

This is an excerpt from the senior thesis named “Denial of Access to Legal Abortion in Mexico: Contributing Factors and International Response,” written by Ana P. Escalante a student from Universidad de las Americas Puebla in 2007.

Introduction

Population explosion and poverty are linked social problems that most Latin American country faces today.¹ Many positive actions, however, have begun to take place in developing countries. These changing attitudes and behaviour patterns have been positive with respect to matters such as marriage age, family limitation, and spacing of children. The changes in social attitudes are desirable in their own right, apart from their effect on reducing fertility and population growth, as they enhance the quality of life for citizens in many countries. In the past, population equilibrium was achieved through natural factors while today, human intervention in the control of fertility is more common (the use of contraceptive methods, for example).² Nevertheless, getting the population to use contraceptives is a difficult and complex process, starting with quality sex education. Medical Scholars offer as a solution for control of population explosion a combination of “family planning, rapid economic development, and appropriate social transformation.”³ The sooner this transformation occurs in our society, the closer we will be to the solving the problems of poverty and population explosion, and also achieve a higher quality of life for humankind.

¹ Some sources that argue these problems are important, fleshing out the nature of these ‘linked social problems’ are Betsy Hartmann, “Reproductive Rights and Wrongs: The Global Politics of Population Control” (Cambridge, MA: South End Press, 1995), Jamie Estay Reno “Latin America faces a world in change,” *International Journal of Politics, Culture, and Society*, Springer Netherlands Vol. 8, no.2 (December, 1994), also read John C. Caldwell, “The Globalization of Fertility Behavior,” *Population and Development Review* Vol. 27, Supplement: Global Fertility Transition (2001): 93-115.

² John Bongaarts, “Fertility and Reproductive Preferences in Post-Transitional Societies,” *Population and Development Review*, Vol. 27, Supplement: Global Fertility Transition (2001): 260-281.

³ Yojana, “Population explosion, social change,” *PubMed* (26 Jan. 1983 [cited 20 Jan. 2007]): available from http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/entrez/query.fcgi?cmd=Retrieve&db=PubMed&list_uids=12311997&dopt=Abstract

Skidmore sheds light on how Latin American countries perceive abortion, “[i]n Latin America the picture of birth control is... complicated. There has been much resistance to it- not only because of Catholic teachings, but also because of poor people in traditional rural society tend to see large numbers of children as benefit.”⁴ Social attitudes and availability of contraceptives as well as a good sex education are important for population growth management. Sex education allows people to be informed about their sexuality and how to avoid unwanted pregnancies and sexually transmitted diseases. Barbara Crossette argues:

[r]educing poverty requires cutting population growth in many places. No, the world doesn't have too few babies; it still has far too many, and in the poorest places. The U.N. Population Division estimates that by the end of this century something like 98 percent of new births will be in the poorest countries.⁵

Although attitudes towards childbearing and sexual independence are beginning to change in Latin America, massive population growth is still considered an obstacle to development.⁶ To increase the capacity of women to make choices and to transform those choices into desired actions and outcomes is central to the development process in every country. As Barbara Crossette rightly points out, these are actions that build both “individual and collective assets, and improve the efficiency and fairness of the organizational and institutional context which govern the use of these assets.” She comments that “it is in both these goals--reducing population growth and promoting not just women's rights on paper but see a change in society's view of women and their absolutely central role in development--that poor and rich nations need to work together for

⁴ Thomas E. Skidmore and Peter H. Smith, *Modern Latin America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001), 358.

⁵ Barbara Crossette, “Fighting World Poverty: Count the U.S. Out”, *Humanist*, Vol. 64 Issue 5, (2004): 6.

⁶ Nikos Alexandratos, “Countries with Rapid Population Growth and Resource Constraints: Issues of Food, Agriculture, and Development,” *Population and Development Review* Issue 31, no.2 (2005): 237–258.

the future of the planet's resources, among other things.”⁷ Of the many important things included in this statement, one stands out with regard to this thesis: *sexual independence and clear reproductive rights are issues that are not restricted solely to the cause of female emancipation*. Their high level of complexity means that they are extremely difficult to study in isolation and separate from the many other social issues they impact and are in turn impacted by – in this case, poverty, population explosion and development in general. That complexity and integration with other problems also, as Crossette hints, makes it unlikely that lasting solutions to them will be achieved if individual nations are left to their own devices. In other words, if the problems are complex, highly integrated, and transcend territorial borders, then it follows that the best potential solutions are likely to be those involving transnational cooperation.

Abortion is perhaps one matter where all of these issues converge in their most complex degree – not only in economic and practical terms, but also because of the cultural and moral implications that continue to make debates on abortion one of the most hotly contested ethical and political topics of the last forty-five years. Postponing the decision to get an abortion is more common among poor and uneducated women, because of many factors including financial stress and moral and religious concerns. Dr. Finer, director for domestic research at the Guttmacher Institute adds that,

[a]bortions obtained earlier in pregnancy are safer, less expensive and less stigmatized than abortions obtained at later gestations...If the financial barriers faced by disadvantaged women were removed, and if women—particularly young women—were better educated about how to recognize a pregnancy, more women would be able to access abortion earlier, making the procedure safer.⁸

⁷ Barbara Crossette, “Fighting World Poverty,” 6.

⁸ Lawrence B. Finer and others, “Timing of Steps and Reasons for Delays in Obtaining Abortions in the United States,” *Contraception* (October 2006): 334-344 in Rebecca Wind, “Some Women Face Barriers to Obtaining Safe, Early Abortions,” The Guttmacher Institute (25 Sept. 2006 [cited 24 Jan. 2007]): available from <http://www.guttmacher.org/media/nr/2006/09/25/index.html>

Ultimately, this is what all countries should be aiming for, to ensure the well being of women regardless of their economic condition. I will use evidence from different sectors as well as case studies to validate this statement throughout this thesis.

Each of the three issues of poverty, population explosion and development, require education and awareness on the problem of unwanted pregnancies and in how we understand sex as a cultural practice as well as the means of perpetuation of our species. While the views of sex as a cultural practice and as a means of procreation are related, they need to be understood separately in order to fully understand the significance of the abortion debate and its place in our socio-political and ethical life. It is self-evident that most human beings do not just have sex only to procreate, rather it is often used as an end in itself—which can bring the consequence of an unwanted pregnancy.

Several practices have developed since ancient times⁹ that attempt to reduce the likelihood of unwanted pregnancies, including various forms of sex education that promote an awareness and consequences of having sex. Medical practices and procedures, some of which possibly date back 30,000 years,¹⁰ also attempt to reduce or deal with unwanted pregnancy. Finally, moral or cultural restraints on behaviour have also been employed for thousands of years to this end. This last practice obviously includes many and varied religious beliefs, some of which are designed to control sexual practices,¹¹ thereby

⁹ See, for example, John M. Riddle's, *Contraception and Abortion from the Ancient World to the Renaissance*, (Boston, Ma: Harvard University Press, 1994) and his *Eve's Herbs: A History of Contraception and Abortion in the West*, (Boston, Ma: Harvard University Press, 1999) for information on the uses of abortive herbs. More recently, Nicholas Culpeper's famous *Complete Herbal* (London: Foulsham, 1995), which was originally published in 1640, contains copious information on the use of herbs to produce abortion. *Culpeper's Complete Herbal* is also available online at www.bibliomania.com/2/1/66/113/frameset.html.

¹⁰ In addition to the above, see "The Ancient World's "Birth Control Pill" Silphion Ferula species The Giant Fennel Family" available online at <http://www.sisterzeus.com/Silphio.htm> [accessed on January 12, 2007], for notes on possible herbal methods of contraception from the ice age onward.

¹¹ The most often cited example is, of course, the Catholic concept of Original Sin which is traceable to St. Augustine's *De Genesi ad literam* written in 415 C.E. and along with the denouncement of sex for pleasure and the renunciation of the earthly body of the Patristic Fathers, subsequently became a central part of

controlling unwanted pregnancies. More importantly, however, is that the crucial aspects of these beliefs reach deeper than questions of sex, equality and control over the body, to our basic understanding of the value of life itself. It is perhaps for this reason that the question of abortion (and relatedly that of euthanasia) is one that is so hotly and emotionally debated today. For the purposes of this thesis, abortion is indeed an issue of women's rights, but it is most significant in how it reveals how widely or how narrowly, a society draws the criteria of its own membership. As White candidly argues "...it is personhood, and not genetic humanity, which is the fundamental basis for membership in the moral community."¹² In short, any answer to questions on abortion reveals what we can call 'self' by how we define 'the other'. Religious beliefs, values and practices are instrumental in determining the answer to this central human question, and therefore particular religious responses to questions of abortion are of crucial importance.

Religion is very important in Latin American society. Catholic teachings do not condone the habitual use of contraception,¹³ since they firmly assert, "[t]he human being must be respected as a 'person' from the very first instant of his existence."¹⁴ It follows that Catholic religion believes "abortion and infanticide are abominable crimes."¹⁵ Therefore, as I will discuss in detail in chapter one, many Catholics condemn abortion in all cases.

Catholic Doctrine. See *St. Augustine, the Literal Meaning of Genesis*. vol. 1, Ancient Christian Writers., vol. 41. Translated and annotated by John Hammond Taylor, S.J. New York: Paulist Press, 1982. For more on the renunciation of sex and the body, see especially Peter Brown, *The Body and Society: Men, Women, and Sexual Renunciation in Early Christianity* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1990).

¹² James E. White, *Contemporary Moral Problems* (Belmont: Wadsworth Publishing, 1999).

¹³ "Humanae Vitae, Sobre la regulación de la natalidad," Carta encíclica de S.S. Pablo VI, (Vatican, 1968) [my translation].

¹⁴ "The Gift of Life, Donum Vitae: Instruction on Respect for Human Life In its Origin and the Dignity of Procreation: Replies to Certain Questions of the Day," (Vatican: Sacred Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, 1987), 12.

¹⁵"The Gift of Life, Donum Vitae," 12.

Given this categorical condemnation, it should come as no surprise that abortion on demand is illegal in most Latin American countries, which are all predominantly Catholic. Even in cases such as pregnancy after rape it is very uncommon that authorities allow for an abortion, even though it is legal. This can be traced through various factors of reasons one of them could be because they apply their own moral and religious beliefs to the situation. Nevertheless, as many are well aware, this does not mean that no abortions take place in Latin America. In the case of Mexico, recent figures are indeed rather sobering:

[t]he Alan Guttmacher Institute estimated that over 500,000 illegal abortions were performed in Mexico in 1990 (at a rate similar to that of legal abortions in the United States), leading to the hospitalization of more than 100,000 women for complications. As is the case throughout most of Latin America, higher-income women are usually able to afford safe, professional (but still illegal) care, while many lower-income women resort to dangerous clandestine procedures or traditional remedies.¹⁶

Surgical abortion is not the only type of abortion that takes place, there are also medical abortions being performed in Latin America. In fact, “in Latin America, where abortion is almost universally legally restricted, medical abortion, especially with misoprostol alone,¹⁷ is increasingly being used, often with the tablets obtained from a pharmacy.”¹⁸ Abortion does not necessarily have to be surgical.

What all of these arguments lead to is that “back-alley” and dangerous abortions are taking place in countries like Mexico, where there is a substantial lack of good sex

¹⁶ “Abortion Surfaces Key Issue in Mexican Politics”, *The Guttmacher Report on Public Policy*, Volume 3, Number 5 (October 2000).

¹⁷ Medical abortions are the ones that do not require surgery rather they are performed by pills. The pills are called *Mifeprex*, also known as RU486, and *misoprostol*. These drugs have the effect of contracting the uterus and expelling the product. Another type of Medical abortions by injecting a drug called *Methotrexate*, followed by *misoprostol*. This procedure also causes the uterus to contract and expel the tissue. These procedures are very effective if taken with the supervision of a medical doctor. More information on the abortion pill is in “The abortion pill,” [cited 20 Jan. 2007]: available from <http://www.abortion.com/topic.php?topic=The%20Abortion%20Pill>

¹⁸ María Mercedes Lafaurie and others, “Women’s Perspectives on Medical Abortion in Mexico, Colombia, Ecuador and Peru: A Qualitative Study”, *Reproductive Health Matters Journal* Volume 13, Issue 26, (November 2005) 75-83.

education- i.e. the use of contraceptives, and the flow of accurate information in order to avoid these dangerous and clandestine activities. Good education and flow of information will provide the groundwork for avoiding unwanted pregnancies, and therefore avoiding abortions.

This brings me to the specific problem that this thesis attempts to address, which is that in Mexico, abortion laws are both ambiguous and deficient. From the exploration of this problem I offer, I postulate that even if these laws were sufficient, practice shows that the authorities themselves seldom follow them. Pregnant rape victims have the legal right to have an abortion in the criminal codes of all the states of the Mexican Republic. However, in several recent documented cases, women have been denied the right to an abortion by authorities and health officials by refusing them services, and even by intimidation. As a result, pregnant rape victims who want an abortion face an unwanted pregnancy and childbearing, despite the protection the law appears to provide for them against this. The denial of legal abortions not only violates the letter and the spirit of Mexican law, it also violates the reproductive rights of Mexican women, thereby obstructing female emancipation in the country and the equality required for advancing and consolidating the project of democratization. Indeed, the international organization Human Rights Watch has recently exposed Mexico for denying access to pregnant rape victims.¹⁹ Kenneth Roth, the Executive Director of this organization says, “[p]regnant rape victims are essentially assaulted twice. First by the perpetrators who raped them, and then by public officials, who ignore them, insult them and deny them a legal abortion.”²⁰ The article argues that Mexico

¹⁹ “Mexico: Rape Victims Denied Legal Abortion, Prosecutors, Health Workers Intimidate Rape Victims With Insults, Threats,” *Human Rights Watch* (7 March 2006 [cited 30 Jan. 2007]): available from <http://hrw.org/english/docs/2006/02/23/mexico12712.htm>

²⁰ “*Mexico: Rape Victims Denied Legal Abortion*,” Human Rights Watch.

by doing so is violating international women's rights obligations when it comes to denying abortions in legal cases such as rape and danger to the mother. Three related issues therefore stem from this problem that I will also address throughout the thesis.

The first is the problems Mexico faces in creating, enforcing and upholding laws that adhere to international conventions on human rights while also being consistent with the cultural values and outlooks that pervade Mexican society today. I explore the tensions involved in this dilemma and show that while Mexico's government wants to appear as if it is upholding basic human rights in the area of reproductive rights for women, the case of legal abortion demonstrates that this may not be the case. The past president, Vicente Fox, was very vocal about his opposition to the practice and principle of abortion under any circumstances. As I will show, this is not a problem that only Mexico faces. But is a reality in several other Latin American countries.

Second, I explore just what is at stake in the abortion debate and how the moral and scientific arguments can be applied to the Mexican case to show that reproductive rights are crucial not only to female emancipation in the country, but also to its democratization and reputation in the international arena.

Third, I argue that the clash between international human rights and elements of Latin American culture suggests that the solution to this problem may not easily come from within these countries alone. Therefore, I will explore some of the mechanisms provided by international bodies, such as Human Rights Watch and the issue of floating Abortion Clinics, that at the moment attempt to help, and could in the future assist Mexico to provide safe abortions for rape victims. I suggest that Mexico should not only adhere to its existing abortion laws, but that the apparent relaxation of these laws fail to permit the right to choose.

It is important to point out that in Mexico abortion and rape are taboos. The topics of abortion and rape in Mexico are stigmatized, and therefore prove evidence for the failure to endow with the right to choose to have an abortion to rape victims.²¹ It is in our interest, as Mexicans, to be aware that Mexico has an inadequate legal framework for prevention, protection and punishment of sexual violence and a lax implementation of the existing laws.

Violating basic human rights, such as the right to a safe legal abortion, clearly goes against international conventions and treaties as well as the reproductive rights of women. Academic attention to this problem is important, because it addresses the links that exist between social problems and women's reproductive rights, such as Rosalind Petchesky²² and in Mexico, Marta Lamas²³ have established. Additionally, many other research organizations such as the Center for Reproductive Rights, the Allan Guttmacher Institute, Population Council, Reproductive Health Matters, have also contributed to this sentiment.

The central argument in this thesis runs as follows: *Mexican laws seem to suggest that there are exceptions to who is part of the moral community. For example, a fetus that is conceived after rape— but by law this fetus does not necessarily have to remain as a member of the moral community. However, as reality demonstrates, this is often not the case, authorities and officials insert their own beliefs and opinions in to the process, often impeding pregnant rape victims' access to legal abortion.*

²¹ "Mexico: Obsessed with Honor," Center for Reproductive Rights [cited 20 Jan. 2007]: available from www.crlp.org/pdf/pdf_BOT_mexico.pdf

²² Rosalind Petchesky, Karen Judd and, IRRRAG, eds., *Negotiating Reproductive Rights*, (London: Zed Books, 1998). She also wrote a very interesting article on International Organizations, "Reproductive and Sexual Rights: Charting the Course of Transnational Women's NGO's," *United Nations Research Institute for Social Development*, paper no.8 (Switzerland, Geneva: 2000).

²³ Marta Lamas, "The Role of Women in The New Mexico". In *Mexico's Politics and Society in Transition*, eds. Joseph S. Tulchin, and Andrew D.Selee (Boulder: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2003).

While concrete laws for abortion on pregnant rape victims exist in all jurisdictions, in Mexico there are many cases in which these abortions have not taken place, either because of negligence of authorities or because of lack of information on bureaucratic procedures by the authorities and religious individual. I will illustrate that a number of interconnected problems contribute to this situation. If this is the case, it also seems likely that possible solutions to this problem must come from different organizations and civil groups. First, Mexicans lack adequate sex education. Second, Mexico's existing legal framework is lax and vague in the treatment of sexual violence, and punishment for rape perpetrators is often ignored. And third, the fulfilment of human rights and international agreements suffer from a lack of enforcement. These three issues are interconnected and also linked to social problems such as poverty, population explosion and, development discussed in the first pages of the thesis. Good sex education, at an early age, is essential to avoiding unwanted pregnancies and skewed ideas about abortion and its legality in certain cases.²⁴ Religious beliefs about sex, personhood and abortion in Mexico today are actually obstructing the kind of education necessary to deal with the problem. Education is, in fact, crucial to dealing with the problem, and as it is widely known it is not done adequately or enough in Mexico.²⁵

The central hypothesis to be defended in this thesis, therefore, while the laws in Mexico are intended to reflect the international legal standards in theory, this does not mean Mexico is fully committed to these legal standards, if they are doing so little to ensure

²⁴ William Marsiglio and Frank L. Mott, "The Impact of Sex Education on Sexual Activity, Contraceptive Use and Premarital Pregnancy Among American Teenagers," *Family Planning Perspectives* Vol. 18, No. 4 (Jul. - Aug., 1986): 151-154 and 157-162.

²⁵ John W. Townsend, Esthela Diaz de May, Yolanda Sepúlveda, Yolanda Santos de Garza L. and Sandra Rosenhouse, "Sex Education and Family Planning Services for Young Adults: Alternative Urban Strategies in Mexico," *Studies in Family Planning* Vol. 18, No. 2. (Mar. - Apr., 1987): 103-108.

that the law is being followed and enforced in practice. This hypothesis is broken down into three sub-hypotheses. First, given the Mexican cultural and political situation, it is unlikely that the problem of obstructing legal abortion will be resolved purely at a national level, from the inside. Second, International Organizations, such as the United Nations and various international Women Organizations, should provide a framework for Mexican authorities to comply with international human rights obligations, such as ensuring access to safe and legal abortions after rape, which are now being obstructed. Ultimately, this highlights the role of international organizations in the process of policy convergence in a global society.

There does not exist a single theoretical school particularly useful, on its own, for this study. Instead, I will be using the arguments of several authors to ground the theoretical framework of my thesis. I will provide ethical and scientific analysis of abortion using a range of perspectives including those of Ronald Dworkin, the Allan Guttmacher Institute, and from the international perspective of the organization Human Rights Watch, International Protocols and Conventions, among other sources. I also utilize some examples from specific countries to substantiate the practical elements of some of my arguments. The groundwork of the arguments I present will be based on the normative approach (concerning the laws). I use in the ethical discussion presented in chapter one.

My desire is to address the gap between legal framework and practice in Mexico. I attempt to make my contribution to the literature by providing an up-to-date analysis of the current situation surrounding legalized abortion in Mexico and elsewhere, specifically concerning cases of rape. I will also offer new evidence and insights on the abortion debate in Latin American countries compared to other countries such as the United States of America using case studies and examples.

Perhaps the boldest and most important contribution this thesis will offer rests on the argument that the solution to the problem will probably not be forthcoming from Mexican government or society alone. The complex and integrated nature of the abortion question and the high stakes any answer to it carries, really does suggest that a lasting solution will be conceived, effected, promoted, supported and, if necessary, enforced by one nation, government, organization or institution alone. I suppose that the respect for women's rights is not something that is easily implemented, even in countries that are fairly westernized like those of Latin America face obstacles. Rather, policy convergence will require the help of international organizations.

I will verify my hypothesis throughout three chapters, beginning with the ethical-theoretical framework in chapter one, moving to the practical examples in chapter two, and culminating in a final prescriptive part offered in chapter three. There I give suggestions for how international organizations can improve the current situation of enforcement on legalized abortions in Mexico and throughout the world.

Chapter one details the main aspects of the philosophical and ethical arguments for and against abortions and what is at stake in the ongoing debate about personhood, when does it begin, what value to attach to it. Consequently, I will present the Catholic perspective, concluding that it is no longer appropriate as a guiding policy and law in modern democracies, mainly because abortion is a public concern rather than private.

In chapter two, I will provide the international legal standards and conventions on reproductive rights including: the outcome document from the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD), held in Cairo in 1994; the Convention of the Human Rights Declaration of the United Nations; the Report of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) of the United Nations; and offer evidence of

the United Nations Treaty Body Concern with administrative and legal obstacles to abortion after rape.

In chapter two I will analyze the Mexican Legal Framework, considering what the law establishes in Mexican jurisdictions as well as the ethical arguments behind the law. I will offer an analysis on the current social and political situation in Mexico. In Mexico, even in the cases where abortion is legal, sometimes women are not even aware they have the right to choose. For example, in Yucatan, abortion because of poverty is legal; nevertheless there is not one case in the history of Yucatan when a legal abortion because of poverty has been performed. I will argue that this is, in part, because of the socio-cultural beliefs behind the abortion debate in Mexico. In chapter two I also consider that in Mexico obstructing the access to legal abortion after rape clearly violates women's rights, and other forms of violations such as intimidation, providing inaccurate information, illegally delaying the abortion also contribute to this problem. I will offer examples as evidence that the government has lax legal standards, even in those cases where abortion is legal. I identify several Mexican examples of this situation and practical arguments for the enforcement of the law. Comparable cases in other parts of central and South America will show that the problem is widespread and rooted in cultural values that are often religiously influenced. It is even surprising that in some cases in the United States several states are losing ground with the 'pro-choice' arguments, challenging *Roe v. Wade* legislation.

Chapter three will validate the sub-hypothesis of the thesis that given the current Mexican cultural and political situation, it is unlikely that the problem of legal abortion will be resolved purely at a national level, and so an international approach may well be required. I will show that International organizations could and can help to resolve the apparent paradox in the Mexican legal framework, by lobbying and pressuring the

authorities to support public information transparency and adequate enforcement of the law. Other measures such as floating abortion clinics are discussed in this chapter. There is also evidence that some success has been a result of the work of Non Governmental Organization (NGOs) that are in Mexico such as Catholics for Free Choice and the Elective Reproduction Information Group,²⁶ among others. I will address what they are doing and provide examples of the actions they have taken within Mexican society. Here I propose that immediate and concrete practical measures could and should be introduced to minimize these problems with pregnant rape victims. I will argue that the Mexican government needs to identify three steps in order to assure its compliance with international standards of women's rights. First, access to information about the procedures to safe and free abortion in the cases when abortion is not criminalized must be publicly if Mexico is to demonstrate that it has a serious commitment to international legal and moral standards protecting the rights of women. These rights might include, for example, the broader human rights to be protected from cruel and unusual punishment, or psychological and/or physical torture. Second, public promotion of birth control and contraception are necessary in order to avoid unwanted pregnancies and illegal abortions in back alley clinics. Third, Congress should revise and clarify existing laws regarding abortion after rape. By not abiding by international human rights codes, Mexico will remain in a contradictory position between what it says and what it does, demonstrating to the world that it is not really concerned about women's rights.

²⁶ GIRE: *Grupo de Informacion de Reproduccion Elegida* [my translation of the name] is a Mexican NGO that works to generate research, disseminate information on reproductive rights in Mexico, it has the objective that reproductive rights of women will be respected and known in Mexico. This organization specializes in the subject of abortion. [cited 20 Jan. 2006]: available from www.gire.org.mx/

Although my suggestions are a starting point to arrive at a solution, they are not the only solutions. The main conclusion to be established is that International Organizations can help contribute to an increase in law enforcement in women's reproductive rights in Mexico and the world. It follows that women should be encouraged to report domestic and sexual violence and encouraging these women is the responsibility of the state, the civil society, and local, national, and international NGOs. Also, the police, government authorities and health officials should be held responsible for the handling of procedures in the proper way, with adequate treatment and access to services for any woman who requests it. I will address the implications for the idea of policy convergence in a globalized world, stating this in the conclusions.

Before getting into the intricacies of the political issues surrounding this pressing problem, it is nevertheless necessary to first establish the main aspects of the philosophical and ethical arguments for and against abortions. To do so, it is important to look at the concept of "the person" more deeply than is usually considered outside of philosophical discourse. For, as I show in the following chapter, one's understanding of the concept of the person, and where personhood begins, ultimately indicates (and may even determine) not only the kinds of rights a woman and fetus are entitled to, but which is thought to trump which, and on what grounds.