

Women's Organizational Response to Gender Violence
and Femicide in Ciudad Juárez, Mexico

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ABSTRACT

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Since 1993, over four hundred women have been brutally mutilated and murdered in the border city of Ciudad Juárez, Mexico. The Chihuahua state and Mexican federal governments have been largely apathetic toward these femicides. Women in Juárez and the state of Chihuahua have formed grassroots organizations, each responding to some of the root causes that have permitted the femicides to occur for over a decade. Women in Juárez's sister city of El Paso, Texas and along the U.S. side of the border have also created organizations in response. Recognizing that the femicides encompass the greater El Paso-Juárez border community, these organizations are dedicated to raising awareness, aiding the Juárez organizations, and/or eradicating women's institutional and physical subjugation on both sides of the border. Though the collaborations among these various women's organizations—as well as how the rest of *juarense* and El Paso societies perceive them—are complex and sometimes contentious, these organizations are well-established and continue to plan ambitious future projects.

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This Masters thesis is dedicated to all of the respondents who have so graciously welcomed me into their organizations and lives. I am humbled and awed by the family members impacted by femicide who continue moving forward with their lives, those working within the organizations who dedicate themselves to propounding social justice and equity, and the reporters and scholars turned activists who refuse to back away from the most contentious issues. Furthermore, I am grateful for the precious time they donated to speak with me. Their personal experiences and insights on life and death along the U.S.-Mexico border are what form the essence of this entire project.

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Ciudad Juárez—or simply Juárez—is a bustling border city of approximately 1.2 million inhabitants, and located in Chihuahua state, Mexico (see Figure 1). It is located just across the Rio Grande from its sister city of El Paso, Texas. Together, they comprise a thriving and interconnected community of somewhere between 1.8 to 2.5 million residents (Rodriguez and Hagan 2001, Juárez: A City on the Edge, 2004). These two cities are said to comprise the largest U.S.-Mexico border community—though San Diego, twelve miles north of the border, is often grouped with Tijuana (Padgett and Thomas 2001; Rodriguez and Hagan 2001). In fact, Juárez and El Paso could very well house the largest border population in the entire world (Juárez: A City on the Edge 2004; Padgett and Thomas 2001).

In addition to being Mexico's fifth most populous city, Juárez is one of the country's industrial powerhouses. Since the signing and implementation of the North America Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) in 1994, the city's *maquiladoras*, or internationally owned processing plants, have mushroomed to nearly 300 plants. *Twin Plant News* magazine reported that by the end of the 20th century, the *maquiladora* workforce totaled some 219,000 people (Rodriguez and Hagan 2001). These jobs, high-paying in Mexican standards, have consequently attracted droves of migrants from throughout Mexico and other Latin American countries. But beyond the cold, metallic gleam of the promising industrial parks and the frenzied urban sprawl lays a city chronically plagued by social issues such as environmental degradation, impoverished living conditions, drug trafficking and alarmingly high murder rates.

Figure 1: U.S.-Mexico border

Source: <https://segueuserfiles.middlebury.edu/hist0208/usmexmap.gif>



Since 1993, more than four hundred women have been brutally mutilated and murdered, their bodies dumped in the sandy periphery of the city (Marín 2007; Pearson 2007). These systematic murders have been termed femicides, “the misogynous killing of women by men” (Radford and Russell 1992, p. 3). Though the city also has an unusually high male homicide rate, the methods of and motivation for killing these women have been disturbingly dissimilar. Firstly, the majority of the murder victims fit a profile. They are young (usually between twelve and thirty years of age), coming from poor families and neighborhoods, and are abducted as they shop or wait for/travel via public transit (Pearson 2007; Rodriguez 2007). Many of them have even shared similar physical traits, such as long, dark hair, a petite frame, and attractive facial features

(Hellard 2007; Rodriguez 2007). One in five of the femicide victims work in one of the city's *maquiladoras*, but victims have ranged from students to housewives, store clerks and small business owners (Washington Valdez 2002).

Secondly, the ways in which the women were tortured and murdered set them apart from the city's male murder victims. Women's bodies have been found riddled with stab wounds and bite marks. They exhibit signs of rape, mutilated breasts, chopped hair and facial disfiguration (Rodriguez 2007; Washington Valdez 2002). Some women have been tied up with their own shoelaces (Rodriguez 2002). One woman had been stuffed into a 55-gallon drum filled with acid (Washington Valdez 2002).

Despite intense outrage and public protests within the country and throughout the international community, the Mexican federal government has taken little decisive action in investigating the murders and preventing future ones. The state government of Chihuahua, in which Ciudad Juárez is located, has reportedly bungled investigations, and have even been implicated in covering up and/or playing a role in the occurring femicides (Hellard 2007; Washington Valdez 2002; Wright 2005).

Horrified by the atrocities occurring in their city and disillusioned by the apathy that followed, women (principally in Juárez) have taken matters into their own hands. They have identified key factors in Juárez's context (such as impunity, *machismo* and the *maquiladoras*) that have permitted sustained, unchallenged femicide. In response, they have formed grassroots organizations whose projects have often taken these factors into consideration. Their lofty goals, for example, include raising global awareness and dispensing justice, providing support for the loved ones who have been impacted, and

eradicating gender violence and femicide in the Juárez community. The *juareense* women's struggles to eradicate gender violence and femicide have spread to Chihuahua City, as well as El Paso and other U.S. border cities. These organizations provide direct support to the Juárez-based organizations, raise awareness and/or strive to confront violence against women in the greater border community. My primary questions are as follows: what sort of impact have these women's organizations made in light of sanctioned apathy, social attitudes and institutions that oppress women, verbal slander and physical threats? What about within a community that may question the motives of those who continue to speak against femicide and gender violence?

For approximately one month during the summer of 2008, I conducted interviews and, when possible, field observation with six organizations located in the Juárez-El Paso border community, Chihuahua City, and Las Cruces, New Mexico. Additionally, I spoke with a professor and activist at the University of Texas at El Paso (UTEP) and three newspaper reporters from Juárez and El Paso. My principal aim was to actively and personally know not only these grassroots—and predominantly women's—organizations, but also their members. They comprise the front lines in the battle against gender violence and femicide occurring along the U.S.-Mexico border.

Three questions served as a guide for the research and interviews that form the base of this Masters thesis. Firstly, what do directors and/or administrators define as the short and long-term goals of these organizations at the individual and social levels? Secondly, from the client/participant perspective, how have these organizations personally impacted their lives? Thirdly, is there transnational cooperation between

grassroots women's organizations in El Paso and Ciudad Juárez organizations to end the violence?

Researching the femicides in Ciudad Juárez and the reaction of women's organizations in response to government apathy is important for the following reasons. Firstly, gender violence in general is a social and public health problem. Femicide is gender violence, in arguably its most severe form. And yet, so few people know what femicide is, or acknowledge it as such when murders do occur. Furthermore, these vicious murders have been occurring for over a decade, in the United States' "backyard", so to speak. It is incredible that, in a post-NAFTA era of increased interdependence and collaboration, so many Americans beyond the U.S.-Mexico border know little to nothing about the femicides.

Finally, there is a dearth of a dearth of literature concerning women's grassroots organizations in Juárez, and their interactions (or potential collaboration) with organizations located across the border. The literature has tended to discuss the mothers' social movements to demand government action and justice, or showcase one of the organizations in Juárez. There is some available literature written on women's organizations confronting femicide that are based in the United States. Even less has been written on trans-border organizational cooperation. All of this missing information is key to the understanding how gender violence and femicide are collectively being challenged and combated in a seemingly lawless city, in which neither the local nor the federal authorities have actively intervened.

The intent of this thesis is to explore the response of women's organizations in Ciudad Juárez—beyond what is posted on the professional websites and written in the glossy brochures. It will present the organizational aspirations and challenges not only of the directors and administrators, but also the mothers and other participants with whom I spoke. It will also analyze some women's organizations in El Paso who are committed to ending gender violence and protecting its survivors, and/or who are in solidarity with the organizations and activists in Juárez. Finally, it will present non-affiliated social perspectives on the Ciudad Juárez organizations, as well as different avenues for investigating the femicides and eliminating gender violence along the U.S.-Mexico border.

Chapter two of this thesis will consist of a literature review, examining general theories on gender violence, femicide, theories as to what drives violence against women in Latin America and the responses of governments, IGOs, NGOs and women's movements to gender violence in that region. The third chapter is a context chapter of Ciudad Juárez, analyzing its contemporary configuration and geopolitical location, key historical factors and events, and socio-cultural beliefs and practices. I argue that these over-arching topics have created a unique "climate" in Juárez ripe for the perpetration and perpetuation of these heinous murders. Chapter four will focus on the qualitative methods used to gather the data while in Ciudad Juárez and El Paso.

Chapter five will present the results of the research process, and discuss their potential significance. In this chapter, I will argue that the women's organizations have risen and tailored their programs to address specific phenomena related to the femicides.

I will also argue that the organizations do work with one another and with organizations found on the U.S. side of the border in confronting gender violence and femicide, even if such alliances are not formally regulated or recognized. Thirdly, I will argue that in spite of numerous obstacles and a community that understandably challenges their motives, the organizations in Juárez have managed to exist for nearly a decade, and have made a tangible impact upon the thousands of people who actively participate with them. A section of conclusions, limitations in research and avenues for further exploration will comprise the final chapter.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

The introductory chapter briefly explained that gender violence—and femicide in particular—is a grave public health and social issue that must be eradicated. This chapter will examine some ideological and structural theories attempting to explain why gender violence occurs and is legitimated. It will first examine some of the most prominent theories about violence against women, as both an individual and social phenomenon. The literature review will then narrow in scope to focus on both ideological and structural factors that shed insight into gender violence within Latin America. I will argue that in the specific Ciudad Juárez context, ideological factors do play a minor role; however, structural factors seem to have played a greater influence in cultivating the necessary climate for sustained femicide. The following section will discuss the formation of Latin American feminist movements within the context of larger social movements against governmental oppression, “motherist” groups in various Latin American countries, and Latin American regional meetings bringing women’s issues such as femicide to the fore. Finally, the literature review will conclude with a section detailing some important themes in women’s local, national and international organizing, as well as the implications of these issues for researchers.

General Theories Concerning Gender Violence

Violence against women—more specifically what constitutes violence and what precipitates it—is a contentious issue in society, and even within the academic community. There is an extensive theoretical literature base—entire journals, in fact—dedicated to exploring these questions, as well studying gender violence in its myriad

forms and manifestations. A small sampling of the academic journals found within the broad spectrum of gender violence include: *Family and Intimate Partner Violence Quarterly*, *Journal of Sexual Aggression*, *Violence against Women*, *Journal of Emotional Abuse*, *Trauma, Violence and Abuse*, *the Women's International Network News*, *Women and Criminal Justice* and the *Journal of Interpersonal Violence*. The volumes of each journal present a diverse collection of theme-related articles, and within the sampling of journals I have listed, one can encounter literature as diverse as the correlation between pornography and violent or controlling behavior towards women, social perceptions of intimate partner violence among people of color, and the use of art as therapy for women and children who are survivors of violence. As the focus of my work pertains to women's organizational *response* to gender violence and femicide (and not to these phenomena themselves) my literature review encompasses only a miniscule fraction of the available literature on theories of gender violence.

One of the first and most prominent theories to broach the topic of male/female gender relations is known as biological determinism. This Victorian-era theory posits that differences (or inequalities) between men and women stem from innate biological differences. At best, biological determinism allows for superficial, sweeping generalizations about the genders such as men are *naturally* more aggressive than women or women are *naturally* more emotional and passive than men. At worst, it has been used to justify men's violence against and domination of women as part of the natural order (French 1992; Nyalunga 2007; O'Toole, Schiffman, and Kiter Edwards 2007).

Liberalist Approach to Examining Gender Violence

Since the second wave of feminism, theorists have moved away from purely biologically-driven explanations about gender violence and inequality. The first approach I will discuss is deemed the liberalist approach, as found in Sylvia Walby's work *Theorizing Patriarchy* (1990). It postulates that violent acts against women stem from a minority of deranged men who had psychologically damaging backgrounds. For instance, West, Roy and Nichols (1978), as cited by Walby, did a study in which they argued that rapists shared a common destructive childhood, and that they raped because they couldn't form normal sexual relationships with women. Similarly, Pizzey (1974), as cited by Walby (1990), theorized that men who beat their wives were modeling behavior that had played out in their own unhappy childhood homes (Walby 1990).

The liberalist approach to explain violence perpetrated against women is questionable. Firstly, in the case of the West, Roy and Nichols study, the evidence was gathered from twelve interview participants who were held in a prison psychiatric facility. The perpetrators were already known to have psychological problems. Also, the researchers admitted that while their interviews could shed insight into the motives of *some* convicted rapists, their results could by no means provide a comprehensive profile of the so-called typical rapist (Box 1983; Walby 1990).

Two other challenges posed to the liberalist theory are underreporting, and the prevalence of violent attacks against women. At the heart of this theory is the assertion that violent acts against women are perpetrated by a small number of degenerates. The ostensible rarity of documented violent acts stems from underreporting and pathetic

conviction rates. Women may not go to the authorities, or that the authorities may not investigate and/or prosecute the violent crime to their fullest capabilities. Therefore, large numbers of offenders may never be convicted and incarcerated for their crimes (Box 1983; Walby 1993).

Finally, there are dangerous repercussions associated with placing male perpetrators of gender violence into the category of “deviant other.” Jim Hines (2005) wryly notes his three-year-old daughter’s uncanny ability to detect the “bad guys” that appear on television programs. On television and in movies, the “bad guys” are easily identifiable and are clearly set apart from “normal” men or citizens. We tend to use these media portrayals as pre-conceived images dictating how violent perpetrators “should” look or act like; yet the fact remains that the most common male perpetrators lead seemingly normal, everyday lives, and know their victims. Hines explains that once before an abusers’ intervention meeting, he held a conversation with a funny, seemingly amiable man who candidly admitted that he had messed up—later on, Hines would discover that this same man had committed battery, rape and attempted murder against his girlfriend.

Because society has such clear-cut stereotypical associations of violent criminals, people may respond with incredulity when the suspect is a so-called average Joe. They may completely discredit a victim if the attacker is considered an upstanding citizen. Furthermore, there is no clear dichotomy of “us” versus “them.” Certainly no one wants to cast himself as one of the “bad guys.” But what of the male college student who believes the pervasive stereotype that females who dress provocatively, flirt and

purportedly engage in sexual activity are asking for sex? What about the good guys who cheer on their friends' multiple sexual conquests or retreat if they hear a man yelling at his partner? Are they enabling the perpetration of violence against women with their tacit acceptance and/or silence (Hines 2005)?

Gender and Sub cultural Class Analysis Approaches to Gender Violence

There is another approach to studying gender violence, using a theory of class analysis. Its main argument states that men who abuse women disproportionately come from the lower socioeconomic strata. The stress generated from their social disenfranchisement and precarious economic situation may incite them to lash out against their female partners. Capitalist and class structures, not destructive childhoods, are the proposed culprit. Among the class analysis approach, there's the general model and the sub cultural model. The general model theorizes that economic stressors, such as a housing crisis or unemployment, are the most common reasons why men commit violence against women. The sub cultural model, on the other hand, argues that men who are socially and economically impotent adopt macho attitudes. They value physical superiority over women, as well (Walby 1990).

The sub cultural model of class analysis has understandably been highly contested because of its implications for men of the lower class and/or men of color as perpetrators of gender violence. It can be argued, for instance that these men seemingly commit the majority of violent acts because of social biases—more intense scrutiny, and higher prosecution and conviction rates (O'Toole 2007; Walby 1990). However, perhaps the

sub cultural theory does not need to be completely discarded; rather the racial/class lens must be removed, and freshly examined through a gender lens (O'Toole 2007).

Looking at rape through a gender lens ascertains that while “every man” may be physically *capable* of committing rape, not all men will commit rape at some point in their lives. Sub cultural theory can move away from race and class, instead looking at men’s social groups or organizations whose group cohesiveness and behaviors may be classified as a subculture. So by combining a gender lens with sub cultural theory, researchers may look at groups such as men’s fraternities, gangs, sports teams, etc—examining variables such as the groups’ ideas of masculinity and ritual behaviors in relation to women (O'Toole 2007).

Radical Feminist Approaches to Examining Gender Violence

Radical feminist approaches often maintain that violent crimes are a mechanism of control and domination which are employed to maintain women’s subjugation. (Brownmiller 1975; French 1992; hooks 1989; Walby 1990). It is important to analyze the problem not only on the individual level, but also on a social level. This entails, more specifically, what a given society defines as violence, laws about violence, how it is punished, resources for female survivors, etc. One radical feminist who wrote about rape, Susan Brownmiller (1975), argues men and women’s different reproductive anatomy is what makes coercive sex *possible*. Yet it was the first rape—the physical overpowering of the woman, her struggle and the fear in her eyes—that solidified the act from then on as “a conscious process of intimidation by which *all* men keep *all* women in a state of fear” (Brownmiller 1975, p. 15). Brownmiller even hypothesizes that one way

in which males bonded in prehistory may have been through gang rape (much like Laura O'Toole's research on sexual harassment and/or violence against women in male fraternities, sports clubs and gangs).

Radical feminists have also theorized that the society at large perpetuates the cycle of (violent) subjugation against women through hierarchical, male-dominated institutions (Brownmiller 1975; French 1992; Walby 1990;). For instance, some of the earliest societies categorized women's sexuality and virginity as the property of their families and future husbands—and there were laws written and implemented in the occurrence that the “property” was violated (Brownmiller 1975). This is still the case in some contemporary societies. Consider, for instance, the phenomenon of “honor” killings, in which a woman who has seemingly committed an impropriety against her family may be murdered by male family members in order to restore the family's good name (Ruggi 1998; Sev'er 2001). In other contemporary societies, women are often deterred from escaping a violent household or prosecuting a violent crime because of bias and/or inadequate infrastructure in criminal justice and welfare systems (Grant 1993; Josephson 2002; Walby 1990).

Greater society and its myriad influences upon gender violence may also be examined through intersectionality. Kimberle Crenshaw (1994) first applied intersectionality to the study of gender violence. Intersectionality looks at the overlap and interplay of social hierarchies within a given society. It recognizes that gender violence is one of a number of social systems that dominate and control individuals or groups of people. This means that overlapping hierarchies of power and oppression (such

as sexual orientation, race/ethnicity, prejudice, gender inequality, etc). impact how a group of individuals experience violence. It also impacts their “visibility” as survivors—if the greater society perceives the crime committed against them as a legitimate crime, and what the social institutions do in response, if they do anything at all (Bograd 1999; Josephson 2002).

The terms that have been commonly used to describe female survivors of gender violence, and their connotations are even indicative of how the greater society perceives and punishes violent crimes against women. Consider the term “battered women”, or the “battered woman syndrome” which have been popularly-used terms, and are still sometimes employed. While these terms do call attention to violence against women as a social and public health issue, some feminist scholars have contested the usage of these terms. Using the term “battered woman” may humiliate and ostracize the women on whom this label is imposed—“It [the term battered women] appears to strip us of dignity, to deny that there has been any integrity in the relationship we are in” (hooks 1989, p. 272).

Arguing for “battered woman syndrome” in legal proceedings, particularly if the female survivor has killed her partner out of self-defense, also has important repercussions. Firstly, labeling a woman as suffering from “battered woman syndrome” (especially in a trial defense) may implicate the understanding that she is sick (Goldberg 1993; Twining 1991). As defined by Lenore Walker’s book *The Battered Woman* (1980; as cited by Allard 1991 and Goldberg 1993), a woman who has survived intimate violence suffers from “learned helplessness”—a twisted dependency upon her abusive

partner in which she is debilitated, unable to escape without killing him first. Also, Allard (1991) and Goldberg (1993) note that the concept of “learned helplessness” stems from white patriarchal culture; therefore battered women of other races, ethnicities and cultures may not be acquitted for crimes of self-defense if they do not fit this particular model.

Feminist Analyses of Femicide

Femicide is arguably the most extreme manifestation of gender violence. Though the term femicide has been in existence since the 19th century, Jill Radford and Diana E.H. Russell (1992, p. 3) employ it to specifically mean “the misogynous killing of women by men.”

The killing of women by men, simply for the fact that they are *women*, is a phenomenon that is, as Hebrew University, Jerusalem scholar Nadera Shalhoub-Kevorkian (2003, p. 581) states, “cloaked in silence and has rarely been investigated.” Interestingly enough, it has also received less critical attention and analysis from feminist activists and scholars than other crimes perpetrated against women, such as rape. In two of her co-authored works, *Femicide: the politics of woman-killing* (1992) and *Femicide in Global Perspective* (2001) Diana E.H. Russell explains that instances femicide may be often neglected or unrecognized—even among the feminist community—for a number of reasons. Consider, for instance, that there is reluctance in even using the term “femicide.” Instead, murder committed against women may be described in gender-neutral manners, referring to both the perpetrator(s) and victim(s) as “individuals”, and labeling the crime as “murder” or “homicide” (Russell and Harnes 2001). As discussed

previously in this chapter, feminist scholars such as bell hooks (1989) argued against the usage of terms such as “battered woman” in reference to a survivor of gender violence. As the application of such a term demeans the woman’s experience and her relationship, using gender-neutral terms in an instance of femicide skews the true intent of the crime—killing a woman for her gender.

Another reason that feminist activists may be hesitant in exploring femicide is because its victims are dead. In some cases, there is no one who can come forward and tell the woman’s story of her life and/or death. Also, death in general is considered a private affair in numerous societies—activists who publicly speak of the murdered woman may not only run the risk of hurting that woman’s loved ones, but also being accused of somehow profiting off that woman’s death (Radford and Russell 1992). Indeed, activists decrying the femicides in Ciudad Juárez have been accused of seeking personal gains, whether it be fame, expense-paid trips or monetary compensation.

There has also been discussion on re-defining what femicide is. Shalhoub-Kevorkian (2003) argues for expanding its contemporary definition to include women who have been effectively sentenced to “death row.” She does not use this term to signify incarcerated women who have received a death sentence. Rather, she applies it to women who have been threatened with murder, and who must continually live in the shadow of death. They are waiting, in perpetual fear, for the dreadful moment in which their lives will be taken from them. Shalhoub-Kevorkian speaks specifically of Palestinian women who have been threatened with “honor killing.” Women who have committed a perceived transgression that jeopardizes their family’s honor may be killed by male

family members to restore the honor. Arguably, then, the mothers and activists who are accused of “staining” Juárez with their outspoken protests, and who have subsequently received death threats could also be included under this new rubric of femicide.

Factors that Normalize or Contribute to Gender Violence in Latin America

With a solid theoretical understanding of why violence against women occurs, and how it may be socially reinforced, we will now examine theories on gender violence specifically within a Latin American context. Latin America is a vast region with considerable socio-cultural, linguistic and ethnic/racial diversity. However, there are similar or over-arching patriarchal ideologies and institutions throughout the region that have relegated women as second-class citizens and perpetuated gender violence. These ideas and institutions are not mutually exclusive, and scholars rarely write about one without mentioning the other. That being said, I have attempted to separate ideology from institution, analyzing both in this section.

Gendered Ideal Types

Literature on different gendered ideal types (or gendered social scripts) in Latin America include the concepts of machismo and marianismo. These two ideal types—while socially constructed—arguably have their roots in biologically deterministic theories of men’s aggressive and virile masculinity, and women’s passive and morally superior femininity. A number of scholars have argued that these diametrically opposed types lay the foundations for socially acceptable or expected male-female relations. Furthermore, these ideal types may normalize and perpetuate patterns of domestic violence. The macho is overbearing and aggressive in encounters with both sexes. He is

childlike, with a hot temper and a constant need to assert his physical superiority and dominance. Sexual potency and virility are cornerstones of this masculine identity: therefore, the quintessential macho man has many women whom he closely monitors and controls (Basham 1976; Rondon 2002; Stevens 1973; Wood and Price 1997). Numerous interview respondents attributed the femicides partly to the pervasive machismo that still exists in Mexico. Their thoughts on the relationship between machismo and gender violence and femicide in Juárez will be presented in the results and discussion chapter of this thesis.

The female ideal type that serves as the *macho*'s counterpart is a physical embodiment of the Virgin Mary. Women who play this role perceive themselves, and are perceived, as morally and spiritually superior to their male partners. They do not enjoy sexual intercourse, but they engage in it because their ultimate calling is anchored in motherhood. When the women become mothers, they sacrifice and suffer for the sake of the family. Furthermore, they must endure their men's domination, temper and infidelity with quiet dignity. Doing so is actually necessary to "secure" their position as martyrs within the family dynamic (Basham 1976; Rondon 2002; Stevens 1973; Wood and Price 1997).

In the machismo/marianismo gender dichotomy, there is usually the addition of a third key player—the "bad" woman or the whore. She is, in fact the entity that makes the *macho*'s philandering and the Marian aspirant's ascension into martyrdom possible (Stevens 1973). In Brazil and the Caribbean, the seductress is symbolized as the *mulata*. Literally, a *mulata* is a woman of mixed African and European descent. However, she

has been romanticized and denigrated, placed in ambiguous cultural position in society. The *mulata* is a powerful symbol of national identity in countries such as Cuba and Brazil. She is a physical reminder of the country's racial roots and composition. Throughout time, she has also evolved as a dangerously seductive being—with her voluptuous form gyrating to African rhythms, the image of the *mulata* has been used to sell both commercial and cultural products to the masses (Kneese 2005; Pravaz 2000).

The first *mulatas* were products of violence: the white master raping the black slave (Kneese 2005; Pravez 2000; Robinson and Epstein 1994). However, this history has become highly distorted and romanticized, with the black slave seducing the helpless white master (Pravez 2000). Furthermore, women's sexual purity before marriage and fidelity in marriage may be seen as a direct reflection upon the family honor. So violence may be used as a method to control female family members' purity (Robinson and Epstein 1994).

Evelyn Stevens' article and subsequent book on *machismo* and *marianismo* (1973) was pioneering and is still often referenced and quoted. Recently, the concept of *machismo* and *marianismo* has been used in conjunction with explaining public and sexual health issues affecting Hispanic communities throughout Latin America and in the United States, such as AIDS transmission (Cianelli, Ferrer and McElmurry 2008; Valencia-Garcia, Starks, Strick and Simoni 2008; Wood and Price 1997).

However, there have been arguments that the *machismo/marianismo* dichotomy is overly simplistic and reductionist, an ideal that no longer reflects contemporary gender relations in Latin America. Norma I. Cofresí (1999), for example, conducted a case study

among thirty Puerto Rican women with higher educational degrees, working in a variety of professional settings. Her findings concluded that these women were in a state of transition in terms of gender and sexuality: while they still honored such “traditional” Puerto Rican values as close family ties, they also wanted to pursue and realize their own professional goals, as well as foster egalitarian sexual and child rearing relationships.

Also, since the 1970s “ordinary” mothers have been leaving the domestic sphere (*la casa*) to protest the disappearances of their loved ones and denounce state-sponsored repression in the streets (*la calle*). In the process, they have formed formidable organizations such as *The Madres of the Plaza de Mayo* in Argentina and *CoMadres* in El Salvador (Chassen-López 1997). These two particular motherist groups will be discussed in further detail at the end of this chapter. As Latin American women across class lines publically challenge the status quo and denounce oppression in its many forms, they are re-defining the concept of womanhood and motherhood.

Structural Factors

What structural or institutional factors have contributed to or exacerbated violence against women? Scholars consistently mention poverty and unemployment as potential factors. These arguments probably stem from a class analysis approach—that crises such as unemployment or long-term social and economic impotence may incite men to assert physical dominance over the women in their lives. When these socio-economic stressors are not present, scholars may analyze the data from radical feminist perspectives that the social structures and institutions are inherently patriarchal in and of themselves.

Sylvia Chant (1997), as cited by Prieto-Carrón, Thomson and Macdonald (2007), reported that incidents of domestic violence in poor Latin American neighborhoods actually rose during economic crises. Further, sweeping neo-liberal economic policies and globalization have placed women in precarious employment positions. Work in Mexican and Central American *maquilas* is often predicated on exploiting a cheap, docile feminine workforce (Prieto-Carrón, Thomson and Macdonald 2007; Salzinger 2003). Informal jobs undertaken by women—street vending and domestic work, for example—can also be dangerous and exploitative. It has been postulated that these jobs come attached with some inherent threat of violence (Prieto-Carron, Thomson and Macdonald 2007).

A case study specifically focusing on domestic violence in Lima, Peru found that poverty may increase the incidence of psychological and sexual violence in the home, but there was not a definitive correlation between poverty and physical violence in the home. Interestingly enough, this case study did not find a positive correlation between a male partner's unemployment and increased violence. In fact, employed men were more likely to be abusers, since they were still the family breadwinner, or at least contributing a wage (Gonzales de Olarte and Gavilano Llosa 1999). The general model in the class analysis approach, as described by Walby (1990), may not necessarily be applicable in this instance, because it is not apparent that there are clear economic hardships precipitating gender violence.

Conversely, RJ Gelles (1974) and P. Bourgeois (1996), as cited in Rachel Jewkes (2002) article on intimate partner violence, argue that unemployed men may in

fact be more likely to abuse. Their masculinity is threatened because they can no longer provide for the family. If they cannot assert their dominance and control financially, they may resort to doing so physically (Jewkes 2002). These ideas may clearly correspond to both the general and the sub cultural models found in the class analysis approach—not only is unemployment (a significant economic stressor) found, but also the men fail to carry out their “manly” duties as provider, and must assert their masculine dominance in an alternative way.

Radical feminist theories on women’s continued subjugation through patriarchal social institutions (Brownmiller 1975; French 1992; Walby 1990) may also have credence in the Latin American case study. Consider, for instance, the research that Mary Ellsberg, Jerker Liljestrand and Anna Winkvist (1997) conducted on *La Red de Mujeres Contra la Violencia* (the Network of Women against Violence) in Nicaragua. This *Red*, composed of 152 different organizations, has been primarily concerned with making the Nicaraguan government more accountable and proactive in eradicating gender violence. Additionally, the Network promotes awareness of cultural norms and values that legitimate such violence. In 1996, the Network teamed with researchers from the National Autonomous University of Nicaragua in León. It was presented to the National Assembly, to whom the Network had been continuously lobbying for eight months to pass a more comprehensive domestic violence bill. Of particular importance were establishing restraining orders, and categorizing psychological violence as a crime. The Networks’ intense lobbying campaign paid off—the bill was passed with unanimous support, with an amendment on psychological abuse. The passage of the bill was largely

an unprecedented milestone in the eradication of violence against women—especially concerning psychological violence. However, in most instances, domestic violence cases still did not go to court. Some court judges and Supreme Court Justices were of the opinion that battered women were also culpable for the abuse (Ellsberg, Liljestrabd and Winkvist 1997).

In the context of gender violence and femicide in Ciudad Juárez, ideological factors do play a role to a certain extent. As I will discuss in detail in Chapter 5, some of my interview respondents attributed the rise and continuation of the femicides in part to *machismo* and gender roles that both men and women perpetuate. However, neither they nor I would solely attribute the atrocities occurring in Juárez to gendered ideal types; to do so would risk passing a dangerous and false judgment that women in city have been victims of “death by culture” (Narayan 1997, 84). Rather, as Chapter 3 will demonstrate, the femicides occur in large part due to a number of context-specific and interrelated structural factors such as the *maquiladoras* and their disproportionate recruitment of women, border industrialization and free trade agreements, and the city’s omnipotent drug cartels and their corruption of law enforcement and justice administration.

Women’s Movements and Motherist Organizations in Latin America

Women’s movements throughout Latin America started gaining momentum in the 1970s and 80s, and have often been intimately linked to greater national struggles against repressive authoritarian regimes and/or supporting a new form of government—often democracy (Alvarez 1998; Basu 1995; Sternbach, Navarro-Aranguren, Chuchryk and Alvarez 1992).

With the first feminist *Encuentro* (or Encounter) held in Bogotá, Colombia in 1981, female activists from throughout the region had the opportunity to discuss women's issues found in their respective countries (Sternbach, Navarro-Aranguren, Chuchryk and Alvarez 1992). This first *Encuentro*, and the several subsequent *Encuentros* occurring throughout the 1980s, brought crucial discussions on topics from women's health to lesbianism to conflict, violence and political movements (Chase 1988). Furthermore, they have not only produced connections among a diverse group of women, but they have also exerted influence upon national agendas and public policies (Lavrin 1998; Sternbach, Navarro-Aranguren, Chuchryk and Alvarez 1992).

The remainder of this section will firstly discuss some motherist groups that responded to state-sponsored "disappearances" or murders of their loved ones. Arguably two of the most prominently-known organizations in this region have been *Madres de la Plaza de Mayo* of Argentina, and the *CoMadres* of El Salvador. These organizations, both still in existence, exemplify the shift of motherhood from the private into the public sphere, and as a tool of resistance that occurred in a number of Latin American countries (Bejarano 2002; Chassen-López 1997). This section will secondly include a brief examine Latin American women's regional meetings centered around egregious human rights violations such as femicide.

Fourteen women who had lost children and/or grandchildren during Argentina's brutal 1976-1983 Dirty War originally founded the *Madres de la Plaza de Mayo*. The group, whose numbers have since grown in the hundreds, has relentlessly questioned the police and military authorities as to the whereabouts of their loved ones. They have

carried photographs and other images or symbols of those they've lost, and they've marched religiously every Thursday afternoon throughout the Plaza de Mayo. The group's objectives have been expanded to include human rights issues for the country's indigenous population as well as policy making and legislation (Bejarano 2002).

The *CoMadres* was founded by nine Salvadoran mothers in 1977, before the country erupted into a bloody civil war. These women, mostly peasant laborers from the countryside, also went to military and police officials to inquire about their “disappeared” children (many of whom were falsely labeled as subversives), and orchestrated protests. Today, the group has some 550 members and analyzes other human rights issues pertinent to El Salvador, such as job and educational attainment and violence against women (Bejarano 2002).

The mothers in the streets have employed two important aspects of idealized motherhood in Latin America: the “good” mother who does everything in her power to protect her beloved children, and the *mater dolorosa*, or the mother who suffers and mourns for her children. However, these women have made an important move away from the private sphere into the public sphere, collectively demonstrating their pain and anger, holding mementos of their precious loved ones, and demanding that the truth come out about those who have been “disappeared” by the state (Bejarano 2002; Chassen-López 1997). Their public efforts have not come without intense scrutiny and persecution—twelve mothers from the *Madres de la Plaza de Mayo* have “disappeared” themselves, and the Salvadoran military has attacked the *CoMadres*. At the same time,

they have set a powerful example for other mothers facing similar situations in the Latin American region (Bejarano 2002).

Both the *Madres of the Plaza de Mayo* and the *CoMadres* are demonstrative of informal and formal women's (or motherist) organizations that arose throughout Latin America in response to state-sponsored repression and brutality. They have also served as a template for later motherist organizations in the region. Motherist groups located in Ciudad Juárez are not responding to state-prompted disappearances and murders of their daughters *per se*, though as I will later discuss, local and Chihuahua state law enforcement officials have been speculated to be accomplices. However, organizations such as *Justicia para Nuestras Hijas* (based in Chihuahua City) and *Nuestras Hijas de Regreso a Casa* (in Ciudad Juárez) have employed similar techniques of demanding that their daughters' disappearances be investigated and waging organized demonstrations in the city's downtown area or near one of the international bridges. They are also perpetuating the legacy of these women's ceaseless work and courage in the face of threats and persecution, and even death in some instances.

The issue of femicide and its prevalence within Latin America was highlighted during a 2006 conference of the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (a department within the Organization of American States). A representative from Mexico, Marimar Monroy, emphasized that femicide has not only been contained to Ciudad Juárez, or Mexican borders, for that matter. Growing numbers of femicide are also occurring in Central American countries such as El Salvador, Honduras and Guatemala, and South American nations such as Colombia. In these nations, women may be targeted

and murdered to instill and perpetuate fear (as in the case of Colombian paramilitaries). It has also served as a means to send messages to political figures, such as in El Salvador and Honduras (Chapman and Seelhoff 2006).

In addition to drawing attention to the scope of femicide and its different forms in Latin America, the representatives present reprimanded Latin American governments to protect their most vulnerable citizens (in this case, young and impoverished women) and demanded that they take decisive steps in upholding the rights of women (Chapman and Seelhoff 2006).

Important Themes in Women's Organizing

As a researcher analyzing women's organizational movements occurring in Ciudad Juárez and the Juárez-El Paso greater border community, I have encountered a number of themes that are central to women's organizing in local, national and international contexts. Some of these themes, though not without important variations, do seem to transcend cultural, linguistic, religious and geopolitical boundaries. Furthermore, the researcher—and particularly those studying women's movements in an international or cross-cultural context—must make the effort to transcend (or at least acknowledge) his/her own paradigms and biases when looking at these organizational movements.

The themes (or rather, questions) that I will address in this section are as follows: around which issues do women organize? Are they considered “women's issues” and do the participants identify their movements as “women's” or “feminist” movements? Who is appointed to organize and/or sustain these movements? Through what channels (such

as governments or religion) do women organize? How do women's participation in these movements impact other arenas of their lives? And finally, what are some benefits or drawbacks of women's international organizing?

In the Western paradigm, some problems such as domestic violence, rape and non gender discriminatory policies in the public sphere have become key issues in which women activists or feminists have organized themselves. Certainly the femicides occurring in Ciudad Juárez fall into this notion of a "women's issue." Particularly throughout the Third World, there are women's movements organized around—or springing from—other movements, needs or issues that do not necessarily fit into the Western mindset of what a "women's issue" is. Agricultural or land reform, for instance, may comprise a significant women's issue if women comprise a significant percentage of their nation's agricultural workers, such as is the case in Nicaragua (Randall 1995). Furthermore, a lack of rights to the land and what to cultivate on it may directly correlate to a "women's issue" such as breast cancer and other women's health issues (Trask 1996).

Indeed, some so-called women's issues occurring in the Third World (such as dowry deaths in India or the hyper-feminization of women in China) are a direct result of the colonial legacy, or have occurred in part due to globalization, the arrival of a capitalist consumer economy, etc (Narayan 1997; Yang 1999). Western researchers, then, must be aware of any inadvertent biases they may have (such as a "colonialist stance"), and take particular care in not attributing a women's issue solely to a national,

monolithic and archaic culture while ignoring other contemporary occurrences and factors (Narayan 1997, 56).

Another important theme to consider is that the women activists in these organizational movements may consciously decide not to identify themselves as “feminists.” For one thing, the name may conjure up connotations of Western imperialism or bourgeoisie—a foreign concept that is not necessarily relevant to their specific organizational movements (Busheikin 1997; Golly 2004; Molyneux 2001; Siklova 1997). And as I will further explain in a moment, women’s movements may be within the context of or intimately linked to another type of movement entirely; therefore, women do not wish to define what they are doing as a “women’s movement” as it may downplay or exclude that greater context (Frank 2005).

Women’s movements throughout the world may spring from, or occur simultaneously within the context of a greater local or national movement. I discussed earlier that many organized women’s movements in Latin America arose from national struggles against authoritarian regimes and/or to install a new form of government. For example, women were key actors in the Sandinista revolution in Nicaragua. They fulfilled roles such as smuggling goods to the guerrillas, political organizing and even fighting alongside their male compatriots. It was through such political involvement that women began to reflect upon and address their own subjugation (Molyneux 2001; Randall 1995). Women’s organizational movements have also occurred through other channels such labor movements (Frank 2005; Rose 1992) and religious affiliation (Hallum 2003; Machado 1993). It is important for the researcher to keep such ties in

mind; though female organizational participants may be helping other women and/or raising awareness about gender oppression, they may not identify the work within the narrow confines of a feminist or women's movement.

The next salient theme is how women may be appointed as organizational participants, or even leaders, and subsequently, how "qualified" they are to address local and national issues. Some pervasive—and misguided—theories from the West posit that middle-class women in Third World countries spearhead women's movements, and/or that such movements have been modeled on or "imported" from Western countries (Basu 1995; Siklova 1997). Such theories are problematic for a number of reasons. Firstly, they completely ignore the incredible (and I would argue universal) capacity of women's organizational movements not only to include women who are poor and may have little to no formal education, but also to actually place them in positions in which they can voice their opinions and concerns, and spearhead decision-making processes. Women of diverse socio-economic and educational backgrounds, for example, have been instrumental in labor movements in Honduras and India (Frank 2005; Rose 1992).

Secondly, the belief that non-Western, indigenous women's or "feminist" movements have been modeled or imported from the West seeks to undermine the remarkable capacity to organize across various levels of social stratification (even gender!). Even worse, governments and/or nationalist movements may level this exact same erroneous charge against women's movements in order to discredit or potentially even dismantle them (Narayan 1997).

Finally, I will address some of the positive and negative implications of women's individual involvement in local, national and transnational movements. On one hand, women can find such involvement to be both empowering and enlightening. For instance, during their involvement in the Sandinista Revolution in Nicaragua, some women were able to learn how to read and write. Also, their crucial participation in the struggle not only enabled them to become more politically aware, but also to express their own opinions. This, in turn, allowed women to re-negotiate some of their roles within the family context (Randall 1995). Within the context of the Latin American Pentecostal movement, some female members have also been able to better provide for their families and/or change abusive behaviors such as alcoholism or domestic violence (Hallum 2003).

Similarly, regional and international conferences such as the 2004 Coalition of Latin American Banana Unions conference and the 1995 Fourth World Conference on Women held in Beijing have been opportunities for women to travel outside of their respective countries and directly interact with one another (Frank 2005; Hsiung and Wong 1998). Such interactions may prove beneficial for a number of reasons. For one thing, they may help break down cultural barriers or misconceptions. Secondly, women may be able to use the information they've learned and the relationships they've formed to establish their own grassroots movements and/or potentially re-negotiate their status as women within their family, community and nation (Hsiung and Wong 1998).

On the other hand, women's involvement in such organized movements is not always beneficial. Consider, for instance, the significant work that women already do for

their families and communities. In the Indian context, for example, women often work in various sectors of the informal economy. These self-employed women may work anywhere from 12 to 20 hours per day. The vast majority (if not all) of their wages go directly to benefit other family members; in fact, they may provide the only consistent source of income (Rose 1992). In the context of the Honduran labor movement, the *mujeres bananeras* (many of whom are single) simultaneously work long days on the banana plantations, take care of their homes and families and participate in (or run) their unions (Frank 2005).

While women may be able to delegate some tasks to other family members or friends, they often essentially end up working multiple “shifts” which deplete their physical and emotional energy. Working multiple shifts, combined with the reality that they cannot possibly give 100% to every arena of their lives, may create powerful conflict within these women. One woman who participated in the Sandinista Revolution recounted that she was so torn between the struggle and her family, that she almost left her children behind (Randall 1995). In contrast, a number of the *mujeres bananeras* admitted they felt guilty that other family members were often raising their children while they were at work (Frank 2005).

Within the national context, women’s movements may be subjected to governmental manipulation and/or rejection. After the 1949 Communist Revolution, for example, women were legally declared to be men’s equals. While such a declaration did produce some tangible benefits, and the government in fact created a branch of government for women’s issues, it also closed the door on recognition, discussion and

organization around gender differences and issues disproportionately affecting women (Yang 1999). The Stalinist regime in Russia, the Soviet Union and its satellite states similarly declared that the “woman question” had been solved, thereby quelling further discussion (Racioppi and See 2000, 207; Acsady 1999).

Also, while state sponsorship of women’s movements may be critical in terms of calling widespread attention to women’s inequalities and passing legislation granting women more rights, it also grants the state the privilege of defining what “women’s liberation” is and designating which women’s rights are unalienable. For example, in communist Russia, women’s entrance into the workforce was liberating—because the government needed more laborers. In fact, Stalin propagated the myth of the “superwoman”—who was both an exemplary worker and an exceptional mother (Racioppi and See 2000, 210). However, when Russian birth rates began declining dramatically, Mikhail Gorbachev “liberated” women by placing them back in the domestic sphere and encouraging motherhood (Racioppi and See 2000). Before the Fourth World Conference on Women, the Chinese government publicly lauded the women’s movement and declared that the People’s Republic was working diligently on proposing gender equality. But when they later perceived women’s organizational movements as a threat to the government, they made a powerful political statement and moved the NGO forum away from the capital city of Beijing. At this same conference, the Vatican and Islamic governments rejected platforms regarding issues such as women’s sexuality and control over reproduction (Bunch and Fried 1996).

Finally, transnational or international women's movements can also be problematic. For one thing, any agreements reached in the context of an international conference may be vaguely defined and non-binding (Bunch and Fried 1996). Colonial or Cold War legacies that have bred mistrust and myths may also serve as a barrier between among an international group of women (Busheikin 1997, Narayan 1997). Also, when international activists become involved in local women's issues in another country, they may—intentionally or inadvertently—manipulate the movement to accommodate their ideas of what is best, or acknowledge or appoint a local “representative” who effectively overshadows the others involved, or who does not even best represent the spirit and intentions of the movement as a whole (Rojas 2005).

The themes I have just finished outlining can serve as powerful tools for the researcher—especially if the researcher is Western and is studying a Third World country, as in my case. They seek to re-configure any of the researcher's preconceived notions of what women's issues or women's movements are, how they look, through what channels they are organized, who leads them and who participates them, etc. Such a broader understanding can lead the researcher to new avenues that he/she had never previously considered before. These themes can also make the researcher aware of any biases that he/she may have (especially if the researcher is Western-educated and studying a Third World country) and how to potentially confront them.

CHAPTER 3: THE FEMICIDES IN CONTEXT

I asked several of my interview respondents two key questions about the femicides in Ciudad Juárez to better comprehend the peculiarity and extremity of the situation: how were these murders different from other homicides, which also occur at alarming rates? And why were they occurring specifically in Ciudad Juárez, and not in another part of Mexico or the world?

They offered a variety of explanations, citing factors such as machismo, the presence of the *maquiladoras*, or the dominion of the drug cartels. Also, some of the respondents emphasized that the murders have not been strictly confined to Juárez. In Mexico, for example, women have been similarly murdered in Chihuahua city. In fact, one of the women's organizations (*Justicia para Nuestras Hijas*) is based in Chihuahua City and exclusively works with cases there. Furthermore, as the previous chapter briefly discussed, instances of femicide have occurred in other Latin American countries, particularly during times of political and/or military conflict (Chapman and Seelhoff 2006).

The chilling fact that femicide is perpetrated throughout Latin America and the rest of the world does not diminish the severity of what has occurred in Ciudad Juárez. It is an exceptional case meriting serious discussion because of the extended period of time in which the femicides have been occurring, the nature of the crimes, and the numbers of women who have been found murdered or who have seemingly “disappeared.” I will argue, in fact, that there are some specific historical, sociological and geographical

variables present in the Ciudad Juárez context have created the so-called “perfect storm” of conditions conducive to large numbers of femicides over a sustained period of time. This chapter will study such variables, and subsequently argue how each of them has contributed to an environment conducive to prolonged femicide. The first section will re-introduce some key information about the femicides. The second section will then present the variables that have contributed to a climate of femicide in Ciudad Juárez. The variables represented will fall under three broad categories: geography, sociology and history. Please note that there are myriad social conditions and problems present in Juárez. Some of these may have also directly and indirectly contributed to the contemptuous climate toward human life (and women in particular). The variables listed here are ones that have come up consistently in the literature and/or during the interview process. Furthermore, while I have attempted to separate the variables into three categories for my convenience and the convenience of the reader, they may fit into multiple categories, and often interplay with one another.

The Femicides

Femicide is the act of males killing females *because* they are females (Russell 2001). Since 1993, over 400 women have been murdered in Ciudad Juárez for no other apparent reason than their biological sex (Marín 2007; Pearson 2007). The majority of the murder victims fit a pattern or profile. They were young (usually between twelve and thirty years of age), came from poor families and neighborhoods, and were abducted as they were shopping, waiting for public transit, or traveling via public transit (Pearson 2007; Rodriguez 2007). It has also been proposed that the murder victims fit a physical

profile, with characteristics such as long, dark hair, petite frame, and attractive features (Hellard 2007; Rodriguez 2007).

According to Diana Washington Valdez's investigative report "Death Stalks the Border", printed in the *El Paso Times* in 2002, one in five of the femicide victims worked at one of Juárez's nearly three hundred *maquiladoras*. The remainder of the victims ranged from students to housewives, store clerks and small business owners. Furthermore, victims were not only originally from Ciudad Juárez and other areas of Mexico, but from other Latin American nations such as Honduras, and El Paso. A tourist from the Netherlands was also found murdered (Washington Valdez 2002).

Around 195 of the women had apparently been murdered in episodes of domestic or drug-related violence (the total femicide count was around 325 at the time that Washington Valdez's report was published). Some 90 murdered women had been linked to a potential serial killer, because of the similarly brutal ways in which they were tortured, mutilated, and then murdered (Washington Valdez 2002). In fact, the drug-related murders and the serial murders could very well be linked to the same organization. During our interview, Ms. Washington Valdez asserted that her extensive research points to the Carrillo drug cartel, which took over trafficking operations in Juárez in 1993, and proved to be nearly immune to the law enforcement or governmental authorities.

The gruesome (and sometimes gender-specific) ways in which these women were tortured and then killed clearly distinguish them from male homicide victims. The bodies have been found riddled with stab wounds and bite marks. Signs of rape have been

detected, breasts mutilated, hair chopped off and faces disfigured (Rodriguez 2007, Washington Valdez 2002). Some women were tied up with their own shoelaces (Rodriguez 2007). One woman had been stuffed into a 55-gallon drum filled with acid (Washington Valdez 2002).

Shockingly, the Chihuahua law enforcement authorities, state police and Mexican federal government have been disturbingly silent and lethargic in responding to these atrocities. In fact, international human rights organizations, such as Amnesty International and the Washington Office on Latin America, have reported inefficiencies and blatant cover-ups in state investigations since the beginning of the murders, fourteen years ago. Evidence at the crime scenes have been overlooked or used improperly, forensic examinations have been carelessly done and analyzed (if done at all) and rumors circulate that organized crime members and local affluent citizens are paying off the Chihuahua police force (Hellard 2007; Wright 2005).

Additionally, some of the perpetrators sitting in jail have been reportedly framed, tortured into giving a false confession. Claudia Cony Velarde, a special federal investigator appointed in 2004 by ten President Vicente Fox declared that 103 officials in Chihuahua had misused their power and/or failed to act when called upon. However, this investigator was not granted the authority to punish the officials (Hellard 2007; Wright 2005). Whether or not the local and state authorities are actually complicit in the femicides, they routinely demonstrated ambivalence and wielded accusations against the murder victims, their families, and the countless other women who have disappeared in Juárez. For instance, Melissa Wright (2004) states that when a girl is reported as missing,

the police officer often immediately asks, “Are you sure she wasn’t leading a double life?” Instead of being attributed to police and government incompetence, the multitudes of murdered and disappearing women are perceived as an unfortunate—but unsurprising—destiny for the “bad” women in Juárez (Wright 2004).

A Recipe for Murder: Analyzing Variables that Have Created a Climate of Prolonged Violence against Women in Juárez

In order to better understand the prolonged femicides in Ciudad Juárez—and the largely superficial response of the governments—it is helpful to have a general knowledge of some of the city’s crucial historical events, social attitudes about women and their gender role, and geographical configurations. This particular section will be divided into three sub-sections that analyze some of these key historical, sociological and geographical variables. For instance, in the history section, I will look at Ciudad Juárez during the Prohibition era, the government-sponsored period of border development in the 1960s, and after the implementation of NAFTA in 1994. In the sociological variables section, I will analyze *machismo* and *marianismo* specifically within a Mexican context, as well as the social implications of women’s entrance into the *maquiladora* workforce. The geographical variables will include the population booms occurring in Juárez over the past fifty years or so, as well as the omnipotence of the Carrillo drug cartel. Each set of variables will conclude with explanations of how they have helped create a sustained climate of femicide in Juárez.

Historical Variables: Ciudad Juárez during the Prohibition Era, PRONAF, The Border Industrialization Program and NAFTA

Contemporary Ciudad Juárez conjurs up negative images such as inter-drug cartel warfare and the wholesale slaughters of both men and women. It has been bestowed such unenviable titles as *la ciudad de muerte* (the city of death). However, the unpleasant connotations and nefarious reputation marring the city can be traced back to the early twentieth century. In 1915, the Boston Herald denounced Juárez as “The Most Wickedest City in the World” (Rodriguez and Hagan 2001). After having visited Ciudad Juárez, American consul John Dye denounced the city as a lair of illicit activity and violence, a “Mecca for criminals and degenerates from both sides of the border.” A Christian evangelical similarly commented “I would rather shoot my son and throw his body into the river rather than have him spend an hour in the raging inferno of Juárez” (Martínez 1975).

Juárez’s already immoral image further deteriorated as El Paso and the rest of the state of Texas were declared “dry” in 1918. By 1920, wholesale prohibition of alcohol manufacture and consumption was declared throughout the United States. Mexican cities just across the border, conversely, did not institute such restrictions. Bootleggers from American cities such as Chicago and St. Louis flocked to border cities such as Juárez, in order to establish bars and other businesses. They conducted booming business in the industries of “sin”—booze, prostitution and gambling—as American tourists, particularly from the Southwest, streamed across the border in droves (Martínez 1975). As New

York Times writer Henry Shukman (2006) describes it, Juárez “became a shadow city, where you could find delights denied at home.”

Interestingly enough, profits from these decadent industries contributed to the community development and implementation of infrastructure in some of the Mexican border cities. Ciudad Juárez flourished during this time, implementing and expanding important public services such as electricity, sewage and public transportation. However, economic development was not evenly distributed, and the border cities operated under a disarticulated economy—severed from the rest of Mexico and dependent upon the United States. Furthermore, the El Paso Chamber of Commerce actively promoted tourism to its sister city. The constant flow between the two cities became so great that two new transnational bridges were constructed within a decade. However, the propaganda depicting Ciudad Juárez as a lavish playground catering to vice only contributed to its already nasty image in the United States and throughout the world (Martínez 1975).

The second set of historical variables concerns the Mexican government-sponsored programs implemented in the 1960s and aimed at industrializing and “cleaning up” the image of its underdeveloped northernmost border. In 1961, it launched the *Programa Nacional Fronterizo* (The National Frontier Program, or PRONAF). The primary objectives of PRONAF were to essentially undo the damage of the early 20th century, and especially during the Prohibition Era. Firstly, it would decrease *fronterizo*’s (or border dwellers’) dependence upon imported goods by providing domestic replacements, as well as enhance the general quality of life for the communities residing along the border. Secondly, PRONAF would also boost Mexico’s image—if the “Doors

to Mexico” could be cleaned up and made presentable, perhaps they would cast a favorable light upon the rest of the country. Investments flowed to the border, coming from both public and private sectors, and being used to build commercial centers in border towns. Thirty percent of the total PRONAF money went to Juárez, for such construction projects as hotels, restaurants, a Museum of Art and History, a convention center and a shopping center (Martínez 1975).

In the middle of the 1960s, border towns such as Juárez underwent another important transition. The modern *maquiladora*, or foreign-owned processing plant, first appeared in Ciudad Juárez in 1965 under the federal government’s Border Industrialization Program, or BIP (see Figure 2). This initiative occurred after the termination of the U.S. Bracero Program. This program had legally allowed Mexican migrants to fill seasonal or temporary jobs. After its demise, the Mexican government had to rapidly absorb the droves of returning migrant workers who had been recently unemployed. The government passed less stringent laws on accepting foreign capital. They developed and implemented the Border Industrialization Program, an initiative to encourage the building of factories and other industrial centers along the U.S.-Mexico border. Investors from the United States saw an enticing opportunity in the industry as well, as Mexican labor and environmental laws were lax or even non-existent compared to those found in their own country. These factories slowly trickled in to Juárez and other important border cities such as Tijuana and Reynosa (Landau 2005).

The Border Industrialization Program was ostensibly successful—by 1975, a purported 67,000 jobs had been filled in the *maquilas*. However, this impressive statistic

Figure 2: This is one of the approximately 300 *maquiladoras* currently in Ciudad Juárez.
Source: Rachel Barnstable



omits a powerful and unprecedented fact—by the 1980s, some 80 percent of the *maquila* workers were women (Salzinger 2003; Wright 2001). This statistic must not be undervalued—it changed Mexican family and gender roles, and spurred outrage among many of Juárez’s society members. Furthermore, the *maquiladora* conditions under which women worked—and the sheer volume of potential workers—have contributed to women’s objectification and disposability within Juárez society (Pearson 2007; Salzinger 2003; Wright 2003). Women’s entrance into the *maquilas*, while certainly a landmark historical event, will be discussed in further detail in the sociological category.

The third and final historical variable presented in this section is the signing and the implementation of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) in 1993. This unprecedented continental trade agreement prompted the arrival of even more

foreign industries. Though the agreement provisioned that all U.S. owned *maquiladoras* throughout Mexico could enjoy the new tax breaks, the overwhelming majority of companies still chose to build their plants in conveniently located border cities such as Juárez. Though Tijuana had more plants, Juárez had the most *maquiladora* employees (Rodriguez 2007). As of 1999, the number of *maquiladoras*, or foreign-owned factories had reached two hundred seventy-three, with a workforce exceeding two hundred and nineteen thousand (Rodriguez and Hagan 2001). The allure of seemingly unlimited job opportunities prompted mass migration of Mexicans throughout the nation, as well as people from other Latin American nations (Rodriguez 2007). Two notable consequences of NAFTA and the massive migrations it spurred are the glut of potential *maquiladora* workers (heightening women's disposability) and the unbridled, unplanned urban growth that has left women increasingly susceptible to violent attacks. These consequences will be further examined respectively in the sociological and geographical sections.

Connections to Climate of Femicide in Juárez

Each of the historical variables mentioned—Ciudad Juárez during Prohibition, 1960s government development programs such as PRONAF and the BIP, and NAFTA—all produced important repercussions for contemporary Juárez. Martínez (1975) stressed that the city underwent important boom and bust cycles—the city's efficient expansion and prosperity was only temporary. Prostitution became a highly visible and lucrative industry during the Prohibition era, and was one of the first occupations women held outside of the home. The historical significance of prostitution haunted women who went to work in the *maquiladoras*. PRONAF and the arrival of the *maquiladoras* via the BIP,

while intended to develop the northernmost border, further developed a disarticulated economy in which border cities such as Juárez were more intimately linked to the United States than Mexico. Furthermore, the industries tapped into a new source of supposedly easily manipulated and cheap labor: women. It seems that any notion of the Mexican government's administration of and regulation over the *maquiladoras* was further hampered with the signing and implementation of NAFTA. Furthermore, the massive migration north prompted by the irresistible allure of well-paying jobs sought to cheapen the capitalist value of women even more—after all, the supply of women outstripped the demand. All of these historical events (or more importantly, their repercussions and the Juárez society's response to them) have created a framework in which women have been increasingly devalued.

*Sociological Factors: Machismo/Marianismo and the Whore in Mexican Context,
Women's Entrance into the Maquiladora Workforce, and Conditions in the Workplace
for Women*

Chapter two discussed three key gender types within the Latin American context: the *macho*, the Virgin or the Marian aspirant, and the Whore. These types are evident and influential in Mexican society, as well. Evelyn P. Stevens (1973) remarks in her discussion of macho and Marian ideal types, "Mexicans like to think that machismo is an exclusively Mexican phenomenon: the country's principal product." The Virgin of Guadalupe is a uniquely Mexican icon; as the patron saint of Mexico, she is the epitomized mother figure (Martin 1990; Taylor 1987). Doña Marina, or La Malinche, was Hernán Cortes' indigenous interpreter and lover during the Spanish conquest. J.L.

Alegria (1975) and Octavio Paz (1961), as cited by Joann Martin (1990), write that la Malinche is also sometimes referred to as 'La Chingada', raped by the foreign invader and giving birth to the first *mestizo*—a child of mixed European and indigenous descent, essentially the Mexican race. This perception is comparable to the *mulata*, raped by her white master but later portrayed as the seductress. While one woman is the virtuous savior of Mexico and the other reviled as a whorish traitor, Octavio Paz (1961), as cited by Martin (1990), argues that these diametrically opposed ideal types both represent feminine passivity. Because of such idealized gender types and roles, Mexican women have traditionally been relegated to the domestic sphere; their ultimate aspiration to be a doting wife and mother. Like the Virgin of Guadalupe, the dutiful wife is socially labeled as "good" or "decent", and the woman who works for a wage is "immoral" or a "prostitute" (Fernández-Kelly 1983; Wright 2004).

Historically, women working outside of the home in Juárez *were* prostitutes. Prostitution has been a flourishing and highly visible industry throughout the 20th century. In other areas of Mexico, prostitutes are confined to red-light districts, but prostitutes in Juárez are able to "advertise" wherever. Prostitutes are the most prominent "face" of Juárez shown to businessmen, tourists and military people. Prostitution and its place within the border economy is especially pertinent in understanding the working woman's status in contemporary Ciudad Juárez. This historical reality has significantly influenced social perceptions of women as they later went to work in the *maquiladoras* (Wright 2004). As they were deviating from the social norm of stay-at-home wife and

mother, these workers were perceived as ostensibly indistinguishable from Juárez's other "working women" (Fernández-Kelly 1983; Salzinger 2003; Wright 2001, 2003).

The second sociological variable that I will discuss is women's unparalleled entrance into the paid workforce. As mentioned previously, nearly 80 percent of *maquila* jobs were held by women by the 1980s (Salzinger 2003; Wright 2001). The question is, why would these industries almost exclusively recruit women if it went against women's "natural" role as stay-at-home wives? Plant managers defended their unorthodox decision with biologically deterministic arguments, asserting that women's fingers were more nimble, they were more capable of handling tedious, repetitive assembly line work, and were more docile and obedient to authority figures. These notions, combined with the reality that women had not traditionally occupied industrial positions or been involved with labor organizing, led to the calming assumption that a predominantly female workforce would be less likely to "stir up trouble" (Nathan 1999; Salzinger 2003; Wright 2001). Furthermore, patriarchal capitalist structures used women as a "cheap" source of labor, receiving lower wages than their male counterparts (Salzinger 2003).

Patricia Fernández-Kelly and Leslie Salzinger both conducted separate field studies on female *maquiladora* workers in Ciudad Juárez, writing about these women's experiences and their context within the city. Fernández-Kelly published her work in 1983, as the proportion of female workers had reached its peak. Salzinger's account, published in 2003, adds a post-NAFTA perspective on the *maquiladora* system and its female employees. In both books, some female interviewees mentioned experiencing

greater autonomy at home and wishing to delay or even avoid marriage (and subsequent dependence on a man).

However, women's sudden and massive entrance into the workforce was viewed with criticism and alarm in larger social circles in the 1970s and 80s. The Ciudad Juárez elites, for instance, worried about female *maquiladora* worker's sexuality and the usurpation of men's role as the head of the family and breadwinner. Newspaper headlines decried the *maquiladoras* as "Fracture[ing] Traditional Mexican Family Structure and screamed "Prostitution in the Maquiladoras"; union leaders pleaded to hire male workers in order to stop the "assault on family unity" and offered classes to their female workers in order to preserve their feminine morality (Salzinger 2003, p. 38-41).

The third and final sociological variable presented in this section concerns the discriminatory and sexualized work conditions women have often faced in the *maquiladoras*. While individual women may feel more autonomous, *maquiladora* practices and work conditions have arguably sought to further de-value women in Juárez by rendering them as sexualized and/or disposable objects rather than human beings with unalienable rights. Some factory supervisors and managers have discriminated against pregnant applicants and employees by refusing to hire them or firing them upon discovering the pregnancy. The employees' fertility has often been monitored and micro-managed through such measures as mandatory pregnancy tests and contraceptive use, and monthly proof of menstruation (Fernández-Kelly 1983; Pearson 2007; Salzinger 2003). Hyper-sexualized gender interactions, sexual harassment and even sexual abuse have

been documented in the *maquiladoras* (Fernández-Kelly 1983; Pearson 2007; Ravelo and Sánchez 2006; Salzinger 2003).

Scholars have also reported a lack of corporate responsibility in ensuring *maquiladora* workers' safety and protection on and off the job. The female workers, in addition to being sexualized objects, are seen as disposable cogs—because of massive migrations inflows and a seemingly endless supply of nimble young women, a female worker can be replaced with ease. Therefore, it is not necessarily in the corporations' best interest to protect their workers, especially when they're not “on the clock” (Pearson 2007; Ravelo and Sánchez 2006).

Connections to the Climate of Femicide

Women's massive and unprecedented entrance into the *maquiladoras* was predicated on the notion of women as cheap, easy labor that could be paid less than men and would lack the knowledge of labor organization. The decision was legitimated with claims of women's ostensible physical and mental suitability in handling such repetitious work. Thus, while individual women may have gained a greater sense of autonomy within their homes, they were collectively being violated and exploited. Rather than being seen as human beings with rights, they were sexualized objects who could be ogled and whose reproduction could be manipulated. Furthermore, there was no need to spend money on their protection on and off the job, as they could be easily replaced.

Meanwhile, the rest of Juárez society perceived these women as singlehandedly destroying the family and moral fiber of “traditional” Mexican society. Working women

in Juárez have either been dehumanized or demonized, so the message either way is that it does not matter if they die.

Geographical Factors: Juárez's Geopolitical Isolation, Population Explosion and City Infrastructure, and The Drug Cartels and their Reign of Terror over Juárez

Geographical variables are also key factors in examining femicide in the Ciudad Juárez context. Chihuahua state's relative alienation from the Mexican government and the rest of the country, the vulnerability that women encounter as a result of poorly planned urban infrastructure, and Juárez's prime location as a corridor for drug trafficking specifically have contributed to the climate of femicide.

In his book *The U.S.-Mexican Border in the 20th Century*, David E. Lorey (1999) reports that from the time Mexico won its independence from Spain in 1821 to the end of the United States-Mexico war in 1848, the lands in the northern-most part of Mexico were not well-defined. That is, the boundary between the two nations was relatively fluid, and a subject of debate between both governments. One key problem was that Mexico City, located in the heart of the country, was simply too far away and did not understand the unique qualities and challenges inherent to life in these territories. The settlers there were summarily ignored for the most part, and did not feel like a part of the country. This geopolitical isolation continued throughout the century—Juárez was more connected to El Paso than it was with the rest of Mexico (Lorey 1999).

With modern advancements in transportation and information technologies, the isolation between Juárez and Mexico City has certainly narrowed considerably. In fact, as will be later discussed in this category, the federal government helped develop and

implement massive development and industrial projects along the northernmost Mexican border. However, the regulation of these industries quickly fell into the hands of the foreign corporations that owned them.

Perhaps the physical distance between Juárez and Mexico City has served as a convenient excuse for not decisively intervening in some of the border city's most urgent social problems? Until very recently, for example, the *distrito federal* has had to be coerced into taking any action in investigating and/or prosecuting those responsible for the murders. While this could stem from a fear that the nearly omnipotent Juárez drug cartel is perpetrating the crimes, the government's apathy and inaction toward femicide has once again alienated the people of Juárez.

The second geographical variable will analyze Juárez's intense population increases, as prompted by NAFTA, as well as its frenzied urban development and inadequate public infrastructural services. The subsequent increase in industrial plants and job opportunities triggered massive migration flows of workers throughout Mexico and other Latin American countries. In the space of ten years (from 1990-2000), the population of Juárez alone increased an unbelievable 53 percent. Comparatively, El Paso's population increased by 19 percent (Rodriguez and Hagan 2001). From 2000-2004, Juárez gained over two hundred thousand more residents (www.bordercounties.org).

The massive population booms within a very short period of time, in turn, have impacted the city's public service and infrastructural systems. As Univisión investigative reporter Teresa Rodriguez (2007, p.3) describes it, "the city's [Ciudad Juárez] roadways

were a hodgepodge of paved and unpaved streets, some marked, others anonymous sandy paths that led to the shantytowns and squatters' villages continually springing up on the outskirts of town." The unchecked growth of these settlements, also known as *colonias*, has left many of its residents without even the most basic amenities, such as potable running water and sewage systems, and electricity (Graham, Guriana, Corella-Baruda and Avitia-Diaz 2004).

Also, since these *colonias* are randomly located in the city's desert periphery, women often live far from the plants in which they work. Most of them, lacking their own transportation, must walk to catch a *rutera*, or one of the old U.S. school buses that Juárez uses for its public transportation. There, they wait for the bus to take them to their plant. The women who work one of the late or early morning shifts may only be able to find a bus taking them to the downtown, and from there, walk or find an alternate route home (Pearson 2007). These factors collectively create a situation in which women are especially susceptible to violent activity (Pearson 2007; Ravelo and Sánchez 2006).

The third and final geographical variable concerns the illicit drug trade in Ciudad Juárez. I place this particular phenomenon under geographical factors for the following reasons: According to the United States Drug Enforcement Administration, Ciudad Juárez and El Paso form a "corridor" that allow for substantial amounts of illegal substances such as cocaine and marijuana to flow over the border. Furthermore, its physical distance from the federal government in Mexico City may play a role in the government's inability to capture and prosecute the city's most influential drug kingpins. What Nestor Rodriguez and Jacqueline Hagan (2001) modestly describe as a "lucrative

trade”, the obscene profits to be made in drug dealing and trafficking has fueled local authorities’ corruption, generated bloody rival gang wars, and prompted numerous deaths of men and women alike.

In 1993, the leader of the Juárez drug cartel was murdered in Cancún, and kingpin Amado Carrillo Fuentes ascended to power. At this point in time, the cartel has already been generating unimaginable profits, earning approximately 200 million dollars *per week* just in cocaine sales. However, 1995 proved to be an unprecedented year for Fuentes and his cartel. The Cali cocaine cartel in Colombia disbanded and allowed for the Juárez drug cartel to control the smuggling and movement of cocaine through Mexico. This additional power allowed the Juárez drug cartel to move four times as much cocaine as other cartels in the country. Not surprisingly, Fuentes became the single most prominent drug trafficker in Mexico. He and his cartel alone accounted for some 70 percent of the circulation and selling of cocaine from Colombia (Soles McMillie 1999).

The Juárez drug cartel wielded a tremendous amount of unchecked power. This omnipotence co-opted the local and state authorities. In January 2004, thirteen officers from the Chihuahua state police department were being investigated for alleged complicity in drug trafficking and murder. In that month alone, 70 murders had occurred, attributed to wars between rivaling drug cartels (New York Times, January 30th, 2004). Phil Jordan, who formerly served as a special agent with the DEA, lamented that “The Juárez drug cartel corrupted federal, state and city police to such an extent that the police no longer investigate the murders. They’re too busy protecting drug shipments for the narcos” (Washington Valdez 2002).

Current Mexican president Felipe Calderón guaranteed when he entered office in 2006 that he would send federal troops to cities such as Juárez to combat the drug traffickers (Miller 2008). In a relatively short period of time, he had sent troops to traditional drug strongholds such as Tijuana, Morelia and Acapulco, dismantled the Tijuana police and extradited 11 alleged drug kingpins to the United States (McKinley 2007). However, what was initially an attempt to weaken the cartels and tamper the related violence became a more ambitious—and many say unattainable—initiative to end the drug trade altogether. As a response to the federal troops' presence, drug cartels in Mexico have claimed more victims. Innocents—those in no way connected to the drug trade—and children have even been murdered as part of a “message” to Calderón to call off the federal troops (Miller 2008). This mirrors what Ms. Washington Valdez asserted during our interview—that the Carrillo drug cartel had brutally murdered poor women to send a message that the cartel's power dominated over Juárez. The counter-attack against the federal government's initiatives has apparently been so marked, that the number of drug-related homicides have increased an incredible fifty percent from 2007 (Mexico Ties Drug Killings to Campaign, 2008).

Has the surge of federal troops had any sort of positive impact? President Calderón released a written report at the beginning of September 2008. He explained that in less than two full years in office, more than 11,000 weapons had been confiscated, and a significant number of cartel leaders had been apprehended (Lacey 2008). In late October of 2008, sixteen prominent members of the Sinaloa drug cartel were arrested (Mexican drug leader arrested after shootout, 2008). During my time in El Paso and

Juárez in the summer of 2008, federal troops were conspicuous, especially near the Santa Fe bridge that we regularly cross. But I do not know how effective they have been in Juárez. It is perhaps still difficult to determine the true effectiveness of these initiatives throughout Mexico and particularly in Juárez, especially considering the high human costs.

Connections to the Climate of Femicide

Ciudad Juárez's relative geopolitical isolation (especially in the period in modern Mexico's borders were configured) has often meant that the Mexican government has not been able to effectively administer over its border cities such as Ciudad Juárez. Perhaps the government's previous historical inability to rule the lawless northernmost border has translated into a contemporary unwillingness to step in and confront the myriad social issues—such as femicide—that plague Ciudad Juárez. The federal district ceded more control of its northernmost borders to U.S. business interests through NAFTA, and it has practically declared that the more than decade-long occurrence of femicide is not its problem.

The poorly planned urban development and infrastructural services that prompt women to walk to open bus stops and travel long distances to and from their place of work increase their susceptibility to violent acts. The *maquiladora* work schedules that force some women to walk in pitch darkness and the companies' reluctance in enacting security measures for their employees almost seem to ensure their victimization.

Finally, Ms. Washington Valdez is certain that the Carrillo drug cartel brutally murdered women because it could—because the women were poor and powerless and they were rich, powerful and unstoppable. Even if they are not responsible for any of the femicides, the countless other murders that the drug cartels have perpetrated in Juárez—and the subsequent police cover-ups—all send a clear message to the Juárez citizenry that human life in their city is worth little to nothing. The disturbing femicides that have been perpetrated for over a decade present an additional message for Juarez society, as best phrased by Ms. Esther Chavez Cano. “In this city, it is a disgrace to be a woman and much greater of a disgrace to be a poor woman” (Rodriguez 2007, 113).

CHAPTER 4: METHODS

Chapter three contained some key details concerning the femicides, followed by some of the crucial historical, sociological and geographical variables that permitted for the femicides to continue unabated for over a decade. Chapter four will focus on the qualitative methods of conducting research with grassroots women's organizations along the U.S.-Mexico border that specifically work with issues related to gender violence. It will explain the necessity of studying the selected organizations, the criteria in selecting the organizations and the interviewees, as well as the qualitative methods employed during the research process. There will also be some mention of the challenges in interacting with women who are survivors of gender violence, or who have been directly impacted by the femicides. The chapter will conclude with a discussion on the limitations I personally encountered while conducting research in the El Paso/Ciudad Juárez border community.

Studying Grassroots Women's Organizations along the U.S-Mexico Border

Much has been publicized about the femicides in Juárez, as well as the impunity of the Mexican federal and Chihuahua state governments. However, there is a dearth of literature studying the various grassroots women's organizations confronting gender violence and femicide within the Ciudad Juárez/El Paso border community. This is the primary reason why I wanted to study them—to learn more about what they were doing on individual and societal levels, how the greater border society has perceived them, and if they were collaborating with one another.

There have been some articles published on women's movements along the U.S.-Mexico in response to the femicides and inaction, and some literature focusing on individual organizations. Two organizations that have consistently come up in the literature found are *Casa Amiga* and *Nuestras Hijas de Regreso a Casa* (Ravelo 2006; Rojas 2005; Swanger 2007; Wright 2001). Furthermore, the women who helped create these two organizations have been activists and advocates for women since the first disappearances and murders became public. Esther Chávez Cano, the founder and director of *Casa Amiga*, has especially been outspoken and public in her efforts. My search for grassroots women's organizations, then, began with these two.

It was later decided to expand the scope of my research to include organizations that were based in Juárez's sister city of El Paso, Texas. This not only increased the number of prospective organizations to research and work with, but it also created an opportunity to study whether or not there is cross-border collaboration on human rights issues such as the femicides.

Selection of Organizations and Participants; Interview Structure

The primary criteria for the selected participating organizations was that they be grassroots and local, with a significant component of their work or initiatives devoted to eradicating violence against women or femicide. "Grassroots", for my purposes, means that the organization came from members of the border community, and is run by members of the community. Two of the organizations are actually informal, meaning that they have not obtained 501(c)3¹ official status. At first, my parameters for

¹ The term 501(c)3 is a provision of the U.S. Internal Revenue Code, and it encompasses 28 different types of non-profit organizations (such as religious, educational and/or religious organizations). Organizations

investigating the women's organizations only encompassed the Ciudad Juárez-El Paso border region. However, once I learned of two instrumental organizations that fell outside of this scope, I widened the parameters to include neighboring Las Cruces, New Mexico and Chihuahua City, Mexico.

It must be noted that a number of Mexican national and international organizations—such as Amnesty International—have played a tremendous role in publicizing the femicides to the international community, and demanding that the Mexican government take action. But I wanted to focus specifically on the grassroots women's organizations and the people that are “on the front lines” every day, so to speak. While the majority of the grassroots organizations I researched were headed by women and served a heavily female clientele, this was not an intentional criterion for the research process.

It was important to speak with directors and administrators from the selected organizations to gain a clearer understanding of organizational goals and accomplishments, as well as the challenges and obstacles that must be confronted. However, I also wanted the perspectives of those family members who did not hold a formal position, but who willingly divulged their personal tragedy, and were actively participating in the organization (and even in the public realm at times). In order to gain a better understanding of how these organizations collaborate, and how larger El Paso/Juárez society perceives them, I interviewed a UTEP professor and three local reporters who have covered the femicides and movements.

that carry a 501(c)3 status do not have to pay federal income taxes. At the same time, there are certain stipulations that organizations with such a status must follow (such as refraining from political organizing).

While there was a pre-determined list of potential questions for each interview, they followed more of a flexible, unstructured format. Interviews were either conducted at the organization, at the respondent's place of work, or in a public location (such as a coffee house or restaurant). Interviews with directors, administrators and participants of the three Mexican-based organizations were conducted in Spanish, as well as the interview with *El Diario de Juárez* reporter Luz del Carmen Sosa. In contrast, interviews with respondents from the El Paso and Las Cruces organizations were conducted in English, with the exceptions of the *promotora* (or peer educator) I spoke with from *Las Américas*, as well as the women from the *Centro Mujeres* support group. Interviews were tape recorded when possible and notes were taken during and after the interviews. In total, 11 organizational workers, three organization participants, 3 reporters and 1 university professor were interviewed.

Observation in my Research

Observation provided another key source of information during the research process. Most participating organizations were visited at least once for observation. Two organizations graciously allowed me to visit twice. In the case of *Mujeres de la Esperanza*, a women's organization based in El Paso, I was allowed to sit in on a women's support group twice and hear some personal stories of surviving gender violence and rebuilding self-esteem. These support group sessions were confidential and could not be recorded. However, through my participation I learned the methods used to tackle such critical issues while simultaneously strengthening the women's self-esteem and empower them to be more independent.

Unfortunately, transportation along the El Paso/Ciudad Juárez border community proved to be a barrier in getting to and from each organization safely and in a reasonable amount of time. Three organizations were not visited at all—in two instances, interviews were done in a public location, and in the third instance—with *Justicia para Nuestras Hijas*, in Chihuahua City—the interview was conducted by telephone.

**Participating Women’s Organizations in Ciudad Juárez and Chihuahua state,
Mexico**

The first organization I worked with during my time along the U.S.-Mexico border was *Nuestras Hijas de Regreso a Casa*. *Nuestras Hijas*, is a civil association that was founded in February 2001 by Norma Andrade and Marisela Ortiz. It was founded in response to the brutal murder of Lilia Alejandra García Andrade, Andrade’s daughter, and Ortiz’s pupil. I did not visit this organization; rather I met Ms. Ortiz and her daughter at the Santa Fe international bridge. Our meeting spot was significant; we had decided to meet at the prominently displayed cross, with a pink placard exclaiming *¡Ni una Más!*. The cross, attached to a piece of pink plywood, is surrounded by little pegs, each holding a ribbon containing the name of a murder victim (see Figure 3). From the bridge, we went to a local restaurant in Juárez where *Nuestras Hijas* was holding a weekend workshop for children.

Before the interviews, as I watched the bustling scene unfold in the restaurant—the children and teenagers joking and laughing, the women sipping drinks and chatting, Marisela deftly making sure that the food was ready and the equipment set up properly—

Figure 3: Cross/memorial for femicide victims at the Santa Fe street bridge, Juárez
 Source: Rachel Barnstable



we commented on how the organization felt like a close-knit, energetic family. And the atmosphere was not one of death and mourning. Rather, there was a decided air of life, strength, and moving forward while simultaneously reminding the world of the brutal murders and impunity that mar Juárez.

On the way back to the Santa Fe bridge, after nearly four hours of observing the workshop, talking to various mothers and *Nuestras Hijas* employees, I was able to talk with Ms. Ortiz at length. She had much to say about the missions, triumphs and challenges of her organization.

The main objective of our work is to find justice, end the femicides and try to achieve that not one more women is assassinated, that not one more mother has to feel this terrible pain...of losing a daughter in such a violent, brutal way. And another of the big objectives, along with prevention, is a social project, which is strengthening the families through the workshops and other works that we have been developing for numerous years now. And we have involved the

children as well in this question of strengthening the family, from a dynamic in which they learn to control their emotions, through art, taking out their pain and suffering, constructing their lives...[this project] is named the project of hope, because they [the children], in a way, are hope...hope where if possible, they must continue the fight that their grandmothers started. The [Mexican] culture needs our community, a culture that is working to eradicate violence against women and foment respect for human rights.

Unfortunately, I did not have the opportunity to talk with these women again or visit the actual organization.

The second Juárez organization visited was *Casa Amiga*. Of all of the literature written about women's organizations, *Casa Amiga* is the most prominently mentioned (Rojas 2005; Swanger 2007; Wright 2001). Its roots go back to 1992, with its predecessor, the NGO *8 de Marzo*. *Casa Amiga's* founder, Esther Chávez Cano, has been an outspoken feminist activist since the first murders. However, while not detracting from the importance of investigating and eradicating the femicides, she wanted to create a space in which gender violence and rape victims could seek help and support. *Casa Amiga* opened in February of 1999. Much to my astonishment (seeing that Juárez is a large city), *Casa Amiga* is still the only violence and rape crisis center that exists in Juárez.

Ms. Chávez Cano herself picked me up at the Santa Fe international bridge. Though short in stature, she carries herself with dignity and has a commanding presence. She is polished and articulate, simultaneously admonishing us for arriving late and complimenting our command of Spanish. In her car, we meandered through downtown Juárez. Some twenty minutes later, we were still driving—the cluster of buildings and businesses had slowly faded into long stretches of dusty, desert terrain dotted by the

occasional industrial park or haphazard settlement of houses. After about a thirty minute drive, we arrived at the organization's headquarters. The exterior was painted in bright primary colors, with one section of building set apart by an elaborate graffiti wall. Framed posters outlining *Casa Amiga's* vision and mission lined the walls of the reception area and waiting areas.

During this first observation, we were given a whirlwind tour of the building, quickly introduced to some of the administrators, and then we settled in Ms. Chávez Cano's office. The plaques of recognition on the wall seem to reaffirm the fact that Ms. Chávez Cano pours all of energy into what she declares is the "project of her life." The interview lasted for more than an hour, and we plan for me to observe a workshop the following Saturday afternoon.

The third participating Mexican organization, *Justicia para Nuestras Hijas*, was located in Chihuahua City. The city is approximately four hours by car from downtown Juárez; getting there by bus to spend a couple of days with the organization was unfortunately not possible during my time along the U.S.-Mexico border. However, I conducted a telephone interview with founder and director Norma Ledezma, whose daughter disappeared in Chihuahua City in 2002. According to Ledezma, women have been disappearing and found murdered since 1999. The families of *las desaparecidas* (a commonly-used term for the women who have been disappearing in Chihuahua), started to organize and unite, forming mass movements and search parties. From these actions, *Justicia* was born in March 2002.

The incredible thing about this organization is that (according to the organizational website) the women involved are “average” Mexican citizens who are minimum-wage workers with little more than a primary school education. Ledezma herself informed me that she had formerly been a *maquiladora* worker for fifteen years. Yet these women have amassed a team of volunteer lawyers and are investigating some 25 cases of disappearance and/or murder. *Justicia’s* work has been no small feat; in many instances, the investigations have already been compromised. While proper investigation and dispensing of justice are the principal goals of this organization, Ledezma added that the organization is also gearing more toward providing moral and spiritual support for the families.

Participating Organizations along the U.S. side of the Border

I also had the opportunity to speak with members of four different organizations based in the El Paso/Las Cruces, NM area, as well as conduct observations with two of the organizations (please refer to Table 1 for a complete listing of the participating organizations). I first spoke to Pat Graham Casey, of the Frontera Women’s Foundations. While I came to find out that this particular organization is more of a vehicle for funding grassroots organizations along the U.S. side of the border, her information proved to be instrumental in finding another prospective organization.

From Ms. Graham Casey, I discovered the Las Américas Immigrant Advocacy Center located in downtown El Paso. During my first day of observation, I spoke with the director Ray Rojas about the organization in general and its various initiatives. There were two particular points of interest: the VAWA application process and the Group

Mujer *promotoras*. The Violence Against Women Act (VAWA) is a United States federal law, passed in 1994. Staff attorneys Eduardo Beckett and Adriana Salcedo

Table 1: Participating Organizations (continued on page 76)
Source: Rachel Barnstable

Organization	Location	Programs/Activities	Interaction with Organization
Amigos de las Mujeres de Juárez (founded 2001)	Las Cruces, New Mexico	Collecting, distributing money for Mexican-based organizations; campaigns to raise awareness about femicide and publicity of the Juárez organizations.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1 interview with director in El Paso
Casa Amiga Centro de Crisis (founded 1999)	Ciudad Juárez, Mexico	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Legal and psychological counseling • compile statistics on domestic violence in Juárez • create workshops, presentations and plays aimed at teaching various levels of society about warning signs of violence and violence prevention. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1 interview with director and tour of organization • 1 day of observation
Centro Mujeres de la Esperanza (founded 1993)	El Paso, Texas	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provides <i>Valores y Vida</i> self-esteem workshops • Women Learning to Earn program • classes in subjects such as ESL, computer skills and citizenship, and <i>Capacitar</i> women's support group 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interview with program director • 2 days of observation
Justicia para Nuestras Hijas (founded 2002)	Chihuahua City, Mexico	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Civil association dedicated to investigating the murders occurring in Chihuahua City 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Telephone interview with director
Las Américas Immigrant Advocacy Center (founded 1987)	El Paso, Texas	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Battered Immigrant Women Project (can apply for protection/legal residency through VAWA or the U-Visa) • <i>Group Mujer</i> program offering education and legal assistance, peer education on issues of domestic violence and AIDS 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1 day of interviews with Director, staff attorneys and <i>Group Mujer</i> director. • 1 day of observation

Nuestras Hijas de Regreso a Casa (founded 2001)	Ciudad Juárez, Mexico	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Civil association dedicated to providing support and therapeutic workshops/psychological services to family members of femicide victims 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1 day of interviews with director, administrators and two mothers. • 1 day of observation
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explained to me that abused women, regardless of immigration status, can file a suit under VAWA. This can even include economic and emotional abuse—for example, if a male denies his partner economic subsistence or activities, or if he constantly threatens to release her to the authorities. However, there are a couple of important stipulations concerning VAWA: the abused must be married to the abuser (the state of Texas does also recognize common-law marriages) and the abuser must either be a U.S. citizen or a legal permanent resident. If both parties do not have immigration status, the survivor of violence can file for a U-visa. The U-visa is a multi-tiered system of protection and status. It first grants approval to reside in the country and get a job. After a few years, it offers a pathway to permanent residency and then citizenship.

During my second day of observation, I had the opportunity to learn more about the Group Mujer *promotoras* program, currently headed by Ms. Renae Deas. The *promotoras* are women, usually from the border region, who have received educational training on domestic violence issues and AIDS awareness. Many of these *promotoras* have survived domestic violence, and some do not have legal immigration status. For a period of six weeks, these women give presentations in schools and other public venues throughout the south Texas border. They are not only geared toward children and

adolescents, but mothers are also encouraged to attend the talks and get information. One *promotora* I spoke with remarked that several times after a presentation, a woman will wait until the venue has emptied and approach the presenters, divulging her personal situation and asking for guidance.

The *promotoras* train other women to be a part of the program, and receive a stipend for their participation in the program. During our interview, Ms. Deas also discussed the possibility of her meeting with the Center's VAWA applicants and forming a support group for survivors of violence.

Another El Paso organization I visited is the *Centro Mujeres de Esperanza*, located a few short blocks from Las Américas. This organization is headed by a local Dominican order, and the current director is Sister Maureen. *Centro Mujeres* is geared toward female empowerment. Moreover, these new skill sets are attuned to the women's unique situations. For example, a number of the participants in this organization are Mexican, without legal documentation, with little to no English skills, and are not working within the U.S. formal economy. *Centro Mujeres* has a women's support group every Thursday, offers two levels of ESL classes, as well as courses in informal economic activities such as cake decorating, flower arranging, financial literacy and computer skills.

On the two Thursdays that I observed, I participated in both the women's support group and the ESL classes. Before the group began, eleven women of various ages, all of Mexican heritage, had coffee hour and conversation. We talked about my research, and some women offered their personal experiences or insights regarding violence against

women. At around 10 am, the session would start with a series of Tai Chi exercises designed to ease the mind and relax the body, followed by a prayer circle. As the women seated themselves into a circle, the group leader, Sister Teresa, distributed slips of paper with a song, entitled “Yo Soy Mujer.” The lyrics affirmed women’s self-worth and capabilities, and as the song progressed the women’s timid voices began to grow louder and more assertive.

Everything said in the circle was strictly confidential. Though the women were actively encouraged to speak up, no one was forced to speak. Sister Teresa deftly employed both comforting reassurance and constructive criticism when necessary; when one woman asked for a telephone reminder about an upcoming event, Sister Teresa gently told the women that they needed to take the responsibility in writing down and remembering what they needed to do. During the second session, the women did another relaxation exercise in which they imagined that they were planning to take a vacation. The mode of transportation, destination and number of people they took along was entirely up to them. Afterwards, each woman was invited to share her own personal “vacation.” I was also invited to observe the ESL classes, and was warmly invited to return again to *Centro Mujeres* if I ever found myself back in El Paso.

The third organization, *Amigos de las Mujeres de Juárez*, is based some 45 miles away from El Paso in Las Cruces, New Mexico. It is composed of volunteers, most of whom are affiliated with the University of New Mexico in Las Cruces, and who are employed and/or attending school full-time. I met with one of the volunteers, who is also a nurse in a local El Paso hospital, in a coffee shop. *Amigos* has functioned primarily as a

vehicle for financial and material assistance to the previously-mentioned Juárez and Chihuahua organizations such as *Casa Amiga*, *Nuestras Hijas de Regreso a Casa*, and *Justicia para Nuestras Hijas*. It has organized fundraisers and collected aid from various universities and organizations throughout the United States. The money collected goes toward each organization's basic expenses (such as rent and utilities) or help mothers and other organizational representatives attend conferences and hearings throughout the international community. *Amigos'* budget also operates under a premise of transparency—each organization generally knows to whom and where the money goes.

Amigos has also played an active role in the demonstrations and marches in Juárez. Moreover, at least one representative will visit each organization periodically to learn about new developments or initiatives, as well as what needs still have to be met. Some of the organization's volunteers have even visited the homes of mothers and other family members personally affected by the femicides.

Sally acknowledged that there are challenges in being a U.S. organization that collaborates with organizations on the other side of the border (which will shortly be addressed in the results and discussion section). Presumably to make things easier, *Amigos* has recently dropped its formal 501(c)3 organization status. While it no longer does fundraisers, it collects and distributes money from U.S. entities to the organizations in Mexico. A number of universities throughout the nation, for instance, have donated the ticket sales from their productions of the *Vagina Monologues*, which *Amigos* has re-distributed to pay for rent and other expenses that the Mexican organizations incur.

Interviews with border scholars and reporters

Irasema Coronado, PhD, has co-authored articles on trans-border organizing, and a book entitled *Fronteras no Más: Toward Social Justice at the U.S.-Mexico Border*. I had the opportunity to interview Dr. Coronado on trans-border organizing in general, and then specifically organizing around femicide.

Challenges in interviewing those who have lost a loved one to femicide

There are inherent ethical concerns and obligations when conducting research with human subjects; these become particularly acute when the respondents are survivors of gender violence or a violent crime such as rape. Ellsberg and Heise (2002) outline some criteria that must be considered when conducting research of this nature. Firstly, does the research create undue danger or harm to the researcher and/or the respondents? If proper precautions are not taken (such as strict confidentiality measures and meeting in a secure location), an outside source or even the abuser could find out about the research, and potentially harm both parties. Setting is also key—the researcher’s safety could be compromised depending on the neighborhood/area and time of day that the research is conducted (this is especially pertinent to female interviewers).

In conducting research on such a sensitive, volatile issue, the interviewer also has an ethical responsibility to mitigate any emotional or psychological stress that a subject may feel during the interview process. Scholars have debated, for example, the ethics of informed consent—whether or not the researcher is obligated to tell the respondent beforehand about any questions related to gender violence, and if that previous knowledge skews the respondents’ answers. The authors also discuss the merits of

endeavoring to end the research on a positive note and reduce respondents' vulnerability post-interview. Finally, they assert that whenever possible, the resulting data should be used to effect beneficial social justice and changes (Ellsberg and Heise 2002).

Campbell, Sefl, Wasco and Ahrens (2004) similarly explore the challenges in finding rape survivors to interview, and providing a secure and non-judgmental environment throughout the interview process. They explain that often, if survivors of rape choose to seek medical attention or prosecute the crime, they must endure insensitivity and judgments that place the blame upon their own shoulders. They risk the sad but true reality that their communities may shun them or doubt their allegations. This last statement is particularly true in the case of many of my informants, as well as the other families who have bravely come forward to decry the femicides and demand justice. As chapter three mentioned, Chihuahuan police authorities routinely asked families whether or not their disappeared or murdered relatives had been leading a *doble vida*. Respondents—directors, administrators and organization participants alike—also mentioned damaging repercussions (from smear campaigns to death threats) for their actions in publicizing their personal stories and insisting on formalized action.

During my research process, I provided an informed consent form at the beginning of each interview, assuring the participants complete anonymity and that they had the right to not answer a question or end the interview altogether. Directors and administrators with each of the organizations had the option of using his/her given name or being identified under a pseudonym. With each new section of questions, I informed the participant about the nature of the questions I would be asking. If a respondent

seemed to be particularly stressed or emotional, the interview would stop and/or the question would be skipped. To ensure my own personal safety, I traveled with a colleague whenever possible, conducted interviews in semi-public locations, and finished with all interviews and traveling by nightfall.

Limitations in Research

As with any major research project, there were obstacles and limitations that were encountered, and must be taken into consideration when looking at the scope of research contained in this thesis. One significant obstacle in conducting research this summer was the lack of transportation. In El Paso, bus rides were needed to go downtown, and there was often considerable walking time after that to reach the organization. Reaching the border by bus took more than an hour one way. Reaching destination sites was considerably more difficult in Ciudad Juárez. Years of unchecked growth and urbanization has transformed the city into a sprawling confusion. The *ruteras*, or school bus public transportation system that Juárez uses, is confusing to the unseasoned rider. Furthermore, a one-way trip from downtown to a particular organization took two or more hours. Often I had to rely upon the generosity of the organization directors themselves in transporting me to and from their sites.

Because of this obstacle, I was able to spend a maximum of two days observing each organization. *Nuestras Hijas de Regreso a Casa* only received one day of observation, and it was not feasible to visit either *Justicia Para Nuestras Hijas* or *Amigos de las Mujeres de Juárez* (located respectively in Chihuahua City and Las Cruces, New

Mexico). When possible, telephone interviews were conducted to replace or supplement visits and observation.

To a lesser extent, there were also some linguistic issues while conducting the research. Some of the interview questions had to be re-phrased. At times, it was difficult understanding the participants. The largest linguistic obstacle has stemmed from interview transcription of my digitally recorded interviews. Entire sections of the recordings are unintelligible, often due to background noise. However, field notes were either taken during or immediately after most interviews. Key context words and descriptions taken from the digital recordings and field notes were used to fill in some of the gaps during the transcription process.

Safety (especially in Ciudad Juárez) was a third issue in the research process. Since January 2008, Juárez has seen alarming levels of drug-related male homicide. President Calderón's administration has responded with a surge of federal troops into the city. Whenever venturing into Juárez, I traveled with a fellow female colleague. We took precautions such as always sticking together and always crossing the border back to El Paso before sundown. The *colonias*, or shantytowns at the periphery of the city, were also avoided.

Time is the fourth and final major constraint upon this research. I spent approximately five weeks in El Paso and Ciudad Juárez, having had no prior experiences there. An extended period of time could have allowed for further exploration of the sister cities and a greater insight into their societies, more opportunities to conduct document-based research in libraries and institutions on both sides of the border, potential meetings

with university professors at the Universidad Autónoma de Juárez, and a sustained period of interaction and observation with each of the organizations.

CHAPTER 5: RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Chapters two and three discussed that the “climate” for prolonged femicide is not simply the result of Mexican patriarchy or macho cultural values. Rather, it stems from a complex interplay of several geographical, sociological and historical factors. Similarly, my interactions with women’s organizations in Juárez, El Paso and other communities close to the U.S.-Mexico border revealed that the response of women’s organizations—and how that response is perceived in greater Juárez and El Paso societies—is complicated. Therefore, this chapter will refrain from reaching simplistic, reductionist conclusions that decisively argue for or against the efficacy of these organizations.

Instead, I intend to argue the following points: Firstly, the organizational members have recognized the roles of political impunity, macho attitudes and the *maquiladoras* in Juárez’s continued wave of femicides. In fact, they have specifically tailored a number of their most ambitious projects and initiatives to counteract the damage wrought by these three factors.

Secondly, each organization (particularly those in Juárez) fulfills a specific niche in regards to the femicides, or gender violence in a more general context. Also, while they may not collaborate directly with one another (in fact, there have been tensions between the organizations) or in a “formal” context with organizations based on the U.S. side of the border, they have presented a united front in public demonstrations and are collectively advancing the *lucha*, or struggle, against extreme gender violence and inequity within the border community.

Thirdly, I will argue that the well-established women's organizations in Juarez continue the planning and expansion of their operations, in spite of logistical obstacles, verbal slander and physical threats, and critiques from a mistrusting community. Furthermore, they all have passionate and loyal bases of participants. In some instances, the organizations themselves have become a sort of extended family for which the participants are willing to risk their lives.

The first section will be devoted to discussing the impunity of the Mexican governmental system, the devaluation of the woman, and to a lesser extent, the *maquiladoras*, because these topics came up so frequently in the interviews. The second section will describe the goals and accomplishments of the organizations, from the perspective of both the directors and administrators, and the mothers and other participants². The third section concerns inter-organizational and trans-border cooperation. The fourth section examines the myriad challenges that face the organizations. This will segue into the fifth section, which looks at the contentious social perceptions of the organizations in Juárez. Finally, there will be a concluding discussion on what can be done at social, national levels to permanently eradicate this problem.

Women's Thoughts on the Femicides: Impunity, Machismo and the *Maquiladoras*

When asked why they thought why the femicides occurred specifically in Juárez, and what was being done about them, several answers contained one or more of these

² Please note that the quotations included in this chapter have been translated from Spanish to English by the authors. Parts of the tape recordings were not understood—for this reason, some unknown words or phrases were contextualized from field notes and have been placed in brackets.

words: impunity, machismo and *maquiladoras*. Each word, then, will be addressed in subsequent sub-sections.

Impunity

The word impunity (*impunidad* in Spanish) came up in nearly every interview conducted. Often, it was intimately linked to assertions that no justice exists in the city, that the police and the government have done absolutely nothing. For instance, Ms. Nakarowari Leal, a young administrator with *Nuestras Hijas*, and the daughter of founding director Ms. Marisela Ortiz, stated “this is a city in which the laws [are not upheld], there’s not a lot justice, it is a city that doesn’t have much government, so nothing happens, in reality. Similarly, *El Paso Times* reporter Ms. Diana Washington Valdez, and the author of *The Killing Fields: Harvest of Women*, stated that the Chihuahua and Mexican state police have done “nothing in the sense of judicial justice” in regards to the femicides. Ms. Norma Ledezma, director of *Justicia para Nuestras Hijas* (or *Justicia*) said that at this time, there are no civil or public servants who work specifically on cases of femicide. A mother, between 50 and 55 years of age and whose daughter was murdered, stated it most simply when she told me with tears in her eyes that “justice here is not just.”

This impunity does not only mean that nothing has been done by way of justice, but also that the crime scenes and investigations have been manipulated, as well as the families and loved ones of the victims. Ms. Washington Valdez stated that the police have felt sporadic pressure to indict some suspects. In the face of such pressure, they have taken largely superficial or suspicious measures. Some families of the murder

victims were provided with monetary compensation. Other families who attempted to investigate were threatened by the police. She asserted that “the police know who’s doing it.” Furthermore, in our telephone interview, Ms. Ledezma noted that approximately 80 percent of the murder cases have been corrupted by way of investigation. These interviews corroborate the scholarly and international organizational findings cited toward the end of chapter three—poorly conducted police and forensic investigations, false and/or forced confessions, and the impotence of federal appointed investigators in prosecuting the co-opted authorities (Wright 2005; Hellard 2007).

The Long-Embedded Effects of Machismo

When I mentioned the femicides and why they have been allowed to happen for so long, several respondents also discussed misogynist viewpoints still found in *juareense* society. Ms. Leal said, “above all else, this society is *machista*, like what we have in many Latin American countries, and I think that has a lot to do [with the femicides].” Ms. Ledezma spoke of a double standard—men can have more than one woman, but a woman must only have one man. Also, it’s still somewhat socially acceptable for men to hit women. In fact, Ms. Esther Chávez Cano, founding director of *Casa Amiga* crisis center, stated that married men may often feel that they are entitled to physically abuse their spouse. She said, “[husbands] say, I have the paper [marriage certificate], so I have more rights to hit.”

Ms. Chávez Cano was quick to note that women may be equally responsible in perpetuating severe macho attitudes.

There are a lot of women who don’t want to change things. The mentality of women, the machista mentality that the women think, like men, no? I ask myself,

why does a pretty young girl put with [her boyfriend] beating her? Because this is the culture. You have to have a partner, because if not, you're criticized. Women have to get married, women have to have children because it's their greatest joy.

Some women, especially in previous generations, never question family violence, because they assume that it is part of the status quo. During a support group with the *Centro Mujeres de Esperanza* (or *Centro Mujeres*), in El Paso, the middle-aged woman sitting immediately to my left briefly touched on her own personal experiences with domestic violence. "I thought it was normal" she said, and as I raised my eyebrows and murmured "domestic violence?" she nodded. She said again, "I accepted things that are not normal." It was not until a female relative or friend pulled her aside and told her she "was blind, going through life with her eyes closed" that she finally sought help.

But what about those women who don't know where to turn for help? Luz del Carmen Sosa, a reporter for the *El Diario de Juárez* who has written extensively on the femicides, noted that, in Juárez, this is still a problem "...the women don't know where to go. The victims don't know where to go, whom to ask for help." And as I mentioned in the previous chapter, *Casa Amiga* is the only rape and domestic violence crisis center that exists in the entire city.

The sentiments expressed by Ms. Chávez Cano and the support group participant from *Centro Mujeres* are reminiscent of scholarly publications on idealized gender types found in Latin America, in which woman's highest calling is to be a mother, and domestic violence is an inevitable part of her life (Stevens 1973; Basham 1976; Rondon 2002; Wood and Price 1997). Likewise, the unfortunate fact that women don't know where to go for help or to whom they should reach out could possibly stem from

women's "invisibility" as domestic violence survivors or a reticence to acknowledge gender violence as a crime ((Bograd 1999; Josephson 2002). And because of hierarchical power structures oppressing women, they may be deterred from escaping a violent household or prosecuting a violent crime because of bias and/or inadequate infrastructure in the criminal justice systems (Josephson 2002; Grant 1993; Walby 1990).

The Maquiladoras

While Mexican *machismo* is still alive and well, neither my interview respondents nor I wish to suggest that it is the sole contributing factor to the femicides. Such a sentiment could foolishly and dangerously allude that women in Juárez and Chihuahua City have suffered "death by culture" (Narayan 1997, 85). If centuries of entrenched *machismo*—and nothing else—is to blame, then why were these women suddenly and systematically mutilated, raped and murdered starting in 1993? Also, since Latin America shares a common legacy of *machismo* (see chapter 2), then why are the femicides occurring almost exclusively in Ciudad Juárez? As explored in chapter three, there are different historical and geographical factors that have played significant roles in sustaining (and perhaps even normalizing) femicide in this border city.

One such factor that I discussed is the arrival of the *maquiladoras* to Juárez, beginning in the mid-1960s and reaching an apex after the signing and implementation of NAFTA in 1994. Likewise, some of my respondents noted that the overpowering presence of the *maquiladoras* in Juárez have played an undeniable role in increasing women's vulnerability to violence, within and outside of the home. For one thing, as was mentioned in chapter three, the *maquiladoras* have radically changed the *juarense* family

dynamic. Ms. Leal of *Nuestras Hijas* explains this dynamic, and what implications it may have had in regard to violence against women in the city.

Maquilas in the beginning, were the only thing [that employed] women, and this changed [the relationship between] men and women. Imagine it...the man sustained the home. But this began to change, and it began to it was like a war between the people, trying to always keep the woman [status] a little bit lower than the man...I think it [violence against women] has to do with the man demonstrating his power, his force, that he's stronger than a woman.

This overnight shift in the family dynamic, in which the women became “autonomous” wage earners, threatened men’s position as the sole providers. To male society members who were already socioeconomically powerless, ceding economic power over to their female counterparts may have prompted the use of physical control to retain some vestige of their domination in the family sphere (Walby 1990).

Also, the *maquiladora* system, with a seemingly endless supply of young and nubile female workers, has further devalued the status of women in the city. Because these female employees have been objectified and are easily replaceable, companies may not change their work schedules and/or implement security measures to ensure that employees arrive and leave the *maquiladoras* safely (Pearson 2007, Ravela Blanco 2006). Ms. Ledezma of *Justicia*, who had previously worked in the *maquiladoras* for fifteen years, asserted that the plants’ work schedule has played a role in increasing women’s vulnerability. For example, a female employee who starts her work shift at six o’ clock has to be at the bus stop by 5am. The work schedules, long distances between the *colonias* and the *maquiladoras*, and the vulnerable walking/waiting for buses culminate in making women especially susceptible to violence (Pearson 2007; Ravelo and Sánchez

2006). In fact, some 20 percent of the femicide victims worked in one of the city's *maquiladoras* (Washington Valdez 2002).

Organizational Accomplishments and Visions for the Future

Women's organizations, reporters and scholars located on both sides of the border recognize that impunity, *machismo* and the *maquiladoras* are all crucial factors in examining the causes and/or consequences of prolonged femicide in Juárez. Some of these organizations have formulated programs to specifically address these issues and their detrimental effects. In this section, I turn to describing each of the three Mexican women's organizations, their most prominent programs and initiatives, and their goals for the future in order to demonstrate the connection between them and the problems of impunity, *machismo* and women's heightened devaluation and susceptibility to violence.

Justicia para Nuestras Hijas (or *Justicia*), based in the state capital of Chihuahua City, is one organization that has accomplished what both the Chihuahua state and Mexican federal governments have failed to accomplish. The organization is currently investigating 25 open murder cases that occurred in Chihuahua City. In addition to a team of attorneys and administrative assistants (some of who are strictly volunteer), *Justicia* has contracted the services of the renowned Argentine Forensic Anthropology Team. Through their forensic examinations, the Team has been able to identify some of the bodies. Furthermore, three of *Justicia*'s investigative cases have been presented in Washington, DC.

The second organization, *Casa Amiga*, is Ciudad Juárez's only domestic violence crisis center (see figure 4). The organization has worked at establishing domestic

Figure 4: Entrance to Casa Amiga Centro de Crisis

Source: Rachel Barnstable



Figure 5: Photograph with Casa Amiga staff members, researcher Rachel Barnstable, Esther Chávez Cano and researcher Tracy Butler (L to R)

Source: Rachel Barnstable



violence as a social and public health issue meriting attention, and is an institution that offers various forms of support to those impacted by gender violence. For instance, within the center's walls, there are departments offering legal assistance as well as psychological services for women, families and/or couples. Each one of these departments keeps a detailed list of statistics such as the number of people who have utilized the services of *Casa Amiga* in a given month and what services they accessed. More personal information, such as the person's marital status and any family history of domestic violence or drug and alcohol abuse, may also be collected to create a larger picture of gender violence in Ciudad Juárez. Ms. Chávez Cano, highly proud of *Casa Amiga's* computerized database, explained during our interview that the Mexican government still does not compile statistics for gender violence. I suspect these statistics are also a way to quantify *Casa Amiga's* progress and successes to the *juarense* community, the country and the international community.

Additionally, *Casa Amiga* offers programs and workshops aimed at educating specific groups within the greater community. There are, for example, trainings that offer strategies for police officers or teachers who become involved in a situation of domestic violence. There are workshops with activities and games teaching lessons about different forms of violence, which teachers can incorporate into their curriculum. During one of my observation periods, there was even a small theatre troupe of children and adolescents who go to schools and perform puppet show on themes of domestic and sexual abuse. *Casa Amiga's* various programs work toward female empowerment and the eradication of gender violence at all levels of society.

The third Mexican organization, *Nuestras Hijas de Regreso a Casa*, works diligently to support the loved ones of femicide victims, whereas federal authorities have ignored them and local authorities have harassed or tried to bribe them. One of *Nuestras Hija*'s principal aims has been, as Ms. Ortiz worded it, the "strengthening of the family," accomplished through workshops, therapy and other projects. I attended one such workshop, on radio broadcasting, held in a downtown restaurant. While Ms. Leal and the broadcaster set up in another room, the women, children and adolescents of both sexes noisily talked, joked, laughed and ate. After lunch, the children and teenagers attended the workshop, while the women and staff members drank coffee and chatted.

One of Ms. Ortiz's assistants in attendance, a male in his early 20s and one of the few males with whom I spoke, is an active participant in these organizations and explained the significance of *Nuestras Hija*'s artistic workshops. He opined that while the workshops were entertaining, they also functioned as therapy for the family members involved. Through writing and other artistic mediums, children have learned different ways to express their emotions. Mothers have found solace and strength in one another. One middle-aged interviewee commented that one major reason she came to the workshops was to commune with and support the other mothers, while another interviewee in her early 40s, and staff psychologist Linda Palacios both commented that *Nuestras Hijas* felt more like extended family than an organization. From my observations, the organization serves as a refuge for family members who have been victimized and threatened within greater Juárez society.

Sally is a co-founder and active volunteer with the Las Cruces, New Mexico group *Amigos de las Mujeres de Juárez* (an important organization that will be discussed later). This is what she had to say about the efforts of *Nuestras Hijas* and *Justicia*:

I think that small numbers of people can really make a difference. Think about how they [*Nuestras Hijas and Justicia*] made femicide an issue. And that this group of poor, uneducated women.... [they have made changes] in a few years with no resources. And what I love about *Nuestras Hijas* is that if [someone in Juárez] makes a stupid comment, then they [organization members] are just in their [Juárez society members'] faces, and risking their lives. And they just don't stop.

Visions for the Future

When asked about their future goals, a couple of the directors spoke of expansion—obtaining bigger buildings, a new pilot site, or launching more programs and services. Ms. Ortiz, for example, would like a larger building, a refuge and educational center in which the children especially could “grow spiritually, morally and psychologically.” Ideally, this center would also offer artistic opportunities and tutoring programs to “support them [the children] in their weakest school subjects” and “prepare them for future careers.”

She would even like to offer health and nutrition workshops and therapy for the mothers. The center would “receive families and keep them continually sustained.” Ms. Chávez Cano would like to build another crisis center, possibly somewhere closer to the *colonias*. She cited that transportation to and from *Casa Amiga* is often a major issue—due largely to the city's explosive and haphazard urban development.

The mothers with whom I spoke also had goals for their families, and for the organizations with which they are involved. One mother, somewhere in her mid-50s,

recounted that after her daughter was murdered, there were six grandchildren to look after. *Nuestras Hijas* has supported her through raising these children, the youngest of which is now nine years old. With tears in her eyes, she told me how proud she was of her grandchildren, and how she plans to “keep them moving forward” in life. She also plans to keep supporting her co-madres and wishes that someday, they “can see justice [being served].” “I would like very much if they paid attention to us in the protests that we do,” commented another mother. It was not exactly clear who “they” were, but she was most likely referring to the state and federal governments, the police and/or greater Juárez society. There seemed to be a common “us against them” mentality emergent throughout the interview process, which will be addressed further in the social perceptions section of this chapter.

Inter-Organizational and Trans-Border Collaboration

As I spoke with respondents from *Casa Amiga*, *Nuestras Hijas* and *Justicia*, I noticed that each one of the organizations seems to fill a particular niche that responds to the effects of impunity, *machismo* and women’s further devaluation via the *maquiladora* system. Though independently they are addressing these crucial issues, the Mexican-based organizations do not collaborate on their projects and initiatives. In fact, there has been some conflict between them. In this section, I will briefly re-visit the independent roles of the three Mexican-based organizations and address the sources of tension that have risen between them. I will also argue that this lack of collaboration has both important advantages and disadvantages.

Nuestras Hijas primarily organizes workshops and support services for loved ones who have lost a loved one to femicide. This stands in marked contrast to *juarense* law enforcement and political authorities, who have aimed to silence these family members. *Casa Amiga*, a crisis center, works predominantly with those who have experienced some type of domestic violence or abuse, and also coordinates programs aimed at teaching violence prevention and eradication to multiple levels of society. *Justicia para Nuestras Hijas* is primarily concerned with investigating murder cases that occurred in Chihuahua City. All occupy crucial roles that the federal and state governments have not occupied.

I asked some of my respondents if there was any collaboration between the organizations in Juárez and in Chihuahua. Ms. Leal replied, “Yes, Yes, there is a solidarity network [network of solidarity]...well, here there aren’t so many groups [for] the assassinated women, but there are some [groups of] mothers, and there are other groups that [work with] social problems like violence.” While she mentioned the solidarity network and the informal and formal groups in Juárez, she could not give any specific examples of collaboration on a project or initiative. Ms. Palacios, staff psychologist for *Nuestras Hijas*, remarked that the organizations were pretty much isolated from one another. Sally of *Amigos* stated, “there has been a lot of separation.” When I later mentioned that there did not seem to be much cooperation, she replied, “No, I’m sure there’s not. And I think there still is not.” She commented, however, that the separation between organizations seems to be ending somewhat, and that they’re getting “much better” about cooperating with one another.

UTEP professor Dr. Irasema Coronado spoke of conflicts or tensions between the organizations in Mexico. She explained that some of the directors and organizations are more recognized throughout the international community. For instance, Eve Ensler visited Casa Amiga for V-Day 2004. And since then, Ms. Chávez Cano—who in Dr. Coronado’s words is “charming, speaks English and knows how to work the system”—has become “the face” of activism against gender violence and femicide in Juárez. Such recognition and publicity also bring greater monetary and resource assistance.

The unequal publicity and access to resources have proven problematic for the relationship between the different women’s organizations (and sometimes the greater Juárez community) for a couple of reasons. For one thing, it was largely members of the international community who appointed Ms. Chávez Cano as the so-called official “spokeswoman” for gender violence and femicide in Juárez, not the local community. She has been recognized for her activism and outspokenness as the first women’s murders came to light, but she was only *one* of a number of women to do so. In fact, the families of the femicide victims, as well as some of the city’s scholars and activists have loosened their affiliation with her. Whether she did it consciously or not, they believe that Ms. Chávez Cano “appropriated the families’ mourning process to forward her personal projects” (Rojas 2005, 221).

Also, the woman or organization that is most recognized throughout the international community will most likely benefit from the largest share of money and other resources. This is crucial, given that these are non-governmental organizations responsible for finding their own sources of money. From my observations, the

organizational members are all clearly passionate about their various projects, and are dedicated to finding the means to not only sustain the projects they have already enacted, but also to expand their operations. They are vying not only for publicity of their ambitious activist efforts, but also much-needed funding, resources, and other forms of support. Given that *Casa Amiga* and Ms. Chávez Cano are disproportionately recognized for a multi-woman and multi-organizational effort, it is understandable that there could be tensions between the Mexican-based organizations.

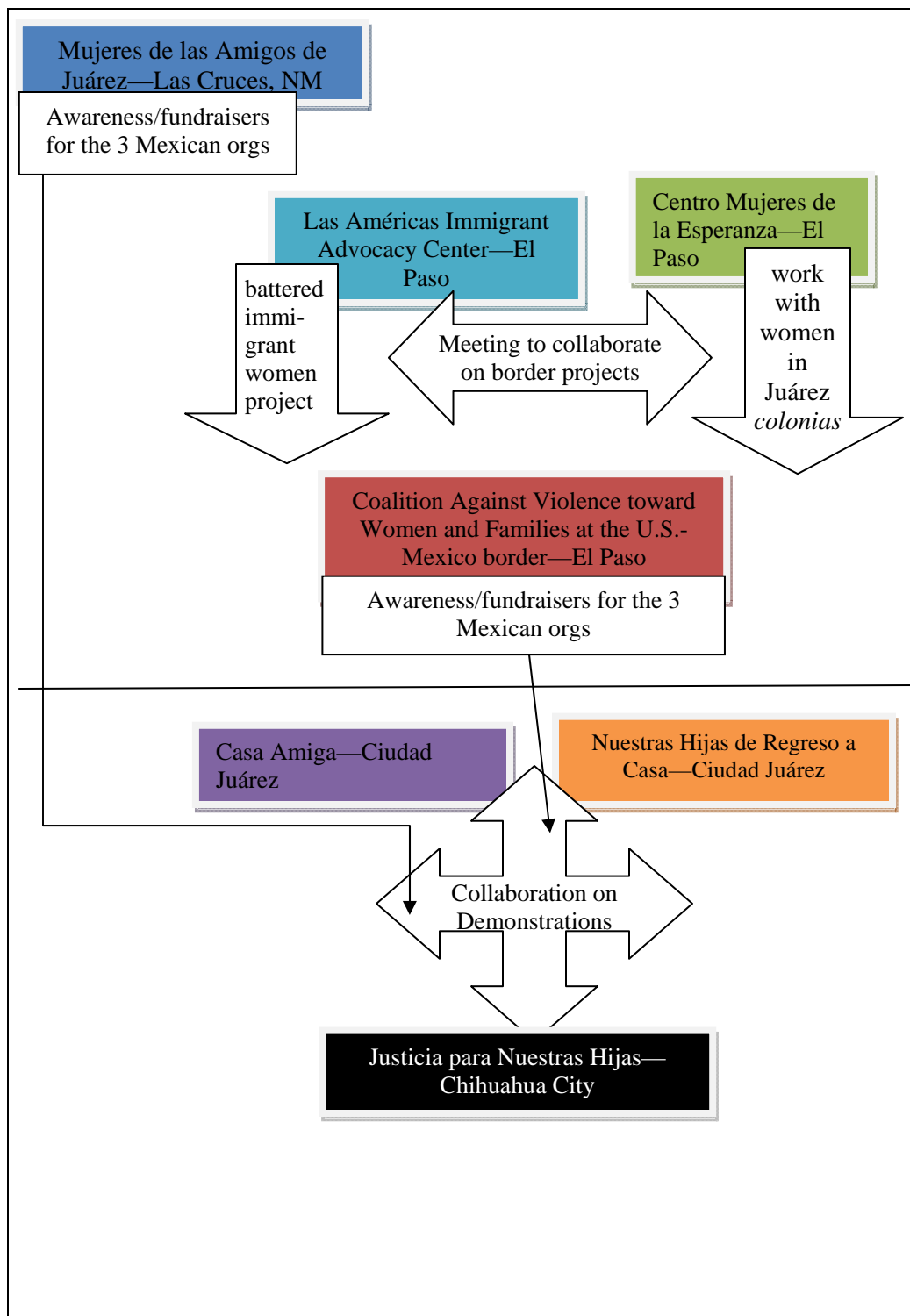
However, the fact that the organizations are not directly collaborating with one another may not be entirely disadvantageous. Perhaps the organizations can make the most tangible social difference not by working together, but by continuing to focus on their respective arenas of murder investigation, family therapy and sustainability, and creating an open dialogue of domestic violence awareness and prevention. They present a united front during the downtown demonstrations that have occurred on a nearly monthly basis. Also, if Clara Eugenia Rojas (2005) and her *juarense* colleagues worry about Ms. Chávez Cano of appropriating grief over the femicides, would they consider a multi-organizational alliance as a monopoly over it?

Collaboration with U.S.-based Organizations

The three Mexican-based organizations have worked to a certain extent with different entities based in the United States (see Figure 2 for a better understanding of how the Mexican and U.S.-based organizations all work together). I spoke with members of two organizations, the *Coalition Against Violence toward Women and Families at the U.S.-Mexico border* and *Amigos de las Mujeres de Juárez* (based in El Paso and Las

Figure 6: inter-organizational and trans-border collaboration

Source: Rachel Barnstable



Cruces, New Mexico, respectively). The *Coalition* has been instrumental in passing resolutions through different levels of government, as well as campaigns for raising awareness, ranging from liberal arts college campuses in the United States to United Nations agencies. *Amigos* has provided emotional support to the families of femicide victims as well as sustained monetary support for monthly expenses such as rent to *Casa Amiga*, *Nuestras Hijas* and *Justicia*. At this time, *Amigos* principally serves as a liaison between fundraising entities and the Mexican organizations.

Additionally, the *Las Américas* immigrant advocacy center and *Centro Mujeres de la Esperanza* (both based in El Paso) that address immigrant women's heightened vulnerability to physical violence and exploitation or subjugation. While the vast majority of these programs are *physically* confined to the U.S. side of the border, they work with citizens from the greater border community. The bi-national clientele that they reach, in turn, reach their family and community members.

I spoke principally with Dr. Irasema Coronado on bi-national cooperation. During our interview, she argued that there are "formal mechanisms and framework" for bi-national projects and cooperation already in existence, evidenced by the fact that the U.S. and Mexico collaborate on some 250 different projects at local, state and national levels. She noted that cooperation among U.S. and Mexican NGOS especially took off after the implementation after NAFTA, resulting in bi-national accords on significant themes such as environmental and labor issues. However, after September 11th, tighter security measures hampered these collaborative efforts. She mentioned that crossing the border in a timely manner, and laws impacting the transfer of funds across the

international boundary were two such impediments. Dr. Coronado explained that these new precautionary measures compelled organizations on both sides of the border to determine how they could continue to make their trans-border partnerships work. And while some found creative ways to gloss over the relatively new obstacles, others have decided to “look to their side of the border.”

Dr. Coronado exclaimed that she has been “very critical” of organizations and other entities failing to work bi-nationally on important issues such as femicide. Two of the few organizations that have taken a bi-national approach toward femicide are *Amigos de las Mujeres de Juárez* (or *Amigos*), and the *Coalition Against Violence toward Women and Families at the U.S.-Mexico border*. The *Coalition* was born of a meeting in Juárez focusing on violence against women in the city, sometime at the end of the 1990s. It was co-founded by Dr. Coronado and her colleague Dr. Staudt in response, and with the aims of raising awareness of the issue in El Paso and fomenting an atmosphere of solidarity with the people and organizations in Juárez. Dr. Coronado emphasized the informal nature of the *Coalition*. “We never organized as a 501(c)3 because we wanted to maintain our informal, loose ties. We also knew, and we learned this from watching others, money was the root of all evil.”

Even with an informal status, the *Coalition* has not only raised awareness within the El Paso community, but elsewhere in Texas and the United States. Dr. Coronado said of their accomplishments:

We had a resolution passed in the City Council, we had a resolution passed at the county, we went to the state government in Austin and had them pass another resolution acknowledging violence in Ciudad Juárez. We were instrumental in bringing the congressional delegation that came here a couple of years ago. I

went to the United Nations and did a presentation there for the 47th annual meeting on the status of women. We raised awareness, I think, on many campuses throughout the U.S. because we were invited to speak about the issue. So that in turn...for example, Dartmouth had a huge fundraiser for some of the mothers. Other colleges gave donations to Casa Amiga, you know, that kind of thing. So, that was our contribution—raising awareness and being in solidarity with people and trying to bring about change through institutional accountability. ...And, have we been effective in raising awareness? Have we been effective in bringing about change? I would say yes.

Dr. Coronado added that the *Coalition*—which she deemed a “small but very loud group”—was still in existence. I asked if it still had the same objectives. She replied that the *Coalition* has become more cautious in how it raises awareness: “We’re kind of torn between dichotomizing, demonizing, dramatizing Juárez. And we’re seeing people that live their lives quite normally.... if we add fuel to the fire, we’ll be doing everyone a disservice.” Instead, it is focusing more on raising awareness on gender violence occurring in El Paso.

Sally informed me that *Amigos* was similarly formed in response to the escalating murders of women, and in an academic setting. She co-founded it in 2001, while a student at the University of New Mexico at Las Cruces. Students and scholars still comprise a large portion of the organizational members. In its infancy, *Amigos* met with a disbanded organization in Juárez known as *Voces sin Eco*. Though the former members were “burnt out” and refused to organize formally again, they did introduce Sally and her colleagues to other organizational members and mothers throughout the city. For their part, the members of *Amigos* went door to door, speaking personally with mothers and telling them that they would provide monetary assistance if they wanted to form a group.

Through these contacts, *Amigos* became acquainted with organizational founders and directors such as Ms. Ortiz, Ms. Chávez Cano, and Ms. Ledezma. The organization then organized fundraisers and distributed the money to meet the basic needs of the organizations. In the past, for example, *Amigos* paid rent for the NHDRC and *Justicia* buildings. It has also paid travel expenses to places throughout the globe, for women to share their firsthand knowledge and experiences of the atrocities in Juárez. As the groups have become more established, *Amigos* has reserved their limited pool of funding to meet any minor emergency expenses that the organizations could potentially incur. Sally made it clear that the organizational budget was intentionally made transparent, so all of the organizations would know where the money was going, and for what it was being used. However, *Amigos* has also recently dropped its 501(c)3 formal organizational status, and has since become a liaison between the organizations and outside entities (such as universities or private donors).

The fact that these two major cross-border collaborators have forgone an official United States organizational status may indicate that trans-border collaboration on this sensitive issue is not best handled through formal channels constrained by bi-national bureaucracy. Informal status seems to grant the *Coalition* and *Amigos* freedom from continually having to apply for sources of money, and then planning on how to re-distribute or utilize the money in a way that does not violate U.S.-Mexico border restrictions. Furthermore, such freedom grants them more time to concentrate on wide-reaching awareness raising campaigns that help encourage *other* entities to donate their money to the Mexican-based organizations.

There are two other El Paso organizations worth mentioning that do not have any formal alliance with the organizations in Juárez, yet their work has important implications for survivors of gender violence on both sides of the border. The first organization is The *Las Américas immigrant advocacy center*. One of its primary legal programs is the Battered *Immigrant Women Project*. Regardless of their documentation status, survivors of domestic violence in El Paso can apply for protection for themselves and their children through the Violence against Women Act. If they are not eligible for this (restrictions do apply, and will be explained further on), they may instead apply for a U Visa. The *group Mujer* program is another program within *Las Américas*, and it recruits *promotoras*, or peer educators, to speak with other immigrant women about domestic violence and AIDS prevention. Though these educational sessions have been largely confined to the Texas border, one of the *promotoras* informed me that she has been sharing her knowledge with her family members in Ciudad Juárez, some of whom have been confronted with family violence, and don't know their rights.

The second group based in El Paso is the *Centro Mujeres de la Esperanza*. Sister Maureen, who is the director, explained that the organization is not only active in El Paso, but also in Ciudad Juárez. They have worked with Casa Amiga and have participated in walks and marches. They also work with Red Mujer Siglo XXI in Ciudad Juárez. In that city, they have taught six week long classes on self-esteem, entitled "Valores y Vida" ("Values and Life"). Two principal topics in this class were 1) conflict resolution and 2) confronting machismo. *Centro Mujeres* has even traveled to the *colonias* and other isolated areas of the city in order to reach the women.

Sister Maureen also mentioned one of *Centro Mujeres'* most successful programs, the “Women Learning to Earn” program. She explained that some of her clients may be undocumented, and need a viable way to generate an income. The classes teaches a number of different skills, such as cake decorating, flower arranging, hair cutting and quilting, as well as basic computer skills, writing a résumé, ESL and citizenship. *Centro Mujeres* also sells fair trade products such as coffees, teas and chocolates. She reasoned that selling these fair trade items complements the Centro’s goal of “transforming structures that oppress women.”

Like *Amigos* and the *Coalition*, both *Las Américas* and *Centro Mujeres* recognize that violence and oppression against women are critical issues not constrained by arbitrary geopolitical borders. Their work is not constrained either—though their programs are not based in Juárez (with the exception of *Centro Mujeres'* work in the *colonias*) they are working with an ever-moving, bi-national clientele who have or are currently confronting the deleterious effects of gender violence. And like the *promotora* who informed her battered *juarense* cousin of her legal rights, or the women in *Centro Mujeres* who are empowering themselves and learning how to generate their own sources of income, all of the people involved in these two organizations are helping to transform women’s status within the El Paso-Ciudad Juárez border community.

Complications and Obstacles

In a number of aspects, the grassroots women’s organizations in Mexico have problems and limitations similar to organizations based in El Paso, and indeed throughout the world. They suffer from the proverbial lack of money, staff and other resources.

However, some of their obstacles stem directly from the city's development, and the sensitive, highly politicized nature of the issue they are confronting. Though these obstacles seek to (literally and figuratively) threaten the very viability of these three women's organizations, all three of them have been open and in operation for nearly a decade now. Furthermore, they all still seem to be going strong—simultaneously running the programs and initiatives that they implemented years ago and developing new ones.

This section will discuss three important obstacles that hinder the women's organizations: transportation, slander and threats of physical assault and death. It will then argue that in spite of these obstacles and their repercussions, the women's organizations are still going strong.

In chaotically sprawling Juárez, transportation to and from the organizations is often a complicated and time-consuming process. A male assistant for *Nuestras Hijas* (one of a handful of males I spoke with during the entire five weeks I was on the border) said that transportation was a problem, since so many of the clients lived far from downtown Juárez. Ms. Chávez Cano similarly illustrated the difficulties in her clients reaching *Casa Amiga* by bus: "People around here, to get to downtown, take a bus. Then another bus to come here. That would be ten *pesos*, or part of their minimum wage. And with children, ten more *pesos*....that's twenty *pesos*, thirty *pesos*....look how they're going to spend their wages, they don't come!"

Understandably, it's also difficult to find the time required to make such a trip. My colleague and I found from personal experience that a trip from the Santa Fe bridge in downtown Juárez to Casa Amiga takes approximately thirty minutes by car. A trip

back from the organization to Juárez downtown in a *rutera*—an old school bus that now serves as the city’s public transportation—takes two hours (see Figure 5). Also, as previously mentioned women of all ages have been forcibly taken as they waited for or rode the public transportation (Rodriguez 2007, Washington Valdez 2002).

Directors, administrators and other participants have also confronted slander and threats because of their ceaseless work. A number of respondents from *Nuestras Hijas de Regreso a Casa*, for instance, talked about receiving violent threats (sometimes promising death). The first mother I spoke with, who raised her murdered daughter’s six children, told me that she had been threatened. Someone tried to kill her two of her children; they subsequently fled to the United States. Her grandchildren also received death threats. She explained, “they haven’t tried to do anything to me anymore because, well, the situation [drug violence] has been very difficult here in Juárez.” Ms. Ortiz’s male assistant corroborated that during their movements (protests, marches, etc). they had received threats. Ms. Ortiz herself claimed that the people involved with *Nuestras Hijas* “have had very severe difficulties.” She spoke of being persecuted, the fact that her daughters have received death threats and that they have been threatened with pistols.

Ms. Chávez Cano insisted that she had never felt endangered because of her work. However, she did reply “they still defame me to this day.” She further explained, “[They say] in the newspaper that I had stained Juárez’s name, they were saying that I’m a bad woman that...I have a political position, theories that are purely lies. There are people that don’t like me...but I don’t do this so that they like me. I do this to help. Here is the work.” Physical death threats and verbal slander are representative of some of the

Figure 7: *Ruteras*, the public transportation system of Ciudad Juárez

Source: Rachel Barnstable



hatred and negativity that some members of the greater Juárez society feel toward the women's organizations.

It would be naïve to state that time and money-consuming transportation, verbal slander, and threats of physical violence and death have not had important repercussions for the women's organizations in Juárez. Ms. Chávez Cano lamented that transportation has deterred some people from seeking assistance at *Casa Amiga*, while Ms. Ortiz explained that internationally-known *Nuestras Hijas* has been rendered nearly invisible in Juárez. In spite of the myriad obstacles (infrastructural, social and even life-threatening), the three Mexican women's organizations have all been in operation for nearly a decade. And people are still flocking to them for assistance and/or a shared sense of community.

Complications in Cross-Border Organizing

I have already discussed some important obstacles to bi-national organizing after September 11th. Likewise, some of the organizations whose work is centered in El Paso still face some obstacles in serving a bi-national clientele. Ms. Renae Deas, who heads the *Group Mujer* program at *Las Américas*, explained that a number of her *promotoras* may provide peer education to undocumented immigrants. Often, these women may be socially isolated and don't know their rights. Even if they have been enduring family violence for years, they may never seek formal assistance for fear that they will be deported.

Furthermore, staff attorneys Mr. Eduardo Beckett and Ms. Adriana Salcedo informed me that unless their common-law partner or husband is not a U.S. citizen or legal permanent resident, undocumented survivors of abuse may not apply for residency under the Violence against Women Act (VAWA). Undocumented women may be eligible for a U Visa, but the process can take upwards of a year. U Visas are also only granted under exceptional circumstances, and the women must "collaborate" with the district attorney in order to complete the application. Such collaboration could potentially mean risking physical endangerment, re-living their victimization and living precariously while waiting for the court's final decision.

The *promotoras* realistically cannot reach all of the undocumented immigrant women who are being abused and/or exploited. Those women with whom they do interact may still stay in oppressive and dangerous situations. Yet one of the *promotoras* commented that in her interactions with friends and family members on both sides of the

border, she has been able to give them more information about gender violence and what legal rights they would have if abused, even if they are undocumented. These women, in turn, may inform and help other women that they know.

Also, the fact that no U Visa has been granted thus far has not deterred Mr. Beckett and Ms. Salcedo from filing a number of them. At the time of the interview, they excitedly informed me that they were waiting for final decisions for some of their applications. They and Ms. Deas have also been in contact with some of the domestic violence shelters in El Paso, and other organizations such as *Centro Mujeres*, in order to assist their applicants with basic amenities such as shelter and income-earning skills. While all three of them were firmly grounded in the reality of the obstacles presented before them, they also delighted in their minor victories, and optimistically plan future projects and initiatives.

Social (predominantly Juárez) Perceptions of the Organizations, the Women, and their Work

The women's organizations in Mexico have garnered a tremendous amount of respect in activist, scholarly and organizational circles throughout the international community. This is not necessarily the same in their own community. As discussed previously, some of the respondents have received death threats because of their continued protests and participation. However, there are other *juarenses* community members who criticize the Mexican-based organizations because they are ostensibly "staining" Juárez's reputation, or they are somehow profiting from the murdered women and their anguished family members. This section will be dedicated to exploring these

two critiques, and will offer a potential explanation for their verbal attacks against the women's organizations in Juárez.

As we spoke about greater social perceptions of women's organizations in Juárez, Ms. Ortiz discussed that groups aligned with the government (she did not distinguish between the local, state or federal governments) have attempted to downplay the femicides and promote the dangerous notion that they are resolved. Such discourses also seek to delegitimize the work and very existence of organizations such as *Nuestras Hijas*. She noted:

And there are groups, for example, people who come with a lot of protagonist needs, and who give up, let's say, to the desires of the government. And they produce this official *bolsa* and they try and co-opt the families with some sort of benefit. But they're in charge of [defending] that everything's fine in Juárez. That femicide no longer exists, that the cases are already solved, and this worries us. It makes us very sad. The reality is that we're more recognized throughout the world than in our own community.

Ms. Chávez Cano may have one explanation as to why those aligned with the governments would promote such falsehoods: "The deaths in Juárez...they're like a stain." The femicides—and now the constant stream of homicides related to warring drug cartels—reinforce Juárez's long-held and unenviable status as the "The Most Wickedest City in the World." This status does not only hold negative repercussions for the tourism sector, but it also burdens those in the city who try to lead normal, everyday lives. A common perception—as irrational and misplaced as it may be—is that the women's organizations are "denigrating" or "staining" the name of Juárez (according to Ms. Ortiz and Ms. Chávez Cano). Whether they are perceived as superfluous or

detrimental to the greater Ciudad Juárez community, the common conclusion is that these organizations need to be silenced and/or disbanded.

Dr. Coronado spoke of a former activist cum government-appointed official who seemed to change her stance as she remained in power.

Victoria Caravello was appointed by the Governor of Chihuahua to head the *Instituto Chihuahuense de la Mujer*. Victoria Caravello is a very wealthy woman from Juárez. She belongs to one of the richest families of the state. But she's one of these wealthy people that has always lobbied and advocated for the poor. And, very elegant woman, very polished, refined. And she was an activist. And she was really hammering on the government, really hauling them to the carpet, really demanding justice. And the governor appointed her. And when she was appointed by the governor, she became... "*well, the situation is not so bad. The numbers of the murders are exaggerated*", and people were, "*you know, Victoria, two weeks ago you were the one who was bashing the governor, demanding justice, telling him to reform*".... So that was another turning point in this whole thing, when Vicky went to work for the governor. And they thought that she was truly co-opted.

Other society members scrutinize the motives of the women's organizations and question if they are somehow appropriating and profiting from the grief of others. As border dweller and feminist rhetorician Clara Eugenia Rojas (2205) explains it, "locally, we activists and scholars have learned—the hard way—to be very cautious in what, how, and who we support publicly."

Indeed, whereas some have attempted to squelch publicity concerning the femicides, others have exploited it. Ms. González, for example, remembers the media explosion of coverage on the femicides when she was in high school. Dr. Coronado mentioned that sometimes during a slow week, reporters would call the Coalition and ask if any more bodies had been found. Dr. Coronado so concerned with the exploitation of femicide victims and their family members that she and Dr. Staudt analyzed whether or

not their activism and scholarly publications were “making themselves rich on someone else’s misfortune.”

Ms. Chávez Cano mentioned that she had been criticized for “not doing anything.” Ms. González, the *Diario de El Paso* reporter, expressed a similar sentiment in her critique of the organizations based in Juárez.

I think they [the associations] have done a good job, I think they have the resources to help a little bit more. And these people have been really bold—I have talked to some of the people. And they’re good people, and they try to help people, but they haven’t done too much. They do a good job, I guess. But they could do a little bit more—I don’t know how—they have been pressuring the government, they have made society aware of this, I’m not sure what else they could do.

Ms. González would not elaborate on her criticisms of the women’s organizations, but her statements get at the heart of how many people in Juárez—and even in El Paso—feel. Previously in the interview, she mentioned that people were tired of hearing about the murders—there are so many myths connected to them, and as Ms. Washington Valdez stated, there has been no real judicial justice. I got the impression that the average Juárez society member, perpetually failed by the state and federal governments and suspicious of any intervention, had either given up hope that justice would prevail or were disillusioned with the organizations because things hadn’t changed dramatically and in a short period of time.

Interestingly enough, during our interview session, Ms. González expressed her admiration for the mothers who have not become members of any of the organizations in Juárez or in Chihuahua City. The *Border Coalition* and *Amigos* have found it easier to do trans-border work without the formal 501(c)3 organizational status. Along these same

lines, those living in Juárez may have a greater respect for the protesters who are not aligned with any particular formalized organization, who seemingly have no “agenda” other than investigating the murders of their loved ones and demanding an end to the inaction and apathy that pervade these murders.

What Can be Done for the Future?

Investigating and Prosecuting the Femicides

The investigation and prosecution of the perpetrators, and how it should be carried out, is still a divisive issue on both sides of the border. Ms. González, of the *Diario de El Paso*, informed me, that she feels “the society is tired” because in more than fifteen years, not one femicide case has really been resolved. After all this time, they may feel that the cases should be closed or deemed cold cases.

And though Ms. González stated that the “forensic technology” exists to potentially solve the cases, the evidence could have already been compromised or erased.

Stated Dr. Coronado:

The Mexican government did not have a good investigative arm, a good local police department, laboratories were missing...a lot of the evidence is gone. It's not fair, and you cannot convict someone without any evidence. And that, to me, is a crime. And I think the mothers, at one point, they exhumed 23 bodies because mistakes were made. And that is absolutely, positively criminal, to have to re-live this whole ordeal, the DNA thing, and that was another thing that really divided the mothers.

She also spoke of the inadequate laboratory facilities in Mexico, remarking “how could they possibly find the evidence?”

Even among those who still demand investigation and prosecution, there is debate as to who should do it, and how it should be handled. Since El Paso and the United

States are literally next door, should the United States play a greater role? There is some criticism on the United States' lack of involvement in the first place. "There is no way we could not have known what was going on. We have centers of espionage and intelligence centers in Mexico," asserted Ms. Washington Valdez. She added that legislators and other government officials have perhaps been "scared to get involved." For instance, it was not until considerable criticism and pressure that U.S. Representative Silvestre Reyes (D-Texas) took action.

For their part, the El Paso and Texas state police departments, and the FBI did extend offers of assistance to Juárez. Dr. Coronado explained, for example, that testing facilities in both El Paso and Lubbock, Texas, offered to process DNA samples so Chihuahua would not have to send them all the way to Mexico City. Ms. Washington Valdez claimed that the Mexican government did not want their interference.

However, Dr. Coronado informed me that there had been a scandal involving the FBI in Juárez. Mr. Hardrick Crawford, Jr. headed the bureau's El Paso Division in 2002 (U.S. Department of Justice 2007). She explained that he was a staunch proponent of the women's organizations in Juárez. He also concluded that the femicides should be considered a bi-national issue, because the murderers could very well have been living in El Paso. During his stint as director, Mr. Crawford and his wife were linked to José María Guardia, a racetrack owner from Juárez. The former Special Agent was accused of concealing important details regarding their friendship, including withholding information about some gifts that Mr. Guardia had given him that same year. He was

convicted in 2006 of not disclosing the truth, and at the beginning of 2007 he was sentenced to serve six months in federal prison (U.S. Department of Justice 2007).

Dr. Coronado found this scandal especially unfortunate, as she explained that Mr. Crawford could have been “a good advocate of bi-national cooperation.” It was probably a further disappointment to the women’s organizations on both sides of the border, who had been working individually and collectively for justice in their communities.

According to Dr. Coronado, the state of Chihuahua did hire former FBI agent Robert Ressler to help with some of their investigations. Furthermore, Ms. Washington Valdez noted that U.S. forces had trained some of the Chihuahua police officers. But such measures may not be appreciated, especially among society members who believe that the United States has a bad habit of meddling in and controlling Mexican affairs. Dr. Coronado lamented that it’s a “tough call” deciding who ultimately needs to take responsibility for investigating and solving the murders, as some Mexicans feel “why is it that the United States has to come in and save us from ourselves?”

Ms. Washington Valdez mentioned that the case of the murdered Dutch tourist had been presented in the European parliament, and reasons that a solution to the impunity would be to make the responsible parties (such as drug lords, mayors and governors) go before an international tribunal for prosecution. While an international tribunal could potentially be an objective and effective way to investigate and prosecute the femicides, would it matter in the long run? Dr. Coronado spoke at length about the impunity, apathy and corruption nestled at the core of the Mexican investigations and

wryly commented, “So how do we expect a person to come in from the outside and fix something that has been broken for a hundred years?”

Changing the Violent Climate Towards Women

Though there is little agreement as to how the femicides should be resolved (and who should resolve them), there was considerably more agreement on strategies to change pejorative social perceptions of women and eradicate gender violence. These strategies consistently involved the future generations. A NHDRC participant and mother stressed, “respect for the woman starts at home, you teach respect for women from a young age. These values start at home.” Luz del Carmen Sosa, who has a fourteen-year-old daughter, similarly stressed the importance of fomenting respect and autonomy for women, in children of both sexes.

Ms. Ortiz grappled with the truth that she will not be around forever to run her organization and continue fighting for justice in Juárez. While giving them the tools to cope and move forward with their lives, she also hopes that the children and teenagers in her organization will “continue forward with this very important project.” Ms. Chávez Cano similarly stated that it is up to the younger generations of women (myself included) to take up the struggle against gender violence in all of its forms. “What I mean to say is that we still haven’t succeeded...it’s your turn to change the world. Those of you who get married...how are you going to raise your children? You have to raise them to respect women. It’s the only way...[our] hope rests with you young people.”

While it is important to foment respect for and empowerment of women in future generations, the *promotoras* at *Las Américas immigrant advocacy center* and the

women's support group at *Centro Mujeres de la Esperanza* are also working with older generations and changing deeply entrenched notions of women's work and worth. One woman, who had not been physically abused but was learning to "take time for herself" and educate herself, was able to share her experiences with an increasingly supportive husband.

Before coming to the U.S.-Mexico border and speaking directly with the women residing on both sides of the border who are so intimately involved in the struggle against gender violence and femicide, I planned to ultimately "gauge" the efficacy of the women's organizations I contacted. However, the more I spoke with respondents from different sectors (such as newspaper media and academia), it became increasingly apparent that the role of these women's organizations is as contested as the femicides themselves. I am inspired by these women's incredible drive and determination, and the accomplishments they have made as a result. At the same time, it is understandable why some Juárez citizens would eye these organizations with a degree of skepticism and criticism, since the still unsolved femicides have been either shrouded in secrecy and corruption, or exploited and woven into sensational myths in some media sources. Furthermore, the arduous tasks of changing deeply embedded patriarchy and co-opted law enforcement and political structures will take some time. Positive long-term change will continue to come slowly. It is my sincere hope that—with the help of these women's organizations—Juárez will be able to simultaneously heal and continue to move forward.

CONCLUSIONS

This section of conclusions will contain a summary of the key information contained within the previous chapters. It will also highlight some of the key points or “lessons” that can be taken away from examining from organizational women’s movements, including the challenges of organizing around a “woman’s issue” at local, national or even international levels, and the difficulties in measuring the so-called “successes” or efficacy of these movements.

The conditions and causes of gender violence and prolonged femicide in Ciudad Juárez are multiple, complex and often inter-connected. Interplay between historical, sociological and geographical factors have created the so-called “perfect storm” for the slaughter and disappearance of hundreds of women for more than a decade. In the historical tradition of motherist groups in Latin America who organized against state-sponsored repression, women in Ciudad Juárez and Chihuahua City have formed organizations specifically addressing—and attempting to neutralize—governmental impunity, *machismo*, and the further demonization and devaluation of women through their entrance into the *maquiladora* workforce.

Though there have been tensions between these Mexican-based groups, they each fill a specific niche that has been neglected. They also present a united front when demonstrating in the city’s downtown. Furthermore, there are organizations based along the United States side of the border that have recognized and responded to the immense need to treat femicide and gender violence as a transnational issue affecting the entire greater El Paso-Ciudad Juárez border community. Two of these organizations do not

have U.S.-recognized official organizational status, which has actually freed them from cross-border bureaucracy that regulates the transfer of goods and money across border, as well as the need to perpetually sustain themselves through grants and other sources of funding. Other organizations may be confined to the El Paso side of the border, but their work is directly related to *juarense* community members, and their efforts in combating gender violence spread throughout the intimately-linked border community.

The organizations in Juárez, Chihuahua City, and along the U.S. border have launched impressive projects and initiatives over a period of years. Each of the Mexican-based organizations has been in existence for most of the 21st century. Furthermore, they continue to exist and fight against impunity, *machismo* and woman's demonization/devaluation in spite of physical obstacles, verbal smear campaigns, and violent threats. They have high expectations not only for their individual organizations and participants, but also the society in which they live.

My interactions with the women's organizations, scholars and reporters along both sides of the border has illuminated some of the major challenges facing organized women's movements not only within the Ciudad Juárez or Mexican context, but throughout the international community. I discussed some of these challenges in my literature review, and would like to apply them to the Ciudad Juárez context. The first concerns how one determines what is a "woman's issue," and how to subsequently address it. While the women's organizations in Juárez arose specifically through recognition of femicide as a grave women's issue, they have each broached femicide and/or gender violence from very different angles. It is not necessarily a negative thing

for local organizations to fill their own niche, but problems may potentially arise when these organizations are all vying for a limited pool of resources. Women's organizations that are all fulfilling a different need may face the quandary of having to publicly legitimate the programs and initiatives of their particular organization, while downplaying or even denigrating others.

This brings up a second challenge that may occur within an individual organization or among multiple collaborative organizations: with limited time, money and resources, how are goals and programs prioritized? And, in the end, who has the final say over allocation of money and other precious organizational resources? The organizations on both sides of the border have successfully incorporated women from different socio-economic levels into participating and leading. In *Justicia*, director Norma Ledezma was a long-time *maquiladora* worker, and the *group mujer promotoras* of *Las Américas* are often from a lower class and educational status. However, while they do have a say in how their programs develop, I am not sure how much say they have in fund and resource allocation toward the projects.

A third challenge is in analyzing how women's participation in the organizations has impacted their lives. As with other women's movements throughout the world, there have been both positive and negative repercussions for women's organizations within the greater Juárez-El Paso border community. On the one hand, the women have found strength and solidarity in their participation and in the bonds that they have formed with other members. They have told me that the communal or familial ties within their respective organizations have helped them to come to terms with grief and other

heartache, as well as propel them forward. Furthermore, some spouses and other family members encourage their organizational involvement. At the same time, these women are expending themselves between family, work and organizational responsibilities. They risk disapproval and slander from other community members, or even death threats to them and their families.

A fourth challenge concerns the local, Chihuahua and federal government's manipulation and rejection of the women's movements. Community and local allegations that the femicides have been solved, or that they will never be solved and nothing more can be done, delegitimize the organizations and their ceaseless, dedicated work. Furthermore, the federal government under President Vicente Fox declared that it would no longer investigate the femicides, thereby quite possibly sending a message that they were no longer an issue.

And finally, the collaboration with and recognition of local women's organizations at the international level may also create points of contention within the local community. For example, a local organization or activist may be deemed the sole spokesperson or role model of a certain women's issue at the international level. Such recognition may preclude the numerous other local individuals and organizations actively confronting the exact same issue. Well-meaning international activists and organizations that provide resources to the local women's organizations or collaborate with them on an event dictate what *should* be done.

At the same time, such global ties could raise unparalleled awareness of a critical women's issue, and generate much-needed resources that would not be accessible

otherwise. Also, international collaboration does not necessarily have to occur within the confines of bi-national governmental legislation and regulation. In fact, informal coalitions and ties may be more efficient in fomenting change, as they are not so constrained by the constant need to raise funds, and bureaucratic red tape from more than one national government. However, this informal cooperation may be perceived as superficial or illegitimate (if indeed it is recognized at all).

The last thing I would like to address in these conclusions is how does the researcher determine and subsequently evaluate these organizations' so-called "success"? Amrita Basu (1995, 13) suggests that they could potentially be measured in terms of achieving what the movement has outlined as its goals, or according to "some more universal standards of social justice." At the same time, she states that these two barometers are problematic—women's organizational movements may not have self-identified themselves as "women's movements" or "feminist movements", the state or other entities can impede the accomplishment of goals, and the woman's movement itself may not last very long.

In the case of the Juárez-El Paso region, members within the local, national and international communities may have widely divergent perceptions of the women's organizations and their efficacy. Women's organizations that are lauded and portrayed as exemplars internationally may be simultaneously viewed as inefficient, obsolete and/or suspicious within their own communities. Such contradictory opinions make success and efficacy difficult to assess. Using the organization's established programs and numbers of participants as potential barometers for "success" is also problematic. Restricted

access to resources, in turn, restricts the organization's ability to implement and sustain their visions. External factors such as time and money-consuming public transportation also directly impact who participates in these organizations, and how often.

Finally, it may take several years to "see" any tangible or quantifiable position change resulting from the women's movements and organizations. As they are so often confronting myriad socially entrenched and intricately connected roots of the problem (such as impunity, *machismo* and the *maquiladoras*), the "progress" that disillusioned people are desperate to see occur overnight may, in fact, occur over a span of generations.

One possible way to gain an idea of a movement's or an organization's "success" is to ask the participants how their involvement has personally impacted their lives. In the Ciudad Juárez/El Paso context, success is reflected in the family members of femicide victims who collectively support one another and continue moving forward; in the women who are educated about gender violence and what their rights are if they are ever in a violent situation; in the mothers who won't give up until they can bring their daughters' murders to justice; and in the children who learn from an early age to value women and give them the respect and dignity afforded all human beings.

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APPENDIX A: INTERVIEW QUESTIONS FOR DIRECTORS, ADMINISTRATORS
AND VOLUNTEERS

Information about the Femicides in Ciudad Juárez

- 1) When did the murders start occurring, and how were they discovered?
 - How are these murders different from homicide and violence against males in Ciudad Juárez?
 - What do these murders say about Ciudad Juárez? Why are they occurring here and not in another part of Mexico or another part of the world?
 - What factors make women more susceptible to victimization?
- 2) How do national and international media portray these murders?
 - Do Ciudad Juárez/Chihuahua/Mexico media sources still talk about the murders? How often?
 - What about across the border in El Paso? In the United States?
 - How do these media sources portray the murder victims?

History/Background Information about the Organization

- 3) Could you give me a background or history of this organization? What types of services or programs does the organization offer for: victims of violence? Friends or family members who have been affected by the violence/femicide? Are there services specifically for men?
- 4) For what reasons was the organization founded?
 - Was this organization already in existence previous to the femicides?
 - If so, how did it change?

Personal/Work Information

- 5) How long have you been with this organization, and what is your job?
 - What aspects of your job are the most rewarding? Which are the most challenging?
- 6) Why are you working here?
 - Is there a personal experience that influenced your decision to work here?
- 7) How has the decision to work at this organization impacted your life? Has it impacted how others (loved ones, for example) perceive you?
 - Do you ever feel threatened, or like you are in danger because of your involvement?

The Organization's Strategies/Goals at Individual and/or Societal Levels

- 8) What are the organization's most important strategies or goals when working with clients or participants?
 - What are the biggest challenges in providing services or programs for these women?
 - How does the organization get/maintain material and financial support?

- 9) Does the organization have goals or objectives that are geared more toward impacting or changing society?
 - Are there goals to help women as a collective group?
 - Are there initiatives to change society's perception/value of women?
 - What about initiatives to raise or maintain awareness of the situation at national and international levels?

- 10) Does this organization collaborate with any organizations or groups based in the United States?
 - What kind of cross-border initiatives are taking place, if any?
 - Is there any resistance in seeking "outside" help for the situation?

APPENDIX B: SPANISH TRANSLATIONS FOR DIRECTORS, ADMINISTRATORS
AND VOLUNTEERS

Información sobre los Femicidios en Ciudad Juárez

- 1) ¿Cuándo empezó los femicidios, y cómo se descubrieron?
 - ¿Cómo son diferentes estas matanzas del homicidio y la violencia contra los hombres en Ciudad Juárez?
 - What do these murders say about Ciudad Juárez? Why are they occurring here and not in another part of Mexico or another part of the world?
 - ¿Qué muestran las matanzas sobre Ciudad Juárez? ¿Por qué están ocurriendo aquí y no en alguna otra parte de México u otra parte del mundo?
 - What factors make women more susceptible to victimization?

- 2) How do national and international media portray these murders?
 - ¿Todavía hablan las noticias de Ciudad Juárez/Chihuahua/México sobre las matanzas? ¿Cuánto—con frecuencia o solo de vez en cuando?
 - What about across the border in El Paso? In the United States?
 - ¿Y en el otro lado de la frontera, en El Paso? ¿En los E.E.U.U.?
 - How do these media sources portray the murder victims?

Historia e Información sobre la Organización

- 3) ¿Me puede explicar la historia de esta organización? ¿Qué tipo de servicios o programas ofrecen la organización para: víctimas de la violencia? ¿Amigos o familiares que han sido afectados por la violencia/los femicidios? ¿Hay servicios específicamente para los hombres?
- 4) ¿Para qué razones se fundó la organización?
 - Was this organization already in existence previous to the femicides?
 - ¿Ya existió la organización antes del descubrimiento de los femicidios?
 - Y si es cierto, cómo ha cambiado?

Personal/Work Information

Información Personal o sobre el Trabajo

- 5) ¿Cuánto tiempo lleva con la organizació, y cuál es su puesto?
 - What aspects of your job are the most rewarding? Which are the most challenging?
 - ¿Qué aspectos de su trabajo son los más provechosos? ¿Cuáles son los más desafiantes?

- 6) ¿Por qué trabaja aquí?
 - ¿Hay alguna experiencia personal que influyó su decisión a trabajar aquí?
- 7) ¿Cómo ha afectado su vida la decisión de trabajar en esta organización? ¿Ha afectado como los demás (como sus amigos, por ejemplo) la perciben?
 - ¿Se siente alguna vez amenazada, o como está en el peligro debido a su participación?

Las Estrategias/ Metas de la Organización en niveles individuos o Sociales

- 8) ¿Cuáles son las estrategias o metas más importantes en cuanto a trabajar con clientes o participantes?
 - ¿Cuáles son los obstáculos más grandes en proveer servicios o programas para estas mujeres?
 - ¿Cómo obtiene/mantiene apoyo material y financiero?
- 9) ¿Tiene la organización metas u objetivos que intentan influir o cambiar la sociedad?
 - ¿Hay metas para ayudar las mujeres como un grupo colectivo?
 - ¿Hay iniciativas para cambiar la percepción o el valor de las mujeres?
 - ¿Hay iniciativas para aumentar o mantener conocimiento de la situación en niveles nacionales e internacionales?
- 10) Colabora esta organización con algún grupo u organización basada en los E.E.U.U.?
 - ¿Qué tipo de iniciativas transnacionales hay, si existen?
 - ¿Hay alguna forma de resistencia en buscar/pedir ayuda fuera del país para esta situación?

APPENDIX C: QUESTIONS FOR ORGANIZATIONAL PARTICIPANTS

Personal/Demographic Questions

1) Are you between the ages of: 18-25, 26-30, 31-35, 36-45, 46+?*

*IRB thinks specific age could be an identifier

2) What is your occupation?

3) Were you born and raised in Juárez, or did you move here?

- If you moved, how old were you? What motivated you or your family to move to Juárez?

Involvement with the Organization

4) Why did you seek services or want to participate in this organization?

- How long have you been seeking services or participating?
- What kinds of services have you been accessing?

5) Have you personally been affected by violence against women or the femicides? If so, did that influence your decision to access services here or participate in any way?

6) How has this organization impacted your life?

- Do you feel safer? Do you feel like you are in more danger?
- If you have been personally affected by the gender violence or femicide, has the organization helped you cope?
- What are your own personal goals in regard to your involvement? For example: is your ultimate goal to empower Mexican women? Or would you most like to see more media coverage and international awareness of what's going on?
- What are the challenges and/or rewards of being involved in such an organization?

Client/Participant's Perceptions on the Situation, Ciudad Juárez

7) Why do you think these murders are occurring in Ciudad Juárez, and not somewhere else in Mexico or in the world?

- What do these murders say about the city?

Others' Perceptions of Client/Participant's Involvement with the Organization

8) Has your involvement with this organization impacted your relationships with others (such as family and/or friends)?

- 9) What do you friends and/or family members think about your involvement with the organization?
- What are people's general reactions if you tell them about your involvement?
 - Do you ever feel hesitant or worried to tell others?
 - Do you ever feel proud to tell others?

APPENDIX D: SPANISH TRANSLATIONS FOR ORGANIZATIONAL
PARTICIPANTS

Preguntas Personales/Demográficas

1) Está usted entre la edad de 18-25, 26-30, 31-35, 36-45, 46+?

*IRB thinks specific age could be an identifier

2) ¿Cuál es su puesto?

3) ¿Usted nació y se creció en Juárez o se mudó aquí?

- If you moved, how old were you? What motivated you or your family to move to Juárez?
- ¿Si mudó, cuántos años tenían? ¿Qué influyó su decisión o la decisión de su familia a mudarse a Juárez?

Participación con la Organización

4) ¿Por qué buscó servicios o quiso participar en esta organización?

- ¿Por cuánto tiempo participa en algún servicio o programa?
- ¿Qué tipos de servicios se ha acesado?

5) ¿Usted personalmente ha estado afectada por la violencia contra las mujeres o los femicidios? ¿Si es cierto, tuvo una influencia en su decisión de buscar servicios o participar?

6) ¿Cómo ha afectado su vida esta organización?

- Do you feel safer? Do you feel like you are in more danger?
- Se siente más segura? ¿Se siente que usted está en el peligro?
- ¿Si usted he estado afectada personalment por la violencia o el femicidio, la organización le ha ayudado a adaptarse?
- ¿Cuáles son sus metas personales en cuanto a su participación? Por ejemplo: le gustaría dar más poder a las mujeres Mexicanas? O le gustaría que las noticias (los medios) aumentaran el conocimiento internacional de lo que está ocurriendo?
- ¿Cuáles son los obstáculos o recompensas de su participación en una organización como esta?

Percepciones de la Cliente/Participante sobre la Situación/Ciudad Juárez

7) En su opinion, ¿por qué están ocurriendo las matanzas en Ciudad Juárez, y no en alguna otra parte de México u otra parte del mundo?

- ¿Qué muestran estas matanzas sobre la ciudad?

La Percepción de los Demás sobre la participación de la Cliente en la Organización

- 8) ¿Ha afectado su participación en la organización sus relaciones con los demás (como sus amigos o familiares)?

- 9) ¿Qué piensan sus amigos o familiares en cuanto a su participación con la organización?
 - ¿Cuáles son las reacciones de la gente si la cuenta sobre su participación?
 - Do you ever feel hesitant or worried to tell others?
 - ¿Alguna vez se siente dudosa o preocupada contar otros?
 - ¿O se siente orgullosa cuando les cuenta a los demás?