

ISM Original Work 2017-2018

Domestic Violence and Law in Society

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Introduction

This year in ISM, the limits of my experience have expanded widely, giving me new opportunities and an excited desire to learn. From an interest in helping people at the beginning of the year, to considering family and divorce law in the first few weeks of Independent Study and Mentorship, and now having found my passion this year in public interest law, I hoped to get out of my Original Work a more direct relationship with global problems and their connection to the law. Although I've spent months researching immigration and family law, I particularly wanted my Original Work project to give me a chance to interact with something directly happening in the world through brainstorming ways to help the epidemic of domestic violence, one of the most prevalent and underreported instances across the globe. Not only did I want to be able to analyze patterns and reasons for the silence of domestic violence victims, but to target a specific country as a case study to see what steps could in theory be taken to help the problem at the route. My goal with the Original Work would no longer be confined simply to researching and learning about how to help people but to try to come up with some early solutions, overall opening the scope of my ISM experience.

Domestic Violence Research

Explanation on why immigrant domestic violence is so underreported:

Like all women, immigrant women are at high risk for domestic violence, but due to their immigration status, they may face a more difficult time escaping abuse. Immigrant women often feel trapped in abusive relationships because of immigration laws, language barriers, social isolation, and lack of financial resources. Despite recent federal legislation that has opened new and safe routes to immigration status for some immigrant women who are victims of domestic violence, abuse is still a significant problem for immigrant women, as it is for all women in the United States.

Analysis:

It's clear the cultural gap that has been cemented in many cultures, which plays a large role in the prevalence of domestic violence cases. I still wonder, how big of a role does religion play into all of this? Are these gender gaps because of religious norms, cultural norms, or have they even fused together in many places such as the Middle East, so the line between the two is blurred anyway? I also wonder, how long will it take to change? When looking at Rwanda for example, they brought women's rights in quickly and efficiently, however they are now struggling as a nation with the repercussions of too much change too fast. As a whole they are having many issues with their stability and social differences ever since the genocide especially, so their gender roles and issues haven't had a chance to really balance out at all. What could be brought to Rwanda to help their problems stabilize? Is time the only real fix and on a similar note, do things have to happen over a long period of time for them to be permanent and without many problems, or can help come faster than over decades?

Facts About Domestic Violence:

- A recent study in New York City found that 51 percent of intimate partner homicide victims were foreign-born, while 45 percent were born in the United States
- Forty-eight percent of Latinas in one study reported that their partner's violence against them had increased since they immigrated to the United States
- A survey of immigrant Korean women found that 60 percent had been battered by their husbands
- Married immigrant women experience higher levels of physical and sexual abuse than unmarried immigrant women, 59.5 percent compared to 49.8 percent, respectively
- Abusers often use their partners' immigration status as a tool of control. In such situations, it is common for a batterer to exert control over his partner's immigration status in order to force her to remain in the relationship
- Immigrant women often suffer higher rates of battering than U.S. citizens because they may come from cultures that accept domestic violence or because they have less access to legal and social services than U.S. citizens. Additionally, immigrant batterers and victims may believe that the penalties and protections of the U.S. legal system do not apply to them
- Battered immigrant women who attempt to flee may not have access to bilingual shelters, financial assistance, or food. It is also unlikely that they will have the assistance of a certified interpreter in court, when reporting complaints to the police or a 911 operator, or even in acquiring information about their rights and the legal system

More Statistics:

- Every 9 seconds in the US a woman is assaulted or beaten.
- Around the world, at least one in every three women has been beaten, coerced into sex or otherwise abused during her lifetime. Most often, the abuser is a member of her own family.
- Domestic violence is the leading cause of injury to women—more than car accidents, muggings, and rapes combined.
- Studies suggest that up to 10 million children witness some form of domestic violence annually.
- Nearly 1 in 5 teenage girls who have been in a relationship said a boyfriend threatened violence or self-harm if presented with a breakup.
- Everyday in the US, more than three women are murdered by their husbands or boyfriends.
- Ninety-two percent of women surveyed listed reducing domestic violence and sexual assault as their top concern.
- Domestic violence victims lose nearly 8 million days of paid work per year in the US alone—the equivalent of 32,000 full-time jobs.
- Based on reports from 10 countries, between 55 percent and 95 percent of women who had been physically abused by their partners had never contacted

non-governmental organizations, shelters, or the police for help.

- The costs of intimate partner violence in the US alone exceed \$5.8 billion per year: \$4.1 billion are for direct medical and health care services, while productivity losses account for nearly \$1.8 billion.
- Men who as children witnessed their parents' domestic violence were twice as likely to abuse their own wives than sons of nonviolent parents.
- Violence against women – particularly intimate partner violence and sexual violence – is a major public health problem and a violation of women's human rights.
- Global estimates published by WHO indicate that about 1 in 3 (35%) of women worldwide have experienced either physical and/or sexual intimate partner violence or non-partner sexual violence in their lifetime.
- Most of this violence is intimate partner violence. Worldwide, almost one third (30%) of women who have been in a relationship report that they have experienced some form of physical and/or sexual violence by their intimate partner in their lifetime.
- Globally, as many as 38% of murders of women are committed by a male intimate partner.
- Violence can negatively affect women's physical, mental, sexual, and reproductive health, and may increase the risk of acquiring HIV in some settings.

- Men are more likely to perpetrate violence if they have low education, a history of child maltreatment, exposure to domestic violence against their mothers, harmful use of alcohol, unequal gender norms including attitudes accepting of violence, and a sense of entitlement over women.
- Women are more likely to experience intimate partner violence if they have low education, exposure to mothers being abused by a partner, abuse during childhood, and attitudes accepting violence, male privilege, and women's subordinate status.
- There is evidence that advocacy and empowerment counselling interventions, as well as home visitation are promising in preventing or reducing intimate partner violence against women.
- Situations of conflict, post conflict and displacement may exacerbate existing violence, such as by intimate partners, as well as and non-partner sexual violence, and may also lead to new forms of violence against women.

These 20 Countries Have No Law Against Domestic Violence

Article and Analysis

It is a startling fact that one of the most dangerous places for a woman is her own home.

Nearly **40 percent** of all murders of women worldwide are carried out by an intimate partner, according to the World Health Organization. **One in three women** across the globe has experienced physical or sexual violence at the hands of her partner. And in the United States, some **1.3 million women** are assaulted by their partner each year, according to CDC statistics.

Despite the prevalence of violence against women in their own homes, dozens of countries around the world do not have specific laws against domestic violence. For example **Kenya has no provision to outlaw domestic abuse and according to the U.S. State Department, police in the country generally refrain from investigating cases of domestic violence, treating it as a private family matter.** In Lebanon, debate rumbles on about finally passing a law to criminalize domestic violence, after a series of horrendous abuse cases hit the country's headlines this year.

Liesl Gerntholtz, Executive Director of the Women's Rights Division at Human Rights Watch, explained to The WorldPost why it has been so important for countries to adopt specific legislation that targets domestic abuse. Gerntholtz pointed out that while ordinary criminal law does outlaw violence, and therefore domestic abuse should be treated as a crime, the issue has historically been ignored by governments and underreported by women. "Because the violence is so invisible you needed laws to enroll judges, police and other authorities to look for it and prosecute it," she said.

"Violence against women is frighteningly simple and complex. Violence will stop when perpetrators stop," she added.

The good news is that incredible progress has been made in recent years to outlaw domestic abuse. While specific domestic violence laws were uncommon just a few decades ago, a lot of countries have created legislation that specifically targets the issue. Saudi Arabia for example, a country known for its restrictions on women's rights, passed a landmark bill in 2013 that outlaws domestic abuse.

One of the biggest challenges today is getting domestic violence laws implemented, such as making sure that women are able to go to the police to report violence or have access to shelters for protection, Gerntholtz notes. While public awareness of domestic violence has greatly improved, the shame attached to being beaten by your brother or husband is still a major challenge.

President of the World Bank Group Jim Yong Kim echoed Gerntholtz's observations during a humanitarian conference in Washington D.C this week. "If domestic violence continues to receive inadequate attention, it tells women they have less worth and less power than men," Kim said. "It undermines their ability to make choices and act on them independently, impacting not only them, but their families, communities, and economies."

Analysis:

I didn't previously realize the shame that goes along with being a victim of domestic violence and now I understand that it plays a major role in why domestic violence is so underreported. Additionally, I didn't realize how many countries have no laws whatsoever against domestic violence because it is seen as a "private family matter". That's so dangerous to women as a whole because it undermines their ability to speak out for themselves, especially in cultures where women are already at such a lower status than men.

After reading about the impacts of different domestic violence laws and the occurrence that many countries don't have any laws in place at all, I created an infographic that included what I thought were the most surprising and impactful statistics from all of my research. It can be accessed with this QR Code:



Rwandan Domestic Violence Case Study

Rwanda is one of the most fascinating nations in the world, especially when it comes to their history with gender equality. In 1994, the country experienced an extremely severe genocide, where a clash between two cultures caused the slaughter of over 800,000 Rwandans. As a result, the gender imbalance grew, and women began to take over more and more positions in the workforce, heightening their social status. This phenomenon has been seen throughout history, much like during World War II, when symbols like Rosie the Riveter brought American women to the forefront of the workforce. Regardless, very few times in the world has the progression of women been seen on such a large and rapid scale as that of Rwanda.

In 2003, the Rwandan Constitution was amended to include a quota that the nation had to have 30% of reserved seats for women in all decision-making bodies. With this new quota, the number of women in Rwandan politics continued to grow as did the equality between the two historically split genders. Rwanda, as with many African countries, has grown with the foundation of a patriarchy-- men working as the primary breadwinners and providers in a household with women working at home and raising children. Even with the rapid growth of women in Rwandan Parliament, there is still a silent danger for all women in the form of domestic abuse and violence. This is where new solutions need to be created.

Rwanda is a perfect example that legislation alone cannot fix all domestic violence; change comes over time and from the ground up. Although there has been powerful growth in a positive direction, with Rwanda become the first nation to reach a majority-female Parliament, over 93% of domestic abuse victims are still women. This stems primarily from the patriarchal cultural norms, with men having to validate their masculinity through partner abuse and control. My proposal is to offer classes in middle school and high school that are required by the country to complete. I think both boys and girls should attend, because according to the Rwanda Men's Resources Center, RWAMREC, 96% of men that attend their training programs against partner violence recognize the need to reexamine the traditional shows of masculinity. Through programs like this one, it is clear that education is a foundational response to the extensive problem of domestic abuse. Additional to this study, statistics show that women are more likely to be victims the less education they receive and men are more likely to be perpetrators the less education they receive. As a response, schooling needs to begin early and persist through primary school, helping prevent people from becoming victimizers and victims.

In the context of law, I think that all countries should implement laws that prevent domestic violence in whatever way possible. Studies show that even though law

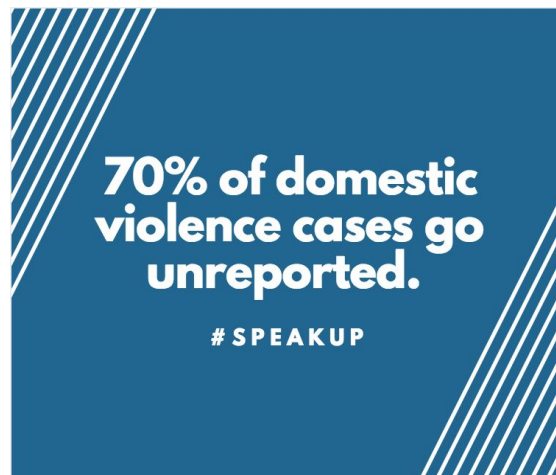
cannot singlehandedly prevent sexual abuse, creating preventative measures help close the divide. Domestic abuse is so particularly underreported because it is seen in many cultures as a private family matter, but if countries proposed legislation to definitively outlaw domestic violence, it would partially remove the “private” matter altogether. There is a barrier that exists between the government and the home life, because historically constituents feel threatened when politicians attempt to invade their home; their privacy. Regardless, for a matter as prevalent and dangerous as domestic violence, I think by every country adopting a strict law against any tolerance of domestic violence, instances would become less frequent.

And in concordance, I believe the final pillar to creating positive change against domestic violence is by making assistance resources more available. Governments as a whole need to sponsor and finance non profit organizations that assist all people, but particularly threatened female victims, with their case against any abusers in their lives. Domestic violence is by far one of the most underreported “silent” crimes, because not only are they not crimes in all countries, but because of the stigma attached to being victimized. The only way to combat this cultural quiet against abuse is to open the dialogue, making the matters something that women feel more comfortable addressing and combating. This is by far the most difficult change of the three to implement, because the shame associated with domestic abuse is private and emotional, not something as easily targeted as making educational classes more prominent or passing laws to fight abuse. Even so, the internal change must take place for the laws and education to properly work. The laws are obsolete without crimes actually being reported and the crimes aren’t reported until the mental barrier is overcome. I think this matter is best handled through a social media campaign or culture-based workshops that make discussing and reporting violence more acceptable and commonplace. Below, I’ve created a mock-up as apart of this product to show how a social media campaign could be utilized to implement positive conversation.

The road towards progress is never a straight one. It takes time and effort to implement beneficial changes that last. As seen with Rwanda, overnight fixes are rarely full and all-encompassing. Even with a trend towards the positive, there is no quick solution. Through education, legislation, and outreach, a thorough advancement can occur, as long as countries and the people within them are fully committed to growing together and for the better.

Mock Social Media Ads:

*SpeakUp as a hashtag is simply a mock, anything could be used, but the point of the campaign would to be minimal and simplistic, but persistent and prevalent, resulting in a lot of people seeing the ads and being inspired to create change as a result.



Original Work Set-Up and Completion Summary

Date/s: Primarily my Original Work took place through the last half of December and was finished during the first few days of January.

Time/s: I worked for over 12 hours over the course of about 2 weeks, researching a few hours at a time every day through the end of December into January.

Materials: I completed this project primarily through online research, with a variety of studies and papers about domestic violence and how it has impacted societies across the world. Other than that, I also created multiple ads and infographics using the online platform Canva to design them.

Objective/Purpose: Over my Original Work, I wanted to feel more connected to everything I had been researching by brainstorming possible solutions to some of the most serious and contentious problems of today. I wanted to not only learn more about these topics, but consider how and why this issues occur before coming up with ideas on potential fixes.

Description of Process: To develop my Original Work, I began with extensive research on domestic violence. I searched on a variety of aspects, from shocking statistics to cultural reasons why, and best proven solutions. From there I created an infographic with what I thought were the most interesting facts to include on my display board and as a part of my product. Then I researched countries with the worst history of domestic abuse and decided to use Rwanda as an example in my product, because of its previous history with gender equality as a result of the Rwandan Genocide. To finish, I developed what I believe are the necessary aspects to solve the severity of domestic violence across the world with three primary pillars: education, legislation, and awareness, and with the awareness step I created some mock ads for how the message of speaking out against domestic violence could be spread through social media. Altogether, this became my final product through thorough research.

Utilization of Higher-Level Thinking Skills: I used many higher-level thinking skills through my Original Work project. At first, I had to evaluate and analyze the research I was doing. I identified and examined patterns in domestic violence statistics around the world and used this information to build conclusions on how to find possible solutions. This is where the bulk of the higher-level thinking occurred: synthesis. I drew from multiple sources to create an all-encompassing solution using old information and

studies to create new and updated solutions. For example, a campaign through social media takes from the benefits of awareness and applies it to modern society and how best messages are conveyed across the masses these days. These three methods of evaluating, analyzing, and synthesizing all came together to build my Original Work.

Results: My final result was a three-step or three-pillar approach to making domestic violence more public and frequently reported, and to eradicate it altogether in a society, for me, Rwanda. My three main solutions were to educate the public, starting from a young age, to take away the lack of knowledge about domestic abuse. Then, the second part of the plan was through legislation, making domestic violence definitively illegal in the face of the law, and the final part was to bring awareness to the prevalence of domestic violence through a social media campaign. In theory, all three would come together to work in tandem to increase how frequently domestic violence is reported and to drastically reduce occurrences as a whole.

Conclusions/Interpretations: Overall, I'm shocked at how persistent domestic violence is. Even in pretty gender equal countries, that are touted for their progression, still have rampant domestic violence as a result of centuries of ingrained gender roles and the prevalence of the patriarchy. That being said, I am optimistic about the trend of domestic violence; it seems that based on statistics, things are getting better, and hopefully through the three "pillars" that I express in the project, if they could begin to be implemented around the world, more positive change will occur.

Application/Meaning: From here I will use everything I have learned in this project to guide me forward on creating actual change in my community. As much as I've enjoyed learning the statistics and thinking of theoretical plans to create progress, I would really like to find a way to make my ideas more of a reality in the coming months. I think my plan could be implemented on both a large and small scale, and now I just need to find a way to make concrete steps to actually achieve that within a reasonable scale.

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