped” nations, they simultaneously stand in contrast to those made about Hispanic families condoning domestic violence. Clearly, the impact of Hispanic culture upon tolerance for domestic violence is a gray area given the heterogeneity of Latin America. These statements also support the statistic that domestic violence increases for immigrants after arrival to the United States given the stress and vulnerability inherent in their status as an unauthorized immigrants. As Volpp asserts, simply blaming “culture” and
assuming non-Western cultures to be oppressive in a black and white fashion is to have a shallow and hypocritical understanding of the issues relating (Volpp, 2005). In chapter four we will see from my firsthand research that some frontline shelter workers feel that culture is a legitimate rationale and even a primary reason for Hispanic immigrant women’ underutilization of services. We must work with humility to see through and beyond stereotypes and biases if we ever wish to work in healthy, ethical, and mutually beneficial relationship to immigrant women.

FOCUS GROUP THEME #7: WOMEN ARE INTERESTED IN SERVICES FOR ABUSERS

"...do you have something that you can get the men together? Maybe if you had 1, 2, 3 men, cause I know men who have this problem, but they go to church. "...I’m gonna go to church again and seek the pardon from the priest." And I know those men, they come and come and come to church, but then a few days after that, they become the devil again. And they say to you “I went to church,” and that’s how they excuse, so what I ask for, they should have like a speech or something."

"...it should be a conference for men, not for machismo."

"That would be a great idea, to have a conference for the men so they could also have help to deal with, probably something that could help them change and think about the problem, as long as there is no conference between 1 or 2 or 3 men or maybe four men, those men are gonna keep going the way they’re going, because of what they learned, what they have said, you know they could talk about those things with other men."

This theme was not identified in the summary produced by the agency, and there were no leading questions for this theme or the alcoholism/addiction theme. Like the correlation of alcoholism and domestic violence, treatment for abusers is a controversial issue within the mainstream domestic violence field. Although the Athens shelter was involved with the Domestic Violence Intervention Program (DVIP), which is a court-mandated group therapy for male abusers, the empowerment
model places emphasis on establishing independence, offering little support for reuniting the family. Furthermore, the empowerment model presumes that women would have access to options in order to make her own choices, options including culturally appropriate batterer treatment, which is rarely the case for unauthorized Hispanic immigrant victims, whose batterers are likely to land in deportation rather than treatment. Even then, my experience is that batterer intervention programs are often rebuked by mainstream domestic violence professionals. My interpretation of this is that our system is overly emphatic of establishing autonomy given our liberal political underpinnings and the corresponding hegemony of Western feminism in the women’s movement. This emphasis upon individualism fails the Hispanic immigrant woman, who often places greater importance upon the unity of the family and the necessity to forgive and heal the family from within. The ubiquitous individualism that informs a Western feminist in her understanding of all things, including nonprofit program design, simply does not inform the Hispanic experience in the same way and to the same degree. Carrillo and Zarza’s (2006) domestic violence intervention curriculum for Latino men is a culturally competent spin-off of the mainstream Duluth model programs, typically court-mandated. Clearly, for the unauthorized immigrant perpetrator, court-mandated treatment is unlikely to be an option given lack of legal status and corresponding access to tax-funded programs, and the lesser likelihood that unauthorized immigrants would turn to police in the first place. In this curriculum, *El Hombre Noble Buscando Balance (The Noble Man Seeking Balance): An Intervention Model for Latino Perpetrators of Abuse* court order is not a requirement of participation. Furthermore, Duluth programs, like the empowerment model associated,
were premised on a mainstream understanding of the family. Carrillo’s innovative method seeks to re-educate men in group settings using content blending Latin American indigenous teachings and Latina feminist theory. This curriculum dares to integrate both substance abuse treatment and the politics of gender oppression into its approach, bringing to the forefront of treatment the issues of cultural norms, worldview, history, and addiction. Where the empowerment model implicitly emphasizes independence, this curriculum states as its goal, “El Hombre Noble Buscando Balance is an intervention process with the goal of guiding men towards Family Harmony and their Healing from Family Violence” (Carrillo, Goubad-Reyna, Martinez, Tello, n.d., p. 8).

Conclusions

In terms of the public/private divide, the failure to serve Hispanic women is evidence that the liberal feminist revisionization is not robust enough to respond to the changing demographics of the U.S. The Anglo woman on which liberal feminism was modeled places high cultural value on self-determination, and will therefore welcome governmental intrusion into the private sphere as needed to protect her individual right to safety, as individual freedom is accorded great respect in liberalism (Kelly, 2003). The Hispanic woman, on the other hand, operates with collectivist values, where acting in self-interest is viewed negatively. The Hispanic woman’s communal and familial values require a solution that puts the interests of the “in-group” first (Rudy and Grusec, 2001, p. 203). If domestic violence intervention necessitates dividing her nuclear and extended families, she is therefore less likely to welcome it into her

89
private family life, even if it is for her own personal protection. For this community, we need to be open to approach that is not as reliant on the underpinnings of our liberal political order, which prizes autonomy over community, as this theoretical disconnect has created great distance between services and immigrants. While relating the Hispanic immigrant’s familial values to that of a conservative feminist lends some important insight, I want to be clear that it is not useful to categorize them as conservative and leave it at that. It is very important to note that Hispanics carry strong communal values and have leadership potential in the rethinking of the public/private paradigm.

Reflecting on Richie (2005), the prominence of liberal feminism in our society means that domestic violence services are set up according to the liberal norm of womanhood. My analysis is that the empowerment model and the law enforcement methods set the standard for domestic violence intervention and rhetoric, both exacting an “individualizing effect” (Kelly, 2003, p. 127) upon victims of domestic violence. Clearly, multicultural feminists are at odds with the paradigm upon which these services are based, and the overreliance upon legal intervention is ineffective not only for minority women, but most women. Kelly argues that our current solutions do little to further the transformational goals of the women’s liberation movement, just as Sokoloff (2005) and associated multicultural feminists urge for solutions that will dismantle the institutional supports for patriarchy, poverty, and racism. Where both agree that our conventional solutions discourage women from seeking help, the multicultural feminist takes this analysis deeper by pointing out ways that women of
color are particularly opposed to law enforcement methods and other conventional methods as they are predicated on a non-inclusive norm of womanhood.

As will be seen in chapter four, domestic violence professionals are quick to blame Hispanic culture for underutilization of services. If we listen to hooks (1989) and Volpp (2005), it is essential to begin with consciousness raising groups, such as the focus group with the Hispanic women. While machismo was referenced as a root of domestic violence and barrier for exit, women expressed interest in areas that the predominant liberal feminist leadership in the domestic violence movement is often unwilling to acknowledge or support—far less mention of police and punishment and far more mention of helping their partners heal, helping their partners abandon violent and addictive tendencies, and instead of criticizing their cultural pressures to keep the family together, ultimately finding ways to help them maintain their families as they jointly reject violence.
Chapter Three

3. My investigation of the issue

Background on my research base: Athens, Ohio

The city of Athens is a college town situated in Southeast Ohio. It is the county seat of Athens County, a former coal-mining hotspot that currently has the highest rate of poverty among Ohio’s 88 counties (Larrick, 2013, Quinn, n.d.). I came to know Athens well during my four years of residence, and gained a singular perspective through my work at the domestic violence shelter and as a research assistant at the Institute for Local Government and Rural Development (ILGARD) team at the Voinovich Center for Leadership and Public Affairs, where I worked on Community Needs Assessments for various nonprofits in Athens County. Although the city of Athens benefits economically from the presence of Ohio University, the largest employer in Athens County, the outlying areas suffer from the loss of the coal mining industry and general lack of rural development which characterize many rural areas in Appalachia. The jobs that do exist tend to be service jobs that pay poverty-level wages. While long ago the region was home to vibrant Native American life, it is now largely Caucasian and poor (“Athens County Quickfacts,” 2013, “Ohio Major Employers,” 2012, Larrick 2013, Quinn, n.d.,). I began working at the local domestic violence shelter as a volunteer in 2004. I was later hired on as a Shelter Aide. The shelter was founded during the shelter boom of the battered women’s movement in the late seventies. The shelter first and foremost provides safe and confidential residence for up to three months to female victims of domestic violence and their children. It
also provides an umbrella of intervention services, not only for residential clients, but for all local victims of domestic violence. This includes a 24-hour hotline, social work services, outreach counseling, and court advocacy (http://www.mspathens.org/). As a Shelter Aide, I manned the hotline, performed client intake, and essentially served as an innkeeper. During my 16 hour overnight shifts I was the only employee present, and therefore came to know many of the clients quite well, as some stayed for up to three months, and I also saw many repeat clients in my year there. I participated in weekly debrief and training meetings with my fellow shelter aides. Intake of new clients was typically performed at the local police department, as we received many referrals from police and required a safe location. The empowerment model, introduced in chapter one, was the theoretical model that guided our actions.

**The Hispanic Community in Athens**

While the Hispanic population is very small in Athens. Growth of about 1.5% means that its population is eclipsed in metropolitan and suburban areas of Ohio. However, Athens being located in the largely rural region of Southeast Ohio, there is a sizable migrant worker community in neighboring Meigs County, where I volunteered as an ESOL (English for Speakers of Other Languages) tutor (Burridge, 2008). In the city of Athens itself, I became familiar with the Hispanic population by starting an ESOL program for workers at two local Mexican restaurants. The Athens shelter primarily served Athens County itself, but also opened its doors to women from several adjoining counties, including Meigs.

Although the shelter was located in Athens County, like most domestic violence shelters, it served neighboring counties. It should have been no surprise that
monolingual Spanish-Speaking clients called our hotline occasionally. However, in the year I worked there, the calls we received in Spanish were dropped because we did not have a language access plan in place. As aforementioned, as a political science major also studying Spanish education, this naturally piqued my curiosity and interest. I regretted that I had not been present to receive the first call I heard about, as my conversational Spanish was competent and I felt confident that I could have slowly but surely performed shelter intake with a patient Spanish-speaking client. However, upon further reflection, it occurred to me that even if I had been working at the time, I was largely unprepared to welcome a Hispanic immigrant woman, particularly an unauthorized one. Although it sounds ignorant to me now, there is one simple fact that is quite illustrative of how little I understood about working with this population: I did not know if we were permitted to admit unauthorized persons into shelter. Debrief in a weekly shelter aide meeting revealed that fellow aides were also unaware. Our intake paperwork was extremely thorough and while we were trained to complete it, we did not understand the bureaucratic technicalities and would have to consult with on-call full time staff when such atypical situations came up. Aside from the documentation issue, which created myriad concerns, I had recently studied abroad in Latin America and had taken an intimate interest in the culture, causing me to doubt that our intervention methods would be compatible with the culture of an unauthorized Hispanic immigrant woman.

**Context of Ohio**

In reflecting upon these unfielded calls and the potential sociopolitical gravity of the issue, I was led to the book “Domestic Violence and the Politics of Privacy
(Cornell University Press, 2003) by Kristin A. Kelly, Assistant Professor of Political Science at The University of Connecticut. Kelly is a colleague of my thesis advisor. Kelly ascertains that domestic violence continues to be resistant to countermeasures because of the tension between protecting the privacy of the family from public intervention. Building upon interviews with more than forty domestic violence professionals, she proposes a societal model that could address the widespread issues these professionals confront in their work to end domestic violence. I was aware that the local Hispanic population remained fairly small yet the state of Ohio itself had experienced a population surge over recent decades. In the aftermath of the calls, I sought to learn what was being done to serve the female Hispanic immigrant population at shelters throughout the state of Ohio. As no comprehensive set of data existed on this subject, I determined that answering my question would require firsthand research.

The methodology for the firsthand research I performed is modeled after the methodology used by Kelly. Via my advisor, I consulted with Kelly in the preliminary stages of research design. In following this model, I chose to do verbal interviews using open-ended questions in order to avoid “prompting” the subjects. Rather, I used questions that I hoped would elicit authentic commentary. I interviewed at length numerous people who work with victims of domestic violence. Most interviewed by Dr. Kelly were professional domestic violence activists who worked in a legal capacity of some sort. In keeping with her model, I used their professional area of expertise as well as their location (in her case Northern California, in my case Ohio) as the criteria for selection. However, while Kelly focused on career professionals who
were actively using political and legal processes in their work against domestic violence, my focus was on the frontline shelter workers, who in my experience as an aide have the most direct contact hours with victims of domestic violence. Most frontline workers are part time employees making a modest hourly wage and some are volunteers; a related degree is typically not a requirement of employment for these entry-level positions. However, my personal observation is that the position is often held by students who aspire to work in the nonprofit sector and are pursuing a related degree, or recent graduates. While I also interviewed several people who fit the criteria used by Kelly, the bulk of my research consisted of a comprehensive assessment of bilingual/culturally sensitive domestic violence intervention services in the state of Ohio. This assessment was accomplished through brief telephone interviews with receptionists/hotline workers at the majority of shelters or programs located in Ohio. All comments will be kept confidential. All methodology is consistent with the standards of the Institutional Review Board (IRB) and was approved by this body.

The scientific objective of this research was to collect qualitative data about the services that are available to Female Hispanic immigrants and the perception of the needs and experiences that are unique to this population. This was collected primarily from the frontline workers like myself, who answered the hotline and typically perform the duties of a shelter aide. Limited quantitative data was initially requested from the individuals in leadership positions, although I experienced difficulty with receiving statistics early on and made the decision to focus on the qualitative results of the research. For privacy reasons, I have not used any specific
information gained from my experience at the shelter as I was working there as an
employee and not as a researcher.

**Research Methodology**

The purpose of the questionnaire I developed to determine how shelters throughout the state were responding to the growing population of female Hispanic immigrants. My initial comprehensive survey of shelters, conducted in the spring of 2006, inquired as to whether or not each shelter offered Spanish bilingual services and if they tailored any of their services to the local immigrant or Hispanic community. The most comprehensive and updated list I found of shelters was found on the Action Ohio website, which listed approximately seventy different shelters (“Ohio Domestic Violence Shelters,” n.d.). I called every shelter listed and reached someone at about 90% of the shelters. For simplicity purposes, I will call the person who answered a “hotline worker”. I introduced myself as a student from Ohio University conducting research for a thesis project, and that my information gathering would be captured anonymously. Hotline workers were quickly able to answer my initial two questions, and I then inquired as to whether or not the aide would be able to answer a standard questionnaire that had been designed specifically for hotline workers. I ended up conducting twenty-eight more in-depth interviews with hotline workers whose locations spanned the state.
Figure 5. Hotline Worker/Shelter Interviews were performed at shelters spanning the state of Ohio.

KEY
Blue= Interviewed one shelter rep/program rep in this county
Orange= Interviewed reps from two shelters/programs in this county
Multicolor= Interviewed reps from five or more shelters/programs in this county
The questions I asked were in three different categories: Program Information, Services Offered, and Advertisement/Accessibility. The full survey forms appear in the Appendix. In Program Information, I gathered basic information about location, contact information, service area, years of operation, and confidentiality of location. The shelters spanned the state, were about twenty years old on average, and most had confidential locations. In Advertisement/Accessibility, I asked about the advertising methods and ways that clients access services. I found that most shelters use low-budget advertising methods such as brochures, as most referrals come through the police, other social service agencies, or word of mouth. The focus of my interviews and the area in which I’d like to focus this summary was on the questions asked under the topic of Services Offered, where I asked the following questions:

• What sorts of services does your agency offer?
• Do you have any bilingual services?
• Do you currently have any Spanish-speaking clientele or have you had any in the past?
• Do you tailor any of your services toward Hispanics or immigrants?
• Do you require Visas/documentation for clients who are immigrants?
• Do you think that the Latino immigrant population in your community is increasing, decreasing, or staying the same?

Conclusions
My research findings suggest some potential limits of many of the mainstream approaches to domestic violence. This project’s conclusion, while tentative, makes the case for culturally sensitive approaches to violence. My lack of experience as an interviewer was at least partially compensated for by the efforts to follow the Kelly method, and the careful attention I received from my advisor through the process. Because of the complications surrounding interviewing unauthorized Hispanic immigrant women and the difficulty reaching professionals in the upper echelons, I largely spoke with frontline workers. I feel this aided my research as it allowed me to discern how information does or does not reach the ground level of service, which is indicative of how well it permeates to clients. My work also suggested the limits of information flow back up the institutional hierarchy.

Beyond material limitations, there are several apparent methodological limitations. First and foremost, speaking with shelter workers throughout the state of Ohio meant that my sample size was quite small. For example, I only spoke to one person who revealed herself to be of Hispanic descent during the interview, and my intuition (based upon context clues as no personal demographic data was collected from participants) is that she was one of few minorities that I spoke to in the course of my research. While I do feel this sheds light on the racial composition of shelter service employees, which I took to be as heavily slanted toward Caucasian, this cannot be quantified as I did not ask about race or nationality; this is only my subjective perception. Secondly, the research results were entirely random, as they were dependent upon which worker answered the phone that day, rather than a consensus of employees at each shelter. It cannot be said with certainty that the opinions of the
twenty-eight shelter workers I performed focused interviews with are entirely representative of the views of shelter workers statewide. Another additional issue was with focus; while some shelter workers and professionals were particularly attentive to my questions, as independent research being conducted in an emergency services environment, the interviews could not be considered priority at all times for all workers, and so we were sometimes interrupted during our chat or hurried to move on to more pressing work. Having acknowledged these potential limitations as a grounding for future and more comprehensive work, this project makes an important contribution.
Chapter Four

4. Findings

Based on the responses of the twenty-eight workers across twenty-four counties with whom I conducted the full hotline worker questionnaire, three major themes emerged in my research analysis: 1. Most frontline workers felt that the Hispanic population was growing in their area, yet they had experienced only minimal or sporadic demand for services from this population. 2. Many commented that they felt the culture of the Latino population was to blame for the underutilization of services. 3. When asked if they tailor their services to Hispanic clients, most responded that staff participate in diversity training and have access to volunteer interpreters.

Each of these themes is illustrated by the quantitative data gathered from the survey, captured in the graphs below, as well as from qualitative data including key quotes from the interviews, as relayed below.
Theme #1: The Growing Population Of Hispanic Immigrants has Made Little Use of Shelter Services

Frontline Shelter Workers' Perception of Growth of Hispanic Population Locally

Figure 6. Frontline workers’ perception of growth of the Hispanic population locally. The vast majority of workers indicated that they believed the local Hispanic immigrant population to be increasing.
Shelter workers were asked the following questions to gauge their perception of the local Hispanic immigrant presence: “Do you think that the Latino immigrant population in your community is increasing, decreasing, or staying the same?”. To determine their understanding of the utilization of services by this population, workers were asked “Do you currently have any Spanish-speaking clientele or have you had any in the past?” As seen in Figure 6, the vast majority of survey participants felt that the local Hispanic population was growing. However, as seen in Figure 7, the vast majority said that the Spanish speaking population used their services only minimally or sporadically.
Theme #2: Most Shelters Have Made Some Effort to Increase Their Accessibility to and Knowledge of the Immigrant Population

Language Access at Domestic Violence Shelters in Ohio by Type

Volunteer Interpreters; 40%
Professional Interpreters; 16%
Bilingual Staff; 8%
Bilingual Materials; 8%
Unsure; 8%
None; 20%

Figure 8. Language Access at Domestic Violence Shelters by Type. The majority of shelters have a plan for language access, but only one-quarter have professional coverage, while the rest have volunteer interpreters, no plan, or were unsure.
In order to get some insight into the level of responsiveness to the local population and the accessibility of services, I asked the questions: “Do you have bilingual services?” and “Do you tailor any of your other services towards Hispanics or immigrants?”. As seen in Figure 9, I found that most shelter staff participate in diversity training, often through the Ohio Domestic Violence Network. As seen in Figure 8, the majority of shelters have access to bilingual services to some degree, whether it be a volunteer interpreter, a professional interpreter, or a language line. Some mentioned that immigrant victims usually have an English speaker call for them. The most common
form of language access was through a volunteer interpreter, which had typically been arranged through a local university.

**Survey Theme #3: The Prominent Explanation Offered for Underutilization was that of Culture**

When asked about their involvement with Hispanic victims of domestic violence, most of the interviewees listed the efforts they’ve made to make their services accessible, with the two primary efforts being the recruitment of volunteer interpreters and the participation in cultural diversity training, as previously mentioned. The third most common remark was regarding the cultural barrier between Hispanic immigrant women and the use of domestic violence services. The following quotes are taken from the interviews and detail their perceived cultural barriers:

One worker brought up the issue of machismo:

> “Especially in M… there is a large Hispanic pop. There is a lot of domestic violence, just not receiving services. It seems to be a cultural thing; seems like in that population the males are dominant.”

Two shelter workers mentioned religion. While one person simply stated that “…another major barrier is religion”, this shelter worker elaborated upon the comment by saying,

> “No one has ever come to us… I have heard it said that many women are told by their priest not to leave, they go to hell, but there is a place in bible where god killed a husband for beating a wife. Perhaps this could help those who are devout Catholics.”

Lack of awareness about the availability of services was also mentioned:

> “There has been a significant increase in the Spanish speaking population, but we don’t get any calls. It’s not in the culture. What happens in the house stays in the house. They don’t know if we’d be open doors.”
Privacy was mentioned by two shelter workers. First, the need to protect one's family problems from public purview, and secondly, the hesitation to disclose domestic violence issues to extended family:

“The Latino population is growing, but they seem to live in the same area and are building their own community, which is still small in this county. They don’t seek help, whether it’s a language barrier or just culture to not tell their business….seems to me it’s cultural…there’s more shame, they’re certainly not interested in returning to their countries; they don’t want to go back and can’t admit it <their struggle with domestic violence> to their families.”

While these comments are important to note, it is also important to note that many workers expressed an interest in better serving this population and while some expressed frustration with the cultural barriers, no workers indicated directly a disinterest or unwillingness to serve the population.

**Interviews With Full-Time Professionals**

The eleven interviews I conducted with full time domestic violence professionals, which I referred to as “administrators”, were arranged in advance and typically lasted from 20 minutes to two hours. About half were conducted in person and the other half over the phone. These professionals included several attorneys, several program coordinators, a mental health counselor, and a legal advocate. Detailed questions were asked regarding program information, personal information, program records (I found that these were a challenge to access and often skipped this section), Hispanic community, nature of services, client needs, staff training, and advertising. These conversations lacked the consistency of the shelter interviews, and the conversation often became slanted toward the area of interest of the professional involved. The themes across these interviews were:
1. Family and child-centered approach to domestic violence intervention is needed.

2. Strong belief in value of coalition building; community building for immigrant women and networking between immigrant groups and social service providers is seen as a critical and lacking asset.

3. Word of mouth advertising is the only effective advertising.

4. Pursuing a U Visa is a challenge for immigrant women given the persistence required in the face of cultural pressures to deny the abuse or keep the family together.

5. Immigrants are hesitant to report crimes for fear of deportation of abuser. Mandatory arrest combined with practice of deporting unauthorized immigrant for first criminal offense equate to underreporting.

Said “Ms. Cherry”, an administrator who works closely with immigrants, “The best way, the only way, to be effective is to get women in the community involved to spread the word.” As evidence of this, I had the revealing opportunity to speak to one Hispanic domestic violence professional. Having immigrated to the United States over twenty years ago as a child, “Ms. Rivierjo” said she understood intimately the cultural dynamics of both immigrants and the urban region of Ohio she lived and worked in. She had been helping navigate the system for the women she had served as a promotora de salud, or community health promoter, for over ten years, both informally as a friendly neighbor, and formally as a domestic violence professional. As a promotora, Ms. Rivierjo networked with local agencies serving the Hispanic
population, with a focus on the preschools in her urban center, which has a relatively concentrated population of Hispanics. Essentially, she served as a community health educator, covering issues specific to women such as domestic violence and prenatal care and also providing information and referrals for general healthcare issues of relevance to the population, such as diabetes. Ms. Rivierjo was confident that her word-of-mouth approach had been effective in the communities she’d served, saying that the emphasis upon family privacy in the Hispanic culture combined with the logistical barriers to operating in a new country makes women very hesitant to approach legal or shelter services without the support of a trusted and relatable advocate who has the fluency in both language and culture needed to serve her peers.

**Conclusions**

Although there was more progress on language access and training than I’d expected given my isolated experience in Appalachia, my expectation that the population is severely underserved by conventional methods was correct. However, the surveys revealed that the population was underserved despite the increased awareness and interest in serving the population, as indicated by the availability of interpreter services, participation in multicultural trainings, and legal assistance with U Visa applications. My interpretation is that policy and resources are being invested, but are not yielding the intended outcomes. There is indeed an unintended and significant disconnect between policy and target population on a statewide scale.

The comments on culture being the major barrier for Hispanic immigrant women victims relates closely to my theoretical inquiry, as it lends credibility to the critiques made in chapter two by multicultural feminists. The survey respondents’
assessment of cultural barriers to disclosure is in general agreement with what was seen in the focus groups, but the degree to which this explanation was used and its outcomes are very problematic. The focus groups indicated that Hispanic immigrants themselves cite extended family pressure as a reason people hesitate to disclose violence. This also agrees with my theoretical inquiry, which indicates that the American liberal political order’s emphasis upon individualism is generally inconsistent with the Hispanic culture’s emphasis upon collectivism, and there is a more authoritarian structure to the Hispanic family. So while there is truth in this, my concern is that culture was the most typical and first explanation provided for underutilization of services. My rebuttal is twofold: 1. Privacy concerns and a desire to keep a family unit intact are issues for American citizens as well, 2. Competing systemic issues that have been discussed throughout this paper are equally if not greater barriers, mainly fear of law enforcement and deportation (political oppression), low wages and lack of affordable housing (economic oppression), and isolation from a support network. As a result, I am lead to agree with multicultural feminists on this subject; blaming underutilization on “culture” typically results in a shortsighted, regressive response to the issue. Rather than accepting community responsibility, blame is displaced upon either the victim or the immigrant community alone.

My in-depth interviews with full-time professionals have allowed me to see Kristin Kelly’s (2003) work toward a triangulated model of society in the context of the unauthorized Hispanic immigrant woman population. Essentially, Kelly’s model constructs a new political theory that supports the belief within the field of social work that solutions require a confluence of micro (interpersonal), mezzo (community level)
and macro (political) level solutions (Maldonado, 2012). My experience in the
domestic violence shelter is that the majority of domestic violence intervention takes
place on a micro-political level. Because macro-political work, such as the advent of
mandatory arrest, the Violence Against Women Act and U Visas, take place on a
micro-political level, we have neglected to treat domestic violence on a mezzo level.
Given the importance of word of mouth communication, the great emphasis upon
networking, and the example set by Ms. Rivierjo as a grassroots promotora, it is clear
that effective domestic violence intervention for this community requires us to “think
outside the shelter”, a place where macro-political policies are implemented in a
micro-political manner via the empowerment approach. Kelly argues that domestic
violence will continue to ravage our society as long as it is treated as a woman’s issue
and not a community issue. For the unauthorized Hispanic immigrant population
especially, a community response model holds far greater hope than the shelter
empowerment model, given the cultural and political incompatibility of the
empowerment approach, which goes hand in hand with the law enforcement approach.
I will discuss the triangulated model at greater length in the recommendations.
Analysis

Generally speaking, my data is supportive of the multicultural feminist’s critique of the domestic violence intervention system. The multiple forms of oppression that are central to multicultural feminist arguments were apparent in the themes of the focus group. The overarching theme was ‘poverty of resources’, as the majority of themes pointed to resources and services that they needed but could not access on account of their impoverished state: lack of housing and childcare resources, lack of awareness of social services, lack of intervention for men for both battering and addiction. The practical and logistical concerns women had toward leaving an abuser who is a household partner dominated the conversation. To the contrary, amongst the frontline domestic violence workers I spoke with, whom I largely perceived to be white American women, a strong theme was the belief that women stay because of the patriarchal influence of their families and husbands. While machismo did come up in the focus groups, most themes were around poverty and isolation, making the lack of family support for leaving an abuser a secondary them. Unauthorized immigrants, for example, are often far from family, although they remain connected and influenced by home culture after resettlement in the U.S. Although the fear of deportation did not come up, likely because a number of the women present were authorized, my research shows that it is the leading barrier for unauthorized women (Orloff, 2005). Given the oppressions of poverty, isolation, nationalism and monolinguism that unauthorized immigrant women face, it is clear that cultural influences are not the primary barrier to realizing their right to safety.
My consciousness having been alerted by the multicultural feminist arguments conveyed in chapter two, I believe that explaining the underutilization of shelter services as being mainly a matter of culture is to gravely reduce the broad social injustices suffered by immigrant women. Furthermore, as multicultural feminist Leti Volpp (2005) argues, culture is often mistakenly seen as being static for immigrant women. My contention is that blaming culture is a convenient form of dismissal, as it implies that immigrant women are helpless given that ‘culture’ is inherent and inseparable from who they are.

Volpp’s (2005) response to blaming ‘culture’ prompts the American mainstream to look in the mirror at our own high rates of domestic violence and asks if we can make the parallel judgment. A comparison of Kristin Kelly’s (2003) work with my research leads me to believe that our current overreliance upon legal services makes our system ineffective to meet the needs for all women, and this is compounded for minority women given that these services have been long premised on a mainstream norm of womanhood. Many minority communities have been victimized by police brutality; unauthorized Hispanic immigrant women risk the ultimate sacrifice of life when attempting to cross the border due to state-sanctioned security measures. Solutions that are heavily reliant upon punitive measures, such as mandatory arrest and the U Visa, require women to confront the fear of American law enforcement in order to escape the fear of an abuser. Clearly, this approach is ill-suited for many unauthorized Hispanic immigrant women, and as Kristin Kelly contends, the criminalization of domestic violence has had the perhaps unintended consequence of prolonging its status as a taboo deviant issue, resulting in dangerous levels of
underreporting, leaving the battered women’s movement mired in intervention when we should be evolving our efforts toward prevention.

Furthermore, the ideology prominent within conventional shelters is that of the empowerment model, which I associate with the reigning liberal feminism, which prizes individualism over interdependency. In analyzing the state of mainstream, established domestic violence services we see that they rely upon a liberal political worldview, and so this project has created a critique of our societal underpinnings from a multicultural feminist perspective. Those who seek reprieve from domestic violence are caught in the tension of the liberal public/private divide, and Hispanic women are particularly hesitant to allow the state to intervene in their private families or to make family sacrifices for their own gain, even if that gain is personal safety.

Reflecting on Kelly (2003), this approach forces women to choose between protecting themselves and protecting their families, an excruciating decision for women which can carry costly outcomes for families and society at large. Kelly’s triangulated model of public and private brings a third dimension of community into theoretical divide. She theorizes that this third sphere could provide the support that would allow women to confront domestic violence while preserving the privacy of the family that the criminal approach too harshly disturbs. In my interviews with domestic violence professionals, I learned about the merits of forming coalitions to counter domestic violence by bringing together diverse multidisciplinary professionals and lay community leaders to build tailored community solutions. Through coalition building, those with privilege and established leadership can work alongside the vulnerable
population to jointly identify pragmatic prevention and response. Rather than
displacing blame and responsibility onto the immigrant victim or the immigrant group
(as we saw is currently the norm in our shelter survey responses), domestic violence
becomes the responsibility of the greater community. This is not only more equitable
for the vulnerable population, but encourages democratic participation. Democratic
participation of oppressed populations is critical to transitioning an authoritarian
governing structure into an egalitarian structure. Essentially, I am advocating that we
consider power dynamics in all policy and practice. If our goal is to make the
male/female relationship a healthy and equitable one, we must have communities and
societies that follow the same mold. This requires the decentralization of male head of
household power and state power alike.

Because unauthorized Hispanic immigrant women have long been denied or
had limited access to legal intervention methods, they have developed community-
based intervention methods that operate outside of the traditional public and private
spheres, in the hybrid sphere of community. My finding is that Hispanic community
advocates such as Ricardo Carillo and Ms. Rivierjo have long been isolated from state
resources and have had little choice but to centralize community-based strategies.
Thus, they have been at the forefront of the community response model for decades,
making their work exemplary to the movement. However, such projects cannot
operate in isolation. They require the support of the state and the broader the
community to thrive.

As unauthorized Hispanic women gain greater access to legal and social
services, as they rightly should, my conclusion is that they will not only help
themselves but help all women by continuing to emphasize community-based solutions even as they utilize public resources. What I had originally conceived of as an absence of Hispanics in the public domestic violence intervention system and a failing to engage, I now view differently. Many Hispanic women actually were democratically engaged in counteracting domestic violence in their communities, as indicated by Ms. Rivierjo, who introduced me to the concept of peer health promoters, or *promotoras*, and their work could and would be an example and an inspiration if we were to take a multicultural feminist approach to the issue. For instance, the bottom-up approach of the manual Domestic Violence: The Silent War Against Women: A Training Manual for Activists, Advocates and Latina Organizers, discussed in chapter one, is intended to facilitate exactly the type of community networking and coalition building that compel Kelly’s triangulated model of public, private, and hybrid community.

Although I do hope that domestic violence intervention changes so fundamentally that prevention takes precedence over intervention, for the near future, we do need to continue to make our current services accessible and available to multicultural women, not only because it is discriminatory not to, but because in reality it would preclude those minority women who for whatever reason prefer using mainstream services. For example, when I worked as a caseworker for refugees and asylees, I had a client named “Fatima” who was a refugee from Somalia. Fatima’s husband had been shot and killed by rebels while working at his shop. Fatima had become very untrusting of her fellow Somalis, accusing some of witchcraft. While this concept does carry legitimacy in some Sub-Saharan African communities today
(Tortora, 2010), Fatima’s fear was so extreme and isolating that it was seen to be largely a manifestation of post traumatic stress, giving her great anxiety about studying English in the same classes and living in the same communities as her fellow Somalis. Her strong preference at that time was to associate only with her own children and the professionals - who in this case were mainly white American women - whom she encountered at the local schools and social service agencies. Despite her very limited English, she would not utilize services designed for the Somali community and took no interest in interacting socially with other immigrants. We therefore worked closely with interpreters and allocated extra time to serving this client. Clearly, this was not a long-term solution, but it was critical to the survival of this woman and her children under the complicated circumstances. The case of Fatima indicates that shared “identity” does not necessarily determine coalition. While Fatima was fearful and uncomfortable with the counterparts in her ethnic group, Hispanic immigrant victims sometimes express hesitation toward working within their community for fear of damaging their reputation within the community. While networking within one’s own ethnic or neighborhood group can be very valuable to well-being, coalition building for domestic violence intervention purposes is typically most successful when a variety of actors are involved.

One of the most meaningful pieces of insight I have gained through this project is around my personal role in this movement. My research into multicultural feminism has constituted personal consciousness raising, leading me to examine the ways my white privilege has informed my work. I now recognize that my initial intentions to help Hispanic women unfortunately stemmed at least somewhat from the “missionary”
mentality that is often criticized by multicultural feminists. However, I now truly believe that Hispanic immigrant women will find their salvation first and foremost within themselves, and also in partnership with other populations, including privileged populations. Whereas the original title of my project began with the word Ayúdame!, which translated, means “Help me!”, I have arrived to a place where I feel that the more fitting punctuation would be Ayúdame? The empowerment of immigrants can be hindered by privileged women precisely because help is typically offered in a unilateral fashion. Rather, we must seek to work under and to collaborate with them if we truly wish to be effective. Otherwise, we are perpetuating the oppression that we have experienced under the traditional leadership of men, where we appear to be gaining equality but find we are only successful when we play by men’s rules. I agree with multicultural feminists who assert that experiencing oppression unfortunately does not liberate one from imposing it. As long as we attempt to “save” Hispanic immigrant women with our tools, we will meet frustration, because our tools are the tools of the oppressor. It is a hard reality. Let us learn from the past, choosing not to empower minorities for our own gain according to our own preferences, but by stepping aside to let them find their own power. Imposing our liberal feminist norms has not only proven ineffective, but precludes the organic development of tailored solutions. For so long, we’ve judged inferior their propensity toward keeping the family together at all costs, their insistence upon helping their abusers, and meanwhile we have failed to find sweeping solutions to domestic violence even for ourselves. It is time that our approach to domestic violence begins to acknowledge what Latinas seem to understand on a more fundamental level: as human beings, we are desperately
interconnected, and as social beings, we yearn for community just as strongly as we yearn for autonomy. Could there not be value in stepping aside and lending the emerging leadership curiosity where there once was judgment?

**Recommendations**

Because of the colonial and postcolonial state’s role in defining domestic space…the state cannot be the mechanism for change. Rather, grassroots, non-state based solutions to violence in postcolonial African contexts have the most potential for combating household-based gender violence (Nigeran feminist scholar Amina Mama, qtd. in Burrill, Roberts, & Thornberry, 2010, p. 21)

We need more people who are committed to the idea of coalition. Part of this comes out of my hesitation with legislation at the state level. Counties have such different needs and communities are in a much better position to know their own needs. For example, the same approach that works in a rural area with one sheriff may not work in an urban area that has twenty. (Carmen, administrator for a domestic violence program in California, qtd. in Kelly, 2003, p. 109)

Sometimes our community members aren’t informed or don’t understand what domestic violence is because we have been suffering in silence, as if it were a private matter. But experience shows that domestic violence is a matter for the whole community. (Parras-Konrad, 2006, p. 7)

From unauthorized Hispanic immigrant communities in the U.S., to sub-Saharan Africa, to Northern California, commitment to grassroots/community-based efforts seems to be on the rise. The unauthorized Hispanic immigrant community has demonstrated that community-based programs, such as the *promotora* program, can be particularly effective among populations where the fear of law enforcement and discomfort with state-based institutions is high. However, building coalitions among law enforcement, social service providers, schools, immigrant groups, and other
special interest groups has become an increasingly desirable strategy for U.S. communities, as indicated in the second quote.

We know that the public/private divide is useful for protecting privacy, but has severe limitations for protecting the vulnerable members of the family unit. Kelly’s (2003) treatment of community as a hybrid public/private intermediary space of political importance holds unique potential for reaching the vulnerable in ways that state-based intervention cannot. The community is a place where values are transmitted and thus can have a normative impact on the consciousness of its members. This can positively impact the mentalities of abusers, as indicated by Ricardo Carillo’s (n.d.) culturally specific batterer intervention program. By expanding the reaches of public intervention to be inclusive of community intervention, we have potential to transform what was once a battle for individual rights into an actual social justice movement. It is in this space that democratic participation occurs (Kelly, 2003, p. 125), and it is there that the oppressed might become co-creators of their own solutions, and the decolonization of domestic violence intervention can occur (Freire, 1970). We therefore must legitimize the community space so that it will be accorded the support it requires to function fully. How can this be done? We can begin by understanding the reaches and boundaries of the space on a theoretical level so that we might see its value for transforming individual/private issues, such as poverty and abortion (Kelly, 2003), into systemic issues that merit state, community, and individual action.

Although it varies to a degree by culture, privacy and intimacy are fundamental human needs. The strict delineation of public from private has served to make public
intervention overly formal, often punitive, and disconnected from the families who do not fit liberal political norms. When state intervention is overemphasized, people of all walks of life find themselves choosing between public or private, black and white, when they need gray space. In redrawing the boundaries between public and private to include a hybrid community space, we form a gray bridge between the white private sphere and the black public sphere. This is where productive negotiation can occur.

To make this concrete, Kelly (2003) offers examples of state groups which are judicial institutions, police departments, governments, and social service agencies. Examples of community groups are social movement organizations, special interest groups, private employers, and religious groups. Examples of family groups include nuclear and extended family, intimate partners, and close friends. There are specific boundaries between all groups; for example, the community is separated from the family by property rights/contacts, civil rights, and ethical codes.

When we decentralize the state and take seriously the potential of the more flexible and accessible community space, we realize numerous advantages. As outlined by Kelly (2003), these advantages include: absence of state sanctions and the corresponding willingness to get help before abuse escalates to an intolerable level, the educational and preventive capacity given greater levels of trust and understanding between actors, the potential to form culturally-specific services, and the ability to take the burden off the victim as the issue of domestic violence is seen as not just an individual issue, but an issue for which the broader community is responsible.

If we continue to think only inside the courthouse and the shelter, we will continue to think of domestic violence as a woman’s issue. If we choose to follow the
Hispanic emphasis upon collectivism, we might begin to see domestic violence as a community issue. In integrating community, the public/private divide becomes a triumvirate. Here, the focus on domestic violence intervention might finally shift to a focus on prevention, which is the paradigm shift we truly seek. The decentralization of state powers and the promotion of localized solutions have libratory potential for all, in the context of domestic violence and beyond.
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USDOJ: Office on Violence Against Women. (n.d.). *USDOJ: Office on Violence*


APPENDIX

Administrator Survey
Hispanic Immigrants and Domestic Violence

Given by: Anne Garrett
Ohio University Honors Tutorial College
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Phone: 513-417-0697

1. Program Information:
   Place of employment:
   Phone number (hotline and business):
   Website:
   Service area:
   Years of operation:
   Mailing address:
   Are you a confidential location?
   If no, address:

2. Personal Information:
   Please supply a pseudonym for confidentiality purposes:
   Title:
   Years in this position:
   Level of education:
   Did you work in any other positions for this organization or related organizations prior to this?
   Do you speak any languages other than English?
3. Program Records

- For each of the following fiscal years, how many clients did your program serve?
  
  FY 2004-2005:
  
  FY 2003-2004:
  
  FY 2002-2003:
  
  FY 1994-1995:

- For each of the following years, how many Hispanic clients did your program serve? If possible, please indicate how many of these clients are immigrants (born outside of the United States), their respective countries of birth, and their immigration statuses.
  
  FY 2004-2005:
  
  FY 2003-2004:
  
  FY 2002-2003:
  
  FY 1994-1995:

4. Community

- What is your service area (i.e., specific county/ies, townships, etc that you are responsible for)?

- In your opinion, is the Hispanic population stable, growing, or decreasing in this service area?

- What types of lifestyles do Hispanic immigrants in this area lead in terms of jobs, housing, education, income, childcare, etc?
• What types of lifestyles do Hispanic immigrants in this area lead in terms of jobs, housing, education, income, childcare, etc?

• Are you aware of any community resources that are tailored to these groups? Are there any community resources that are denied to these groups? What resources do you feel are necessary but lacking for these groups?

5. Your Services

• Is there a certain demographic that you typically serve (race, income, number of children, marriage status, category of residence such as inner-city, suburb, rural, etc)? If so, how do you gear your services towards the unique needs of this group?

• Do you offer any special services to immigrants? If yes, when did you begin offering these services? If no, has this issue been discussed at staff meetings?

• Do you offer any special services to Spanish-speaking clients (i.e., hotline referrals (please specify), pamphlets in Spanish, bilingual staff, etc)? If yes, when did you begin offering these services? If no, has this issue been discussed at staff meetings and what has prevented your organization from implementing such services?

• When you do an intake or accept a new client, do you ask for proof of citizenship or a Visa of any sort? Do you have a policy on immigration status?

• About how much money did you spend on services for immigrants (including trainings, materials, salaries, etc)? About how much money did you spend on services for Hispanic immigrants specifically (please be as accurate as possible). How much do you think this number has increased or decreased over the past five years?

6. Client needs

If you or any of your staff have worked with Hispanic women or immigrants from any country, please answer the following questions:

• What special needs did your Hispanic clients or immigrant clients and their families have in general, if any?

• In general, did it seem that the experience of these clients differed from the experiences of your more typical clients?
• Did the abusers of Hispanic clients seem to have any unique characteristics or habits?

• Do you feel that the children of Hispanic clients have unique needs?

• Do you feel that Hispanic women or immigrants in your area need services but are unable to access them? What do you feel are the major obstacles for these groups?

7. Staff training

• Have you ever done any trainings with staff on immigrant women or Hispanic women in particular? If so, approximately how long ago was the last training? How frequently do you have them? Where do you get the information from that you pass along?

• Are you aware of any local, regional, or state trainings on immigrants and domestic violence? Do you know of any geared towards Hispanic women specifically? Have you taken part in any of these? If yes, please specify. If no, why have you chosen not to participate?

8. Advertising

• How is your organization publicized? Do you target any specific groups? Do you have any ads in Spanish?

9. Closing

• Thank you for your input. Is there anything else that you would like to add that has not come up yet today? Are there any issues that you would like emphasize? 

144
Hotline Worker/Receptionist Questionnaire
Hispanic Immigrants and Domestic Violence

1. Program Information:

Place of employment:

Phone number (hotline and business):

Website:

Service area:

Years of operation:

Mailing address:

Are you a confidential location?

2. Services Offered

- What sorts of services does your agency offer?

- Do you have any bilingual services?

- Do you currently have any Spanish-speaking clientele or have you had any in the past?

- Do you tailor any of your other services towards Hispanics or immigrants?

- Do you require Visas/documentation for clients who are immigrants?

- Do you think that the Latino immigrant population in your community is increasing, decreasing, or staying the same?

Advertisement/Accessibility

1.) How do you advertise?

2.) How do clients access your services? Do any other agencies refer clients to you?

3.) Could you give me the name of an administrator who might be able to participate in a more in-depth interview?