June 1998

Intimate Partner Violence Strategies: Models for Community Participation

Jenny Rivera

Follow this and additional works at: https://digitalcommons.mainelaw.maine.edu/mlr

Part of the Criminal Law Commons, Criminal Procedure Commons, Law and Gender Commons, Law and Society Commons, and the Legal Remedies Commons

Recommended Citation
Available at: https://digitalcommons.mainelaw.maine.edu/mlr/vol50/iss2/6
INTIMATE PARTNER VIOLENCE STRATEGIES:
MODELS FOR COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION

Jenny Rivera*

INTRODUCTION

Over the last several years, states have passed legislation to address intimate partner violence, more commonly known as "domestic violence," or violence and abuse between current and former spouses, or persons in similar intimate relationships. Much of this legislation is composed of civil and criminal provisions, including criminal sanctions for intimate partner violence. The constitutionality, practical impact, and implications of such legislation have been a focus of discussion, analysis, and debate.

* Associate Professor of Law, City University of New York School of Law. A.B., Princeton University, 1982; J.D., New York University School of Law, 1985; LLM. Columbia University School of Law, 1993. This paper was presented at the Law, Feminism & the 21st Century Conference on April 4, 1998, in Portland, Maine.

1. Intimate partner violence in this Article refers to violence between current and former intimate partners, conducted commonly labeled "domestic violence." As used in this Article, "intimate partner violence" includes physical, psychological, economic, sexual and/or emotional abuse by a former or current intimate partner, such as a spouse, ex-spouse, cohabiting or formerly cohabiting unmarried person, who shared an intimate, sexual relationship with the abused. This definition is not limited to heterosexual relationships; however, due to the constrictions in the format of this Article, the Author is unable to properly and specifically address the complexities raised by a discussion of same-sex partner violence.


2. In prior Articles, I have indicated my objections to the use of the term "domestic violence" because I believe it to be a misnomer which unnecessarily emphasizes the private relationship aspects of violence between partners. See Jenny Rivera, Domestic Violence Against Latinas by Latino Males: An Analysis of Race, National Origin, and Gender Differentials, 14 B.C. Third World L.J. 231, 232 n.5 (1994) [hereinafter Domestic Violence Against Latinas]; Jenny Rivera, Puerto Rico's Domestic Violence Prevention and Intervention Law and the United States Violence Against Women Act of 1994: The Limitations of Legislative Responses, 5 Colum. J. Gender & L. 78, 79 n.8 (1995) [hereinafter Puerto Rico's Domestic Violence Law]; Jenny Rivera, The Violence Against Women Act and the Construction of Multiple Consciousness in the Civil Rights and Feminist Movements, 4 J.L. & Pol'y 463, 465 n.6 (1996) [hereinafter The Violence Against Women Act]. Such violence is violence no matter how it is characterized. This is not to suggest that responses to intimate partner violence should ignore the fact that it occurs between individuals who have shared an intimate personal relationship. Instead, this fact should be the basis for contextualizing this violence, for purposes of developing appropriate legal and social responses. While in the past I have used the term "domestic violence" for purposes of clarity and uniformity, I believe it is time to drop this term from our legal and social lexicon. Therefore, that which is commonly labeled "domestic violence" shall be referred to in this Article as "intimate partner violence." The term "domestic violence" shall be included only to preserve the integrity of direct quotations or other writer's concepts.

3. For a summary presentation and citation list of state statutes addressing violence between spouses and other intimate partners, see generally David Frazee et al., Violence Against Women: Law and Litigation (1997) (focusing on the Violence Against Women Act); see also Marion Wanless, Mandatory Arrest: A Step Toward Eradicating Domestic Violence, But Is It
and present and potential benefits of these statutes are the topic of political debates, scholarly diatribes, and litigation. 4

Despite the controversial nature of such statutes, in 1994 the United States Congress passed the Violence Against Women Act (VAWA), 5 which contains provisions addressing intimate partner violence, many modeled on state initiatives. 6 For example, the VAWA criminalizes intimate partner violence at the federal level. Under the VAWA, any person who crosses a state line “with the intent to injure, harass, or intimidate that person’s spouse or intimate partner, and who . . . intentionally commits a crime of violence and thereby causes bodily injury to such spouse or intimate partner . . .” is subject to criminal penalties. 7

Unlike its state counterparts, which focus on local and/or regional needs and the local impact of state legislation, Congress’s authority extends to issues national in scope. Consequently, Congress passes laws, the purpose of which is to ensure the common welfare of all persons in the United States. A fortiori, the “federalization” of any

---


For a discussion and analysis of the Violence Against Women Act (VAWA), see generally FRAZEE, supra note 3; Symposium, The Violence Against Women Act of 1994: A Promise Waiting to Be Fulfilled, 4 J.L. POL’Y 371 (1996) [hereinafter Symposium]; Rivera, The Violence Against Women Act, supra note 2; Rivera, Puerto Rico’s Domestic Violence Law, supra note 2, at 105-26.


particular subject area is aspirationally less parochial than local efforts. It is also more grandiose in scope and application than regional or state legislative efforts. It comes as no surprise, then, that in the context of the VAWA, Congress capitalized upon its “democratic” governing-body status to include within the VAWA inducements to encourage certain conduct by the states, in furtherance of congressional policy choices. For example, the VAWA promotes mandatory arrest of abusers, a now well-established state law enforcement practice, and requires full faith and credit recognition of orders of protection.8

The passage and implementation of federal legislation specifically designed to address violence between present and former spouses and intimate partners9 reflects a sea change in federal and local perceptions about intimate partner violence and the appropriate legal responses to such violence.10 The acceptance and application of criminal sanctions, and the inclusion of a civil rights action for gender-motivated violence in the VAWA is a dramatic departure from the past. Historically, and by the very descriptive language of its title, “domestic violence” suggests actions which are inappropriate subjects for criminalization and judicial intervention.11

This dramatic shift in legislative interest and action is a tribute to the success of external, community pressures.12 Indeed, legislative policy choices are influenced and shaped by community and constituent concerns. As community norms of appropriate behavior reconfigure, alternative normative bases develop, flourish, and provide a justification for legislative intervention.13

11. Critics of criminalization argue that intimate partner statutes, or the application of criminal statutes to violence between current and former intimate partners, are ineffective because criminalization is not a proper response to violence between persons who have a history of personal relationships. They argue also that criminalization undermines a greater societal goal: the unification and survival of the family. For examples of the various critiques of criminalization, see the list of articles, supra note 4; see also Pamela Blass Brusher, Mandatory Arrest for Domestic Violence: The City of Cincinnati’s Simple Solution to a Complex Problem, 65 U. Cin. L. Rev. 155 (1996). In addition to its criminal components, the VAWA also provides for a civil remedy for victims of violent, gender-motivated crimes. See 42 U.S.C. § 13981 (1994). This section is currently under constitutional challenge. See, e.g., Doe v. Doe, 929 F. Supp. 68 (D. Conn. 1996); Brozownikala v. Virginia Polytechnic Inst. & State Univ., 132 F.3d 949 (4th Cir. 1997).
13. For example, while at one time judicial intervention in a matter involving violence or sexual assault by one spouse against another was unheard of, today there are numerous statutes criminalizing such violence and eliminating the marital rape exemption, thus permitting a wife to
This Article suggests that the current framework for transforming community norms into legislation and policy directives is unable to provide an avenue for communities historically absent or excluded from the legislative process. While feminist methodology and philosophy seeks to reflect and produce social and legal strategies authentically based on women’s experiences, antiviolence legislation has yet to fully reflect and address the views and priorities of communities of color, and women of color specifically. Absence of communities of color from legislative power structures, and their inability to secure full representation in federal and state legislatures, have made the application of feminist methodology a difficult, and at times improbable, exercise. Absent full actual representation—resulting from elections won by exercising the franchise, or constructed representation (based on legal fictions of appropriate community representation found, for example, in the Voting Rights Act)—the legitimacy of antiviolence legislation is, arguably, dubious.

This Article considers two aspects of fuller community representation. First, it discusses a framework for the development and eventual integration of community-defined political and legal antiviolence strategies. The proposed vehicle provides a basis by which communities of limited access to national and state-based political structures may, nonetheless, participate fully and substantively in antiviolence projects. Second, the Article focuses on three community models that address intimate partner violence. Although this second part of the Article is limited to presenting models developed within the Latino community founded on the ideas derived from community input and accountable to community demands, the structures are applicable in other contexts. The Article outlines a template with universal applicability.


14. See Rivera, The Violence Against Women Act, supra note 2, at 497-510 (discussing the limitations on the applicability of the VAWA to women of color).


16. “Latina,” “Latino,” and “Latina/Latino community” as used in this Article to refer to individuals and discrete identifiable groups of those individuals whose historical roots and political associations are based in Latin America and the Spanish-speaking Caribbean, and whose struggles for equality are centered on their lives in the United States and Puerto Rico. I have included in this definition Puerto Rico as one of the sites of political and social movements because of the: (1) colonial history of Puerto Rico as a commonwealth possession of the United States; (2) current political interdependence of Puerto Rico and the United States; and (3) continued cross-migration of Puerto Ricans from Puerto Rico to the United States (the mainland), and from the mainland to Puerto Rico. See CLARA E. RODRIGUEZ, PUERTO RICANS: BORN IN THE U.S.A. 1-19 (1989).
Part I of this Article discusses the need for a different approach to legislative and social policy decision-making, so as to facilitate and maximize community-developed strategies within a democratic government system. This part discusses the difficulty of historically ignored and suppressed communities, specifically the Latino community, of participating in democratic, progressive, social, and legal reform movements. In the first part, I suggest that representational politics is an elusive concept which should be viewed as fluid. Here, I introduce the idea that Latina/Latino community positions may be represented in a manner which demonstrates a cohesive position. However, the community need not, and should not, be relegated to representation by a singular voice. The multivocal realities of the Latina/Latino community may be expressed univocally, but not singularly.

Part II of this Article describes three existing models for community representation, within a democratic process, for communities which are historically underrepresented and misrepresented in the existing democratic governing structure of the United States. The three models each evolved from within the Latina community, and each is designed by Latinas to address intimate partner violence and other issues of particular concern to Latinas. One model exists within a national Latino civil rights organization, another is a state Latina task force, and the third is a city-based Latina “domestic violence” service provider. All models are committed to the empowerment of its members/participants and the Latinas who are the subjects of the models’ work. The three are leadership models for social reform.

**PART I**

**A. The Myth of Democratic Representation**

Pluralistic ideals of representative government, which reflect diverse community priorities, presume that there are discrete and unique communities, with opinions and concerns that are specific to them, either because of status or because of group associational identifiers. They also presume that because communities can be identified they can be represented by some group agent or agents. The first presumption of existing communities with perceptible voices is generally accepted. Ethnic, racial, and gender group data, and data indicating comparative intergroup status, support these presumptions by presenting allegedly fact-based, statistically significant intergroup differences. A consequence of this presumption is that it leads to political and social assumptions of the existence of varied political community viewpoints. The second presumption, that they can be represented within the current democratic structure, is not as generally accepted. Indeed, community

---

17. See infra Part I.
18. See infra Part II.
leaders have spent over a century in search of “equal access” to and “equal representation” within government. The work of harmonizing and actualizing a variety of political viewpoints, represented by and representative of different community groups, has proved to be a daunting and elusive challenge.

B. The Expression of Multivocal Realities Through Univocal Representation

The difficulties of securing “equal access” and “equal representation” are twofold. First, the complex task of identifying the issues that are unique to the experiences of Latinas must be completed. Second, the obstacles endemic to a system which favors a White majority, currently a male-dominated sector of society, must be tackled in the process of achieving representation. The Latina community’s efforts at eliminating intimate partner violence demonstrate the Herculean challenge facing underrepresented communities in attempting to develop and realize legislative and policy initiatives that address their specific concerns.

The contrariety reflected in community politicization on the issue of intimate partner violence may appear irreconcilable: status and experience affect opinion and perceptions; but commonality of group traits does not translate into commonality of group opinion on intimate partner violence strategies. These aspects of individual self and groups appear at odds. Consequently, cohesive group opinion leading to consensus can appear an unattainable goal.

Communities and groups of women speak with numerous voices and represent a variety of positions concerning appropriate antiviolence strategies. They are not univocal. These multivocal realities are illustrated in the reactions to criminalization of intimate partner violence. While some members of discrete communities are supportive of expansive and far-reaching criminal penalties, others question the success and long-term benefits of such strategies. For example, mandatory arrest policies and laws, pursuant to which police must arrest under certain circumstances, regardless of the requests of the parties, or of the officer’s bias against criminalization or arrest, are controversial. Amongst women of different ethnic and racial groups, there is no single position on mandatory arrest. Similarly, arguments favoring state and federal civil penalties for intimate partner violence have faced counter-arguments that such remedies are ineffective and promote excessive government involvement in women’s lives.

19. See Wanless, supra note 3, at 535, 545-46; Ruttenberg, supra note 3, at 191-94; Zorza & Woods, supra note 3, at 1-2, 10-11; Rivera, The Violence Against Women Act, supra note 2, at 503-06.

20. See supra notes 3-4. Articles by White women are also referenced herein because they also represent a racial group.

21. The tortuous struggle to pass the VAWA’s civil rights remedy is a prime example of opposition to such efforts. See FRAZEE, supra note 3, at ch. 5 (discussing the VAWA legislative
Nevertheless, there are threads of commonality which bind groups and easily create identifiable and cohesive strategy foundations. Consider this proposition: Not all Latinos need to be poor for there to be agreement that poverty is detrimental to the lives of individual Latinos and to the survival of the Latino community. Applying this same analytic formula to intimate partner violence leads to the following proposition: Latinos can agree that intimate partner violence is injurious to individuals and communities, but they need not agree on any single response because the impact of strategies affects the entire community, not just women. The community may express various strategies for addressing such violence, which take into account the impact on the community as a whole, as well as the impact on individual male and female members. The existence of multiple voices is not equivalent to being voiceless—or having “no voice”—it simply reflects voice, tone, and pitch.22

The multivocal expression of resolution-based strategies and policy does not necessitate reliance upon majoritarian representation. Individual representation can be valuable as an expression of a particular experience and group identification. Self-identified group representation can be valuable as an attempt at thoughtful univocal expression with the goal of group representation. These various expressions can be explored and accommodated without loss of political leverage and without the automatic creation of dysfunctional political and legal strategies. “Dysfunctional” in this case means strategies lacking a political base or which reject feminist method.

C. Authentic Dialogue

All political groups and conversations develop through dialogue and debate. The authenticity of such dialogue depends on the actualization of true discourse—in the purest sense, a discussion expressing various positions, opinions, and experiences. While discrete political and ethnic groups institute and organize such dialogues through planning and agenda-setting sessions, these groups do not move beyond the self-defined boundaries of their enclaves to explore authentic intergroup discourse. Coalition-building and the establishment and existence of multiethnic, multiracial political groups are only partial efforts at authentic intergroup discourse and political strategizing.

history and the controversy surrounding the VAWA’s civil rights provision, Title III; Goldfarb, supra note 10, at 393 (noting that the civil rights provision controversy focused, in part, on the claimed “overload [on] the federal courts” and charges that it was “patronizing to women because it implied that women need special protection”); see also Rivera, The Violence Against Women Act, supra note 2, at 497-501 (explaining that the VAWA civil rights remedy has limited utility for women of color).

22. Being “voiceless” can have several meanings. It can mean the physiological lack of voice. It can mean the physical absence of voice resulting from not being present where voices are heard. It can also mean not being heard or being ignored, regardless of physical presence. This Article deals with this last version of being “voiceless.”
A concrete example clarifies this point. A coalition of antiviolence activists composed of advocates from different ethnic, racial, and political backgrounds bears the appearance of multivocal dialogue. However, the coalition’s credibility, in part, depends on the univocal positions promoted by respective group members as the positions of the groups they represent. Thus, within this coalition, the Latina from a “domestic violence” organization, formed on behalf of Latinas to further the rights of Latinas, is credible because the organization represents a community position. Her group lends its credibility to the coalition, in part, by bringing to the table a univocal position, which is incorporated within the coalition’s agenda. Multivocal positions, reflecting the positions of various coalition members, are transformed into a univocal coalition agenda—or, at least, this is the intention and expectation of the coalition membership and organizers. At the coalition meetings, the discrete group members present their univocal positions, having transformed the community’s multivocal dialogue into a single set of strategies ready for adoption by the coalition. The coalition then mirrors this process by transforming the coalition members’ various positions into a univocal agenda.

The difficulty and tension with this model is that it often replicates the imbalance of majoritarian politics. Communities with disparately less power in the larger social structure are disparately represented in the coalition—either through token representation on the coalition, or by the mere fact that they represent numerically smaller communities within the larger society. Coalition members associated with numerically and politically dominant communities have a larger position within the coalition, based on numerical presence and hegemony.

This structure undermines authentic dialogue because its credibility depends on truncated discourse. Rather than structuring the coalition so that communities with less power within the dominant society may participate in authentic dialogue within the coalition, the coalition depends on and demands that communities complete this discourse within their own enclaves, prior to coalition participation. Indeed, an attempt at such dialogue within the coalition threatens coalition structure because it violates the organizing principle: group representation as the foundation of coalition building. Consequently, under this model, multivocal community discourse within the coalition would undermine efforts at cohesion. Multivocal expression without some organizing thread is a threat to cohesive discourse.

An alternative model exists which can build on the positive and vital aspects of a coalition framework and a foundation of authentic discourse. The multivocal discussion must be brought to the center of the coalition’s discussions, rather than relegated to an external situs. In the same manner that dominant groups use political fora for building univocal positions and “consensus,” other discrete groups can participate along with dominant groups for authentic discourse.
Authentic dialogue requires the recognition of the realities discussed above: univocal group expression and multivocal intragroup discourse. Authentic dialogue also requires the accommodation and embracement of these realities. In other words, univocal expression as a political and social goal requires the laborious task of multivocal discourse. Multivocal debates must be part of the similarly diverse political and social multigroup discourse.

In the above example, rather than assume that representatives speak for an entire community at the table, and thus silence the multiple voices of the community, assume instead (and expect) a multivocal dialogue throughout the coalition discussion. This is not a rejection or challenge to the need for intragroup community discourse or a rejection of representational politics. Instead, it is a proposal facilitating ongoing intergroup discourse with the potential for greater authentic discussion.

D. Economic and Political Disparities That Justify Intragroup Discourse

Community organizing and social reform movements are fundamental to the survival of underrepresented and misrepresented communities. Economically and politically, these groups have not reached parity with White America. There are glaring disparities amongst discrete racial and ethnic groups, even along gender lines, in three significant areas: economic status, employment, and educational attainment. Assessed in these three areas, the current status of the Latino community is representative of the current "economic gap" between Whites and members of non-White groups. This discussion is presented as an example and emphasizes the problems endemic to other economically-struggling communities.


1. Economic Status

Latinos’ economic status is significantly lower than the economic status of Whites, regardless of gender differentials. Interestingly, there are intragroup disparities that demonstrate the interplay between class and ethnic subgroup within the Latino community. According to the Bureau of the Census, the median income for all Latino households is $22,860, compared with $37,378 for Whites, or 61% of the White households’ median. The median earning of approximately $20,380, as compared to $34,400 for White men, or 59% of White men’s median earnings. The gender and ethnic gaps had significant affects on Latinas’ economic status. For example, Latinas working full time not only had a lower median earning than Latinos, making over $3,000 less than the men, but they also had a lower median earning than White women. Latinas working full time had a median earning of approximately $17,170, compared to $23,660 for White women, or 73% of White women’s earnings.

The economic status and earnings capacity of women and men in the Latino community had a profound impact on Latino families. In 1990, 25% of Latino families were below the poverty line, and one in six persons living below the poverty line was Latino. Within the Latino community in 1996, Puerto Rican families were the poorest ethnic subgroup, with a 35.6% poverty rate. Latino children fared worse within the community, with over one third living in poverty in 1990, and Puerto Rican families having a 37.5% poverty rate.

2. Employment

Latinos have an unemployment rate of 10%, double the White population unemployment rate. Moreover, Latinos generally hold jobs within the service industry and are minimally represented within professional sectors. For example, only 17% of Latinas hold managerial or professional jobs, compared to 33% of White women; 11.6% of Latino men hold such jobs compared with 30.5% of White men. Yet,
13.5% of Latinas are in operator and laborer jobs, compared to 6.1% of White women; Latino men occupy those positions at a rate of 28.8% compared to White men's rate of 18%. In professions and political positions typically associated with political and social influence, such as attorneys and legislators, the Latino presence has increased only marginally over the past several decades. For example, there are 1310 Latino judges of the 60,000 judges in the United States, and approximately 1.2% of all attorneys in United States law firms are Latino. There are only 13 Latino members of Congress, although Latinos are and have been, for over a decade, the largest and fastest growing ethnic group in the United States. Latinos are currently 11% of the total United States population.

3. Education

The statistics on Latino education rates are deeply troubling for they portend a greater problem than mere educational attainment. In 1994, I asserted that

[ed]ucational attainment data, as an indication of employability, socioeconomic mobility, and potential for financial stability and growth, demonstrate the limitations on the economic and political growth of Latinos. In 1991, only 51% of Latinos had completed at least four years of high school, and a mere 10% had completed at least four years of college. Even more disturbing was the national 31.3% high school dropout rate for Latinos.

The statistics have not improved since that writing. According to recent census information, 10% of Latinos have less than a fifth grade education.

These disparities demonstrate the need for community action. Organizing and political action, however, require, preliminarily, community dialogue and education to identify and define community

33. See id.
36. See id. at 314.
39. Rivera, Domestic Violence Against Latinas, supra note 2, at 237 (footnotes and citations omitted).
issues. Community dialogue—along racial and ethnic lines—must be sacrosanct. As community dialogue develops, agenda-setting and strategizing take root and grow. Without this initial process, underrepresented communities cannot fully participate in others' organizing, strategizing efforts. Their attempts at legal and social reform will continue to have limited impact on economic and governmental structures.41

PART II

A. Community Representation as a Predicate to Rational Community-Designed Antiviolence Legislation and Action

Just as intergroup and intragroup dialogue, as discussed above, are necessary for access and representation of the Latino/Latina community within a democratic government framework, so is women-representative dialogue critical within the Latino community. Just as women and the feminist movement have labored valiantly to develop and implement appropriate antiviolence strategies, Latinas have organized around issues concerning women in their communities.42 Thus, Latinas recognize that in order to actualize participatory representation of women and the Latino community generally, Latinas must develop community-based organizations and entities that allow for intragroup discourse by different Latina subgroups.43 The process of exchanging and debating informa-

41. Ethnic and racial communities and other women have had tremendous success in minimizing the negative effects of oppression and discrimination in society. Their legislative reform movements transformed the legal landscape with the implementation of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, Pub. L. No. 88-352, 78 Stat. 241 (codified as amended at 28 U.S.C. § 1447, 42 U.S.C. §§ 1971, 1975a-d, 2000a-h (1994)); Title VI, id. at § 2000d to -6 (federally funded programs and activities); Title VII, id. at § 2000e to -17 (equal employment opportunities); Title VIII, id. at 2000f (Secretary of Commerce to compile registration and voting statistics); and Title IX, 20 U.S.C. § 1681 (1994) (federally funded financial assistance for education); and the VAWA, Pub. L. No. 103-322, 108 Stat. 1902 (1994) (codified as amended in scattered sections of 8, 18, and 42 of the U.S.C.). Despite these hard-won battles for legislative change, men and women of color do not have economic and political equality to Whites. The "gender gap" between all men and women persists. The resilience of racism, xenophobia, and patriarchy demonstrates the enduring strength of these forms of oppression and dominance and signals the urgent need for alternative (perhaps subversive) methods to effectuate change.

42. See Rivera, The Violence Against Women Act, supra note 2, at nn.12, 15, 20; see also Gloria Bonilla-Santiago, Legislating Progress for Hispanic Women in New Jersey, 34 Soc. WORK 270 (1989).

43. In order to express the experiences and concerns reflective of the lives of different Latina subgroup populations, tokenism, the mere presence of a "Latin" female in any particular organizational or representative body structure without recognition of the need for subgroup representation, must be avoided. In other words, recognition of the need for Latina representation collaterally requires the recognition of representation of various Latina subpopulation experiences. In addition, in order to avoid ethnic subgroup stratification, Puertorriqueñas, Dominicanas, Chicanas, Cubanas, and other Latinas must respect the need for representation of each other's concerns, fairly and adequately.
tion and strategies, through intragroup discourse, is a basic component of successful political reform and libertarian experimentation.

This part describes three successful models for structuring and implementing advocacy and legal strategies on behalf of Latinas, which have included or singled out intimate partner violence as their primary work area. In these models, the participants assess and rebuild the group structures to respond to the needs as defined by a community of Latinas. The first model, of national application, is the Latina Rights Initiative of the Puerto Rican Legal Defense and Education Fund. The second model, the Hispanic Women’s Task Force of New Jersey, is a state-based organization created and maintained by a cadre of Latinas in New Jersey. The third model, the Violence Intervention Program, is a local, New York City “domestic violence” residential and nonresidential services provider.

B. Developing a National Latina Agenda: The Latina Rights Initiative

In the late 1980s, the Puerto Rican Legal Defense and Education Fund (Fund), a national civil rights organization dedicated to protecting the legal rights of Latinos, undertook the task of designing and integrating a civil rights agenda for Latinas within the Fund’s institutional framework. Developing this agenda was part of a larger project of redesigning and transforming the Fund’s civil rights agenda to respond to the political retrenchment of the decade. The Fund also sought to build on the general population’s growing awareness of and interest in women’s issues in order to promote issues concerning Latinas, specifically.

The Fund sought to address the difficult question of how a national civil rights organization, founded on the principle of equality, could recast and redirect the dialogue on women’s rights within the confines of a traditional civil rights infrastructure and methodology. The impetus for this effort was due, in part, to the recognition by members of the Fund staff and Latina leaders that the economic and political status of

44. The discussion of the historical development of the Latina Rights Initiative (LRI) of the Puerto Rican Legal Defense and Education Fund is based on the Fund’s public materials describing the LRI and the Author’s recollections as one of the LRI’s founders. The Author was an Associate Counsel of the Puerto Rican Legal Defense and Education Fund from 1988 to 1992, and was a principal actor during discussions about the Fund’s historical and future services to Latinas. The Author is one of the founders of the Fund’s Latina Rights Initiative, the organizational response to the concerns raised in these discussions, and has served as co-chair of the Latina Rights Initiative Advisory Committee since 1995. The Committee is composed of several Latina activists and leaders within the Latino community who work on women’s rights. The Committee is geographically and ethnically diverse.

45. See PUERTO RICAN LEGAL DEFENSE AND EDUCATION FUND GENERAL INFORMATION 1998 (on file with author).

Latinas had not improved sufficiently despite the economic and political gains of other members of society.47

Fund staff and board members had varied opinions and ideas about the proper direction of an effort aimed specifically at designing a viable approach to the needs of women in the Latino community. Eventually, the Fund opted to ground its work in the experiences of Latinas, as articulated by Latinas themselves.48

The Fund sponsored a series of round tables with various Latina activists, community representatives, and other leaders to discuss its concerns, as a Latino civil rights organization, about the status of Latinas. The Fund also compiled data based on legal and empirical research on Latinas' and women's status. The information obtained through the round tables, and the statistical and legal research, became the foundation for the Fund's women's rights agenda.

In 1991, the Fund launched the Latina Rights Initiative (LRI), a novel and strategic response to the legal and political concerns of Latinas. The LRI is "a dynamic legal and community-based strategy intended to improve Latinas' economic and political status."49 Reflecting the issues raised by women themselves, and in an effort to capitalize upon the momentum generated by the feminist movement, the Fund identified its three areas for programmatic development: economic empowerment, health care, and domestic violence.50

Forging links between the more traditional civil rights approaches and the current thinking on women's rights, the Fund developed strategies for each area which incorporated legislative and policy advocacy, community education, and litigation. Since the LRI is not a discrete and insular project but rather a methodology for the implementation of social and legal reform work addressing issues that affect and concern Latinas, its structure and philosophy are groundbreaking. Moreover, since the LRI is an empowerment model, seeking to develop leadership and self-reliance within the community of Latinas, it is a momentous opportunity for the Latino community and civil rights activists.

47. In the late 1980's, the Puerto Rican Legal Defense and Education Fund ... recognized that, despite successful legal and political efforts to ensure and advance the rights of Latinos, Latinas generally had not reaped the full benefits of those early civil rights victories. Cognizant of the need to address issues which impact specifically on Latinas, and aware of the history of neglect attendant to Latinas' rights [the Fund] accepted the challenge of designing and implementing litigation and advocacy, focusing on the obstacles facing Latinas today.

Id.

48. See id. Other options included the creation of a separate and discrete women's rights project within the Fund's existing structure; the implementation of a docket that included "women's issues" representative of the percentage of women in the Latino population; and making women's issues an adjunct to the Fund's other work by offering organizational support to women's groups on issues that appeared particularly relevant to Latinas.

49. Id.

INTIMATE PARTNER VIOLENCE

Through litigation, advocacy, coalition building and community education, the Initiative promotes Latina empowerment. The Initiative has implemented a culturally-sensitive legal and advocacy program that confronts issues overlooked in traditional civil rights and women’s rights agendas. The Initiative’s blueprint for change is unique and modifies the approaches previously applied to community civil rights struggles. The Initiative proactively addresses race, national origin and gender-based discrimination, as experienced by Latinas.  

In all aspects of its work, the Initiative also promotes community education as a viable end in and of itself, and as a basis for developing community support for women’s issues.

The Latina Rights Initiative has had notable success at the national level, impacting on legislation and policy initiatives directed towards women, and Latinas in particular. In the area of intimate partner violence, the LRI focused on various issues that reflected the specific concerns of Latinas. In the spirit of the LRI approach, the Fund organized round table discussions in New York with Latina activists working on intimate partner violence to identify the problems women were facing in seeking legal and advocacy assistance. The LRI also sponsored a conference in New York on the issues facing poor and immigrant Latina survivors of domestic violence, entitled “Welfare and Immigration Laws and Its Impact on Latinas: Identifying Key Issues for Domestic Violence Service Providers and Advocates.” The Conference panel represented Latina activists from various organizations and communities, and the participants came from several Eastern states.

The LRI also sits on a steering committee of intimate partner violence Latino activists, which organized the first national symposium on intimate partner violence within the Latino community. Over fifty Latino intimate partner violence activists attended the “National Symposium on La Violencia Domestica: An Emerging Dialogue Among Latinos” in 1997 and discussed intimate partner violence in the Latino community and the obstacles within the existing legal and political

51. LRI I, supra note 46.
52. See id.; see also HUMAN RIGHTS OF LATINAS IN THE UNITED STATES (a policy paper by the Latina Rights Initiative of the Puerto Rican Legal Defense and Education Fund, 1996) [hereinafter LRI 3] (on file with the author). This report states:
   Through coalition building, the [LRI] develops relationships with traditional women’s and civil rights organizations in order to work together toward Latinas’ social and economic empowerment.
   Id. at iv.
54. The Department of Health and Human Services Administration for Children and Families sponsored the symposium, which was held in Washington, D.C., on November 6-7, 1997.
structures to the development of a cohesive community response to such violence.\footnote{55. The Author participated in this symposium.}

Most recently, in 1997, in conjunction with the Center for Constitutional Rights (CCR),\footnote{56. The Center for Constitutional Rights is a New York-based civil rights organization that advocates for social and legal equality and justice.} the LRI submitted a petition for a writ of certiorari from the United States Supreme Court in \textit{Soto v. Flores},\footnote{57. 103 F.3d 1056 (1st Cir.), \textit{cert. denied}, 118 S. Ct. 71 (1997).} a First Circuit decision affirming dismissal on summary judgment of a "domestic violence" civil rights action filed by Flor Maria Soto Vega against various local police officials for failing to properly protect her and her children from her abusive husband.\footnote{58. See \textit{id.} at 1058.} The undisputed facts revealed that on April 17, 1991, Ms. Soto went to her local police station in Puerto Rico in an attempt to file a complaint against her husband for beating and threatening her.\footnote{59. See \textit{id.} at 1059-60.} Under Puerto Rico’s Domestic Abuse Prevention and Intervention Act,\footnote{60. P.R. \textit{LAWS ANN.} tit. 8, §§ 631-641 (Michie 1996).} Ms. Soto could seek criminal charges against her husband.\footnote{61. For a discussion of Puerto Rico’s law, see Rivera, \textit{The Violence Against Women Act}, \textit{supra} note 2.} According to Ms. Soto, the police initially discouraged the filing of this complaint, notwithstanding Puerto Rico’s law. The next day, the desk duty officer, who was present when Ms. Soto went to the precinct and who was an acquaintance of the husband, went to her husband and told him that she had gone to file a complaint against him with the police.\footnote{62. See Soto \textit{v. Flores}, 103 F.3d at 1060.} The husband was enraged at Soto and later shot their two children and himself in their home.\footnote{63. See \textit{id.} at 1061.} The district court and the First Circuit both concluded that the officers were entitled to qualified immunity and that Ms. Soto did not satisfy her burden of proof on her equal protection claim.\footnote{64. See \textit{id.} at 1061, 1065.} The LRI and the CCR argued that the officers were not entitled to qualified immunity and that the First Circuit had imposed an erroneous and excessive burden on Ms. Soto’s equal protection claim.\footnote{65. Brief for Petitioner at 9, \textit{Soto v. Flores}, 103 F.3d 1056 (1st Cir. 1997) (No. 96-1024), \textit{cert. denied} 118 S. Ct. 71 (Oct. 6, 1997) (No. 96-1976).}

This was a significant case for the Fund because it represented the Fund’s first direct involvement in intimate partner violence litigation. It was also a case involving a Puerto Rican statute of significant importance to women in Puerto Rico. In addition, it was a case with potential national impact because the Fund and the CCR were arguing for a less stringent standard than that imposed by the lower courts in intimate partner violence civil rights actions. The \textit{Soto} case, arising under Puerto Rican law, also provided a unique opportunity for the Fund...
to link its local and international work on women’s rights and intimate partner violence.

The status of women within an international context has been a continued area of concern for the LRI. The LRI has recognized that Latinas are often treated as “foreigners” in the United States, even after generations of living and working within its borders. Moreover, the Latino community has a significant recent-immigrant segment, with special legal and political needs, and Latinas and Latinos have strong ties to their Latin American roots. Thus, the LRI has expanded its efforts, where appropriate, in the international arena.

In 1995, the LRI sponsored five women to attend the United Nations Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing, China. Once again, pursuant to its working framework, the LRI hosted a series of workshops on the human rights of Latinas in the United States. The workshops brought together Latina activists as panelists and participants in discussions about the particular concerns of Latinas in the United States that would be relevant to an international discussion on the status of women globally. The LRI participants held a workshop at the Non-Governmental Forum in China on “The Status of Latinas in the United States.” One of the issues covered in the workshop was “domestic violence.” During the Conference in China, the LRI took a leadership role and organized the first ever Latina Caucus for Latinas from the United States attending the Conference. The LRI organized regular meetings to discuss workshops, events, and strategies related to proposed language for the Conference final document. As part of the Women of Color Caucus, the group met with the United States Delegation and presented its ideas for the Platform for Action, the Conference working document.

In its local efforts to further contextualize the issues raised in Beijing, in 1996 the LRI published its policy paper, Human Rights of Latinas in the United States, based on the Beijing experience. This paper has been distributed widely amongst Latina conference attendees and other Latina and Latino activists.

The LRI has been at the forefront of the struggle for Latinas’ rights and has assisted in framing, and often reframing, the public dialogue as it has affected Latinas. It has done this successfully by working within the structure that the Fund adopted as a model for change.

C. A State Model for Participatory Representative Democracy: The Hispanic Women’s Task Force of New Jersey

At the state level, New Jersey has been the site for similar success through the efforts of the Hispanic Women’s Task Force of New Jersey.

---

66. The other issues discussed during the workshop were health, immigration, and economic empowerment. The Author presented the segment on “domestic violence.”

67. See LRI3, supra note 52.
The task force “is a project of the Hispanic Women’s Agenda, the Commission to Study Sex Discrimination in the Statutes, several New Jersey women’s organizations, and other Hispanic groups.” The task force, composed of Latina activists, intellectuals, academics, scholars, and other leaders and community representatives, “wanted to advocate for upward mobility and economic development for Hispanic women in New Jersey; in particular they wanted to organize Hispanic women to advocate for legislation that would address the needs of Hispanic female single heads of household.”

In the late 1980s, they focused on legislative initiatives to further these goals. After several years of hard work, they successfully lobbied for the passage of legislation targeting Latinas in New Jersey. The legislation, the Hispanic Women’s Demonstration Resource Centers Act, passed in 1988, provided for the establishment of two to five state-funded model centers in New Jersey that provide various social, educational, and employment services to Latinas. New Jersey’s legislature found that Hispanic women needed services specifically targeted to them and their concerns, and that there were obstacles that Latinas faced that should be addressed through specific legislation.

The Act provides for a range of services, including language and employment training services, and specifically identifies domestic violence and sexual assault as part of its information and referral services components.

The history of the passage of the Act reveals the tremendous obstacles to passage of such legislation and the need for a well-developed and motivated group dedicated to long and politically charged efforts at achieving political victories through the legislative process.

First, the women had to organize amongst themselves to develop leadership within the group and to confirm their legislative agenda. This was apparently an enormous obstacle because female leadership had to be recognized as powerful and viable within the group. The task force also had to address the pessimism within the Latino community and distrust regarding the efficacy of legislative action.

The first obstacle was persuading the women involved to feel self-confident about the legislative agenda and to develop faith in their abilities to effect change. The formidable task was complicated by the need to develop trust in the leadership judgment of women, to learn to seek cooperation from other women’s groups when neces-

68. Bonilla-Santiago, supra note 42, at 270.
69. Id.
70. See id. at 270-72.
73. The Act provides for job counseling, training and placement, self-help programs and mentoring projects, career information services, and “training in assertiveness, survival and coping skills.” Id. § 52:27D-43.29(c)-(g).
74. See id. § 52:27D-43.29(h).
necessary, to become aware of the ability to work cooperatively with those groups, and to learn to deal with different leadership styles among the male members of the Hispanic community. Another hurdle to overcome was the failure-prone attitude of some of the Hispanic community leaders....

Hispanic women leaders needed training in how to move effectively in political circles, how to wield power in lobbying efforts, professional development, and negotiation skills.75

The task force met often and arranged meetings and meeting locations to increase the opportunity for full community participation, as well as other organization participation, in this process.76 Through this process, the task force membership gained confidence and optimism in the success of the project.77 The task force also recognized that, as a body of individuals, it could not presume that it fully understood the concerns of New Jersey's Latinas, and so it worked on developing a knowledge base of the issues and problems facing Latinas.78

The task force maintained a process that focused on the broadest support base possible.79 Thus, Latino men and non-Latino women's groups were invited to meetings. Indeed, coalitions with Whites and African Americans were vital to the success of the legislative agenda.80 By following an organization structure which permitted all those interested in setting a stake in the success of the project, the task force was able to ensure broad support for the passage of the legislation. The sense of investment permeated the process:

The task force formed coalitions with organizations of black and white women and men. Some of these groups knew legislators in their districts and agreed to visit in small delegations to encourage support of the bill. Some participants were motivated to help the bill be passed because they wanted the centers to be located in their areas.81

Once this empowerment and agenda-setting through education and coalition building had occurred, the task force commenced implementation of its legislative agenda. The task force familiarized itself with legislators and influential politically involved and connected individuals.82 The task force identified supporters and opponents of its legislative agenda and proceeded to work on securing support for the Act.83

75. Bonilla-Santiago, supra note 42, at 270.
76. See id. at 271.
77. See id.
78. See id.
79. See id.
80. See id.
81. Id. at 272.
82. See id. at 271.
83. See id.
This cadre of women articulated the issues of the Latina population, drafted appropriate legislation, and lobbied state public officials to support that legislation. They made legislators aware of the needs of Latinas by providing legislative aides with factual information about the status of New Jersey’s Latina and Latino population. The task force’s unceasing work in this area gained its members the trust of the legislators. Even legislators who were likely opponents were targeted by the task force as part of its educational and lobbying campaign. Moreover, the task force gained numerous cosponsors and the support of women’s groups. The task force decided that it must address the historic invisibility of Latino men and women, most apparent and damaging in the legislative process, through a massive public relations effort. In addition to the education campaign directed to the legislature, the task force also distributed information to both the English and Spanish language media.

Throughout this legislative campaign, the task force maintained its grounding in the community. Women from even the poorest sector of the community worked on the campaign, including meeting with legislators and contacting media and news personalities directly about the need for and urgency of the legislation. The education campaign approached from this axis was invaluable. The legislators generally had little or no valid and accurate information about the Latina community upon which to base their decision about the legislation. Thus, exposure to all sectors of the community was vital to ensure legislative choices based on realities and not stereotypes and misinformation:

Most legislators were not well informed about Hispanic women, and they were educated in formal meetings, follow-up letters reminding them of the issue, direct phone calls when the bill came to committee, and regular news releases as information went out to the media. These tactics proved effective when the time came to vote on the bill.

The task force succeeded because they applied a grounded approach to their legislative efforts, and one which permitted the investment in success of the work for people of diverse backgrounds and interests. Most important, the task force educated public officials and employees and held accountable elected officials to a Latina constituency which had been ignored and invisible prior to the task force’s campaign. The success of this model is contained in the legislative declaration and findings of the Act, wherein the New Jersey Legislature declared that

[c]ontributing to the Hispanic women’s plight is the fact that cultural differences and language barriers are not acknowledged by the

84. See id.
85. See id. at 272.
86. See id. at 271.
87. See id.
88. Id.
present educational, career and social services system in New Jersey; although some agencies have bilingual staff, they lack the bicultural knowledge of the socioeconomic obstacles that affect an Hispanic woman’s ability to fully participate in the programs currently offered.  

D. The Violence Intervention Program: A Local-Based Model with National Impact

The Violence Intervention Program (VIP) is the first Latina-run, community-based “domestic violence” bilingual/bicultural residential and nonresidential services provider in New York State. Founded in 1984 by a group of Latina antiviolence activists, it serves the East Harlem and Bronx communities of New York City, historically important homes and political bases of Puerto Ricans and other Latinos.

The VIP is a service provider entity, and it is also a community of antiviolence Latina activists dedicated to the elimination of intimate partner violence within the Latino community. The VIP Mission Statement declares:

We are committed to ending violence in the lives of women and their children and any manner of oppression that disproportionately renders women and children vulnerable to various forms of violence. Our unique approach and understanding of violence comes from our life experience as women who have survived various forms of oppression. We view our role as a bridge to bring battered women and the Latino communities together for a common mission of eliminating violence in the lives of women and children.

In furtherance of this mission, the VIP provides several services. As part of its nonresidential services, the VIP provides individual counseling, support, and educational groups for domestic violence survivors who do not seek shelter. These services “are geared toward empowerment while assisting participants in exploring their individual options.” The VIP also has residential services, providing short-term shelter for survivors and their children. Women in the program also receive counseling, support, assistance in securing permanent housing, and may participate in educational groups as a way of “allow[ing] residents to understand their domestic violence situations and empower[ing] them to live a life free of domestic violence.” Children of Latinas in both the

90. See Violence Intervention Program Mission Statement (revised June 1997) (on file with author). The Author is a former member of the Violence Intervention Program (VIP) Board of Directors.
91. Id.
93. Id.
residential and nonresidential service programs may participate in the VIP’s Children Services Component. Through this program, children learn “that violence is not ‘okay’ and are taught appropriate ways of addressing their feelings.” The children participate in counseling and age-appropriate support groups.

As part of its outreach services, the VIP maintains a New York City-based hotline, available 24-hours, 7 days-a-week, through which it provides crisis intervention, emotional support, information, and referral services in English and Spanish. The VIP also manages the New York State Spanish Domestic Violence Hotline, a toll-free 24-hour hotline which provides similar crisis intervention and referral services to Latinas throughout New York State. The State Hotline’s bilingual counselors help women secure emergency placement, police protection, and information about legal assistance. The State Hotline also provides statewide workshops on intimate partner violence and its effects on Latinas and the Latino family. In addition to these various services, the VIP provides direct support to the entire Latino community. The VIP provides technical assistance, consultations, workshops, staff training, and other presentations on intimate partner violence to the Latino community, within and outside the borders of the East Harlem Community.

The VIP also maintains representation on the New York State Domestic Violence Coalition and the Steering Committee of the “National Symposium on La Violencia Domestica: An Emerging Dialogue Among Latinos.” It is also an organizer and major sponsor of the annual No Mas Abuso Conference, a statewide conference on intimate partner violence within the Latino community in New York State. During the conference, workshops and panels are held on state and federal legislation, as well as ongoing and new issues concerning Latina service providers and Latina survivors. The conference is a forum for strategizing and planning plenary sessions out of which the VIP and other Latina antiviolence activists identify and design their advocacy, policy, and legislative agendas. As a result of this work, the VIP is able to influence and assist in the development of legislative and policy antiviolence strategies in New York State and nationally.

---

94. Id.
95. See id.
96. See id.
97. See id.
The work of the VIP has changed the Latino community's perceptions and handling of intimate partner violence. The VIP has taken a subject that was generally avoided, not discussed, and denied within the Latino community and politicized it, making it a visible and important issue for individual and community discourse. The VIP was a fledgling entity which suffered some serious fiscal problems before becoming the successful multiservice provider that it is today. The VIP has won several awards for its program and is well-recognized and well-respected within the "domestic violence" community and the Latina/Latino community. The commitment of the Latinas who work at the VIP and who constitute its current and former Board of Directors have saved lives and continue to transform the way Latinos and Latinas think about la violencia domestica.

CONCLUSION

In addition to the practical and political lessons to be learned from these models, the thematic thread which binds these efforts, and which is a classic aspect of these models, is also of significant import. Diversity of voices, ethnic representational politics, and the success of alternative strategies which characterized the efforts described in this Article have had a lasting impact on community agenda setting.

Latinas and Latinos cannot hope to influence public policy and legislative strategies, or otherwise implement fundamental change, without articulating specific political transformative proposals, in a setting that is truly representative of the Latina experience. In other words, Latinas and Latinos must have fair representation at the table, and must act assertively, designing their own legislative bills and policy-oriented plans of action that address the particular concerns of the Latino community. The plans must be designed to benefit Latinas and to ensure the integrity of the political process through full and fair representation, as well as through achieving just and adequate results.

Lastly, as these models demonstrate, it is incumbent upon each Latina and Latino to act, remembering that each one represents not only a community but a movement. Each one should commit to taking personal action to ensure that the efforts of our schools, organizations, churches, and other popular networks are directed towards gender equity—not just for the elimination of bias but for truly meaningful participation.

Author Esmeralda Santiago, a Puerto Rican woman, captures this politicization of human existence and personal conduct in a recent article:

It's a strange phenomenon. A Latino or Latina gains a bit of attention, and next thing he or she knows, the words spokesperson or role model become attached to their names. It's as if who you are and what you've done is not important on its own. You must stand for something greater than yourself; otherwise, your accomplishments are meaningless....
All of us in the public eye are spokespersons for Latinos, whether we like it or not. We work as grass-roots organizers, business owners, artists, teachers. And some, like me, the writers who sit in small rooms facing blank pages, are trying to make sense of our Hispanic—or Latino—heritage, trying to explain it to others so that we can understand it ourselves. We Latinos speak for one another. And for those who can’t speak for themselves: because they have no forum, because they don’t speak the language, because they’re afraid.

... We must not become anesthetized by the giddy figures putting us at the top of the minority heap—numbers alone do not constitute power. They’re merely a reflection of potential. Power comes when a few brash individuals take stands and speak out, speak loud, speak well. And if they speak often enough, they might be heard by people other than their families and friends. And become the leaders we do desperately need, the ones with vision and courage, who will lead us into the next century.100

Composition of the U.S. Latino Population 1996
(Total Latinos = 22,432,000, excluding Puerto Rico)

- Puerto Ricans: 61.0%
- Mexicans: 26.5%
- Central Americans: 7.3%
- Other Latinos: 5.2%
- Colored: 0.8%
- Other: 4.5%

Median Household Income 1995

- Puerto Ricans: $10,025
- Mexicans: $22,513
- Central Americans: $24,024
- Other Latinos: $23,232
- Colored: $25,102
- Other: $25,202
- Total Latinos: $23,232
- Non-Latino Whites: $23,232
- Total Population: $23,232

This IPR Datnote is based on data from the March 1995 Current Population Survey (CPS) conducted by the Bureau of the Census, U.S. Department of Commerce. The CPS is a national survey of about 60,000 households in all 50 states and the District of Columbia (excluding Puerto Rico and other U.S. territories). It includes the civilian noninstitutionalized population and members of the Armed Forces in the U.S., living off post or with their families on post, but excludes all other members of the Armed Forces. Since the CPS is based on a sample, the data presented here are estimates and subject to margins of error. These data are, therefore, most useful in comparing characteristics between groups rather than in estimating total population counts. These CPS data are the first weighted using 1990 Census figures and are not comparable to earlier CPSs.

These data come from basic Census Bureau tabulations, available from the tables, "The Hispanic Population in the United States: March 1995" (P20-502) available via the Internet <http://www.census.gov/popest/www/acoahisp55.html> or can be ordered in hard copy. For further information, contact John Reed at the Census Bureau at (301) 457-2492.
### Labor Force Participation Rates

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Puerto Rican</th>
<th>Mexican</th>
<th>Cuban</th>
<th>Central/South American</th>
<th>Other Latinos</th>
<th>Total Latinos</th>
<th>Non-Latino Whites</th>
<th>Total US Population</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total (16 years of age or more) (%)</td>
<td>56.8</td>
<td>66.2</td>
<td>61.2</td>
<td>65.6</td>
<td>62.3</td>
<td>65.0</td>
<td>66.6</td>
<td>65.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Males</td>
<td>65.5</td>
<td>79.8</td>
<td>69.4</td>
<td>79.4</td>
<td>72.9</td>
<td>77.4</td>
<td>74.1</td>
<td>73.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Females</td>
<td>46.9</td>
<td>51.7</td>
<td>52.0</td>
<td>58.0</td>
<td>52.3</td>
<td>52.0</td>
<td>59.0</td>
<td>55.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Unemployment Rates

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Total (16 years of age or more) (%)</th>
<th>Males (16 years of age or more) (%)</th>
<th>Females (16 years of age or more) (%)</th>
<th>Males</th>
<th>Females</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>10.1</td>
<td>10.1</td>
<td>11.5</td>
<td>9.9</td>
<td>10.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Males</td>
<td>10.1</td>
<td>10.1</td>
<td>11.5</td>
<td>9.9</td>
<td>10.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Females</td>
<td>11.5</td>
<td>10.3</td>
<td>10.3</td>
<td>9.9</td>
<td>10.3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Selected Occupations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Male (%)</th>
<th>Female (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Managerial/Professional</td>
<td>15.6</td>
<td>22.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Operators/Laborers</td>
<td>29.0</td>
<td>11.7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Median Earnings (1995)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Median Earnings (1995) $</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Males Part &amp; Full-time</td>
<td>15,430</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percent White Female Median</td>
<td>97.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Full-time Only</td>
<td>20,491</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percent White Female Median</td>
<td>11.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Median Househld Income (1995) ($)</td>
<td>15,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Median Family Income (1995) ($)</td>
<td>15,430</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percent White Male Median</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Median Househld Income (1995) ($)</td>
<td>15,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percent White Males Median</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Median Household Income (1995) ($)</td>
<td>15,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percent White Males Median</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Percent Households Without Phones

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Percent Households Without Phones (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Married-couple</td>
<td>35.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Single Female Householder</td>
<td>29.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Single Male Householder</td>
<td>5.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poverty Rate for Families (1985)</td>
<td>35.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age 65+ Householder (%) Poor</td>
<td>19.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Householder Not H.S. Grad (%)</td>
<td>48.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percent Own or Buying Home</td>
<td>29.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Households WithoutPhones (%)</td>
<td>21.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percent US-Born (excl. Puerto Rico)</td>
<td>56.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Foreign Born - % Naturalized</td>
<td>12.7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

---

*Source: IPR DataNote*