

**“SPOILED AND UNSPOILED”: AN AUTOETHNOGRAPHY AND ARTS-  
BASED INSTALLATION ON VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN AND FEMICIDE**

A Dissertation

by

ERNESTENE SHEROW

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Chair of Committee,	Robert M. Capraro
Co-Chair of Committee,	Stephen Caffey
Committee Members,	Lynn Burlbaw
	Mary Margaret Capraro
	Bugrahan Yalvac
Head of Department,	Yeping Li

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## **ABSTRACT**

This dissertation addresses violence against women and femicide through an autoethnography and arts-based research agenda. Many cases of violence against women go unreported each year. Women often withstand violence until a weapon, such as a knife or gun, poses a threat. The only resolution to ending violence in a relationship is for women to leave the aggressive partner; however, a great number of women refuse, and death is often their fate. The dissertation combines narratives with a collection of visual artworks that focus on the emotional and physical state of women as they endure violence.

In the narratives, I relived my past while watching and listening to an act of violence on a woman. The narratives highlight indicators of gender control and how society views acts of violence toward women. The visual images are rendered through my past and current research on violence against women collected through a literature review. Images include the exploration and characterization of tragic events through mood, emotion, dramatic lighting, and ambiguous space, with the human figure a counterpoint to emphasize both violence and empowerment.

This dissertation reveals the psychological and physical state of women, offers alternative ways in which women affected by violence avoid conflict in violent situations, and provides visual depictions of emerging empowerment of women as they begin restoration from violence.

## **DEDICATION**

I dedicate this dissertation to God, whom I love with all my heart. I would like to thank you for blessing me with the opportunity to experience and embrace innovative ideals of learning. I can do all things through Christ that strengthens me.

My sincere gratitude to my mother Sunny Faye Sherow for her support and words of wisdom. My lovely mother taught me to persevere and encouraged me to always follow God and believe in myself. I also thank my sisters Darlene Rossum, Pamela Sherow, and Kristy Bobo for their unconditional love. I love you all.

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# CHAPTER I

## INTRODUCTION

Violence against women and femicide is ubiquitous (The World Health Organization [WHO], 2013; Wilson, 2014). It is defined as the overt physical, sexual, and psychological abuse of female members in society (Roberto, McPherson & Brossoie, 2014), whereas femicide is defined as the killing of women (Renzetti, 2008). According to research (Michalski, 2005; Tjaden & Thoennes, 2000) and interested groups (i.e., the National Coalition Against Domestic Violence [NCADV]), one out of every four women will experience some form of violence in their lifetimes. Wilson (2014) posited one in three women across the world will experience some form of violence in their lifetime. The number of women experiencing violence is often difficult to quantify. For example, in 2012, the United States Bureau of Justice claimed almost 350,000 women in the United States each year experienced rape, sexual assault, aggravated robbery, or aggravated assault. Conversely, Michalski (2004) stated 1.3 million women in Great Britain, Canada, and the United States were assaulted by intimate partners (IP) in any given year. Some reasons for this disparity in numbers was thought to be the result of women not reporting their experiences (Federal Bureau of Justice, 2012), and Wilson (2014) posited that some records kept by medical personnel and police departments were inadequate. Michalski (2004) concluded that 95% of assaults on spouses or ex-spouses were committed by men against women. In addition, he estimated women experiencing assaults between the ages of 20 and 24 were more likely to be victimized by their



partners. These numbers suggest women have been the more common victims of violence and are commonly victimized by someone they know personally.

According to Renzetti (2008), femicide (also feminicide) has been one of the primary causes of death for women between the ages of 20 and 49 in the United States. Femicide is defined as "the assassination of women or female children for reasons associated with their gender. Femicide is the extreme form of violence based on gender inequality" (Wilson, 2014 p. 8). Unfortunately, almost one-third of female homicide victims have been killed by IP (Federal Bureau of Investigation [FBI], 2001). Generally, in relationships marked by violence, research also confirmed that deadly violence was intensified toward women upon departure of their intimate relationships with men. Researchers and advocates also indicated violence against women became more lethal when women educated themselves and made provisions moving towards independence from their abusers. The media and law enforcement do not provide detailed reports of events or facts characterizing victims' attempts to leave abusers at the time of their murders. Regrettably, the Texas Council on Family Violence (TCFV, 2011) indicated through research data that 3% of women murdered in the state were in the process of leaving their husbands and 17% had terminated relationships with their intimate partner. It is not possible to know how many of the remaining victims had begun the preliminary process to establish autonomy. For 102 cases of femicide in 2011, firearms were used on sixty-six victims (TCFV, 2011). According to the Dahlberg and Krug (2002), femicide in the United States is more likely to occur through the use of firearms. Although numbers of women experiencing violence or victims of femicide have been difficult to quantify,

researchers and organizations agree that both phenomena reflect two serious social issues for women.

Curriculum can also be used to address, create awareness of, and correct social inequalities, just as during the 1960s and 1970s, the evolution of social concepts from the Civil Rights and feminist movements rectified social inequalities and provided all citizens with equal access to civil, social, and cultural opportunities (Dobash & Dobash, 1992). One social inequality that should be addressed through curricula is violence against women. As a result of the Civil Rights and feminist movements from the last century, stakeholders in art education have worked to address inequality by incorporating diversity in curricula (Cho, 1998; Garber, 1995). I will examine violence against women and femicide using the theoretical framework of philosophical ideas attributed to John Dewey, specifically regarding experience, theories of autoethnography, and arts-based inquiry (i.e., the artistic process) amalgamated with social justice.

The unrelenting social issue of violence against women and femicide was the impetus for my study. Research has suggested that women across ethnic groups have dealt with these issues; however, African American, Hispanic, and Native American women experienced higher rates of femicide than Caucasian women (Renzetti, 2008). In addition, the preponderance of femicide involved the male partner perpetrating violence against the female prior to the murder; therefore, previous violence against women has been considered a primary risk factor for femicide.

There have been several empirical studies to investigate violence against women and femicide. Many of these studies included examination of men's use of violence and

the lives of their female partners (Brownridge, 2004; Dobash, Dobash, Cavanagh, & Lewis, 2004; Michalski, 2005). In 2005 Michalski said some researchers, such as Brownridge (2004) and Nash and Hesterbreg, (2009) provided evidence that women were more likely to be abused by men having patriarchal views by using “coercive control” strategies to separate women from social support or resources (MacMillan & Gardner, 1999). Regardless of who committed acts of violence or femicide or how they occurred, there were also several approaches for addressing these two issues, including public health efforts, prevention programs, and research (Dahlberg & Krug, 2002; Lehrner & Allen, 2009). Although meritorious, there was limited evidence of their effectiveness on the prevention or elimination of violence against women or femicide (Dahlberg & Krug, 2002; Michalski, 2005; Umberson, Anderson, Glick, & Shapiro, 1998).

### **Problem Statement**

My study addresses the need to (a) increase cultural, social, and political awareness and understanding of violence against women; (b) create an understanding of the experiences of victims; (c) educate the community by raising awareness about abuse and femicide as social problems; and (d) generate dialogue for social change (see Appendix A).

### **Purpose Statement**

The purpose of my study is to understand: (a) the researcher’s perception of the culture of violence against women and femicide as a result of her personal experience; (b) the processes that lead to violence against women; and (c) my experience as a victim

of violence presented through a visual autoethnography and art installation (see Appendix B).

### **Research Questions**

My study seeks to answer the following research questions: (a) How do my reflections expand present knowledge and understanding of violence against women and femicide? (b) How does my art provide insight into femicide and social justice inquiry? (c) What meanings or definitions are constructed by the researcher from experience? (d) As others viewed an art exhibition on violence against women, what behaviors did the researcher observe (see Appendix B)?

### **Definitions and Terminology**

Visual Culture – Images we view through the fine arts or through technology.

Autoethnography – In this case, the researcher's experience

Femicide –The murder or massacre of women or girls

### **My Story – Origin of the Researcher**

My father, an alcoholic, terrorized my mother, me, and my three female siblings. On several occasions, my mother pushed my older sister and me into our bedroom out of harm's way. At other times, I begged my father to stop hurting my mother. I heard the screams and curses of my father and heard my mother cry. We begged my mother to leave my father, and she refused without providing her children any explanation until we were adults. As children, we swore we would never stay in a violent relationship. My father graduated from abusing my mother to verbally and physically abusing his young adult daughters.

### *The Dance*

Commonly known as domestic violence, intimate partner violence is one of the more frequent types of violence. Although this criminal act can be perpetrated by anyone in an intimate relationship, intimate partner violence nonetheless, is more commonly perpetrated by men against women (Heise & Garcia-Moreno, 2002). On March 23, 2007, my intimate partner brutally assaulted me in Laredo, Texas. During the incident, he repeatedly beat me about the face and chest, and strangled me as I screamed in terror. Taunting me with his pocketknife, my partner stated, “You’re going to die tonight, Bitch, as soon as you get home.”

The incident occurred while I was driving my partner home from his job. My truck stalled from the damage he incurred by hitting and kicking the dashboard and steering wheel as I was driving. Prayerfully, I opened the door and ran. He followed me, but slowly, as though he knew no one would help. There were lights on in several houses and stores in the neighborhood. Repeatedly, I knocked on doors begging for help, but no one responded. My partner caught me and resumed beating my face. Finally, a man opened his door to shout, “Get away from my door.” Startled by this man’s shout, my partner walked quietly into the night like an invisible monster. I asked the man who had opened his door if he would allow me to use his telephone to contact the police. The man’s response was, “No. Go to the store across the street and ask for help.” His actions are not unlike those of many others in our country. The man at the door chose to lock me out of his home and, by doing so, also chose to lock out of his home the ugliness of violence against women and femicide. I banged on the doors of the store across the

street, but the people in the store refused to open the doors, an indication that they also, clearly, did not wish to become involved. After several minutes of my begging, however, the storeowner handed me a phone, outside the door, to contact the police. I called law enforcement and hid until they arrived.

Following that night's experiences, I contacted the police about the incident several times, but I failed to receive any response from the authorities with regard to my case. Finally, I spoke with the chief of police, who indicated that several women would not and did not prosecute. Therefore, he said, the detectives probably believed my reaction would be the same.

Although the incident was in the past, in my mind, it seems that no time has passed. I continually have relived that night. I was violated physically and psychologically, and sometimes I still experience uncontrollable anger, fear, devastation, and humiliation. On occasion, I see my badly swollen, bruised, battered face and torso in the mirror. I continue to be easily startled by loud noises and sudden movements. I have found my brain emphasizing any occurrences in the media of violence and its consequences. As I researched the information on the numbers of cases of violence against women provided by the National Coalition of Domestic Violence (2008), I became driven by what I had unearthed. Consequently, through my experiences I was compelled to empower myself and others through research and education to create a public forum, dialogue, and awareness that focused on violence against women. Although I chose to prosecute my intimate partner to the fullest, my sense of security and trust was compromised, and my human and civil rights were violated.

### *The Empowerment*

Today, there is calm in my life. Yet, this calmness can still be breached. For example, it was two o'clock in the morning; all was quiet and I was at peace. Suddenly, a car pulled into the driveway, a driveway shared with a neighbor. "Hurry up we need to leave," a small female voice said. I laid still in my bed, holding my breath as though I was trying desperately not to be seen. Immediately, a second car drove up. There were loud screams and name calling. "You bitch! What you think you are doing?" a man's voice exploded. "You leave my house now or I will call the cops." I cringed and ground my teeth, nervous as I laid in my bed. Car doors opened and shut, house doors opened and shut, and the screaming continued. I felt my body sink deeply into the mattress and found it hard to inhale. Terror had paralyzed me. I could no longer move. I heard screams and the crashing of objects against the wall. I wondered, should I call the cops? I silently waited for a sign about what I should do. Finally, the volcano erupted. The door to my neighbor's house swung open. "You bitch, when I finish with you!" The sound of screaming and a body falling down the stairs were terrifying. Although this incident was loud, the neighborhood was quiet and dark. Watching from my window, there were no lights to be seen, just darkness. The screams and abusive language became louder. I could hear the kicks of the abuser. I peered out the window. A small man between eighteen to twenty years of age was dragging a woman by her hair from the bottom of the steps towards a small Jeep. The woman's screams rang out through the neighborhood. As I watched through the blinds on the door, I saw the woman fighting to free herself from her abuser's clutch. The woman broke free and ran towards a truck

parked in the driveway. As she opened the door and stepped in, a hand reached in, pulled her out by the neck, and dragged her to the middle of the driveway. As I peered through the blinds, I noticed two other men. One stood in the driveway watching the incident. The abuser hit the woman in the face with his fists again and again, as well as kicking and stomping on her face, upper body, and torso. She screamed helplessly at the top of her lungs. "Please stop. No. No. Please stop," she begged as she tried to protect her body from the abuse, and the man continued expressing his rage as he hit, kicked, and stomped the woman with all his strength. The woman, weighing no more than one hundred pounds, was picked up and slammed to the ground, and, again, the young man kicked and stomped on her. I was enraged and appalled by this behavior. Finally, as he spit on her, I interrupted his hostilities. I could no longer silently watch in horror. I opened my door and screamed, "What are you doing!" The young man was shocked he had been discovered. He stopped his violent acts and ran to the other side of the truck. He hid from my view. I stepped outside. His friend said, "Let's go man." I reached down and helped the woman to her feet and escorted her into my home. "I am going to call the cops, do you hear me," said the young woman as she walked through my doorway. I closed the door. The woman was hysterical and her tears flowed in a continuous stream. Quietly, I questioned myself, "What did I just do? Have I lost my mind? How could I put my health, well-being, and life in danger so easily?" Upon reflection I knew that I expected to give to all what I received: Compassion, kindness, and charity. I could protect this woman because I was empowered. In helping her and others, I took one more step toward my own freedom.



The young woman cried as I tried to comfort her. I asked, "What can I do for you?" She answered, "Nothing, I have to go." I asked, "Who was that man?" "My baby daddy," the woman responded. At that moment, I heard a knock on the door. I looked past the blinds and saw the abuser standing at my door. Unsure about whether to open the door, I hesitated for a few moments. The man begged to gain entrance. I took a deep breath and cracked the door slightly. "Miss, can I come in?" he asked. "You have got to be kidding me, right?" I replied. "No," he answered with confidence. I asked, "What did you just do to this young lady?" The young man responded, "But miss, you didn't see what she threw at me. She threw a bottle at me," as though that justified his actions. At that moment, two police cars blocked the entrance to the driveway and two additional police cars parked on the street. The young man turned toward the policemen, instantly walked away from the door, and faded away into the night. One policeman asked, "Miss, what's going on here?" as he peered inside and saw the battered and bruised woman. I responded, "I will let her speak with you." The policeman asked, "Did the young man that left the premises do this to you?" The woman did not respond. Then, the policeman directed his questions to me. "Did that young man beat her?" I slowly nodded my head in confirmation. Immediately, the officer notified assisting officers that the abuser had fled the scene. I escorted the woman back to her house and watched her enter safely. The young man who witnessed the episode stood in the yard ever so quietly, so as not to bring attention to himself. I looked him directly in the eye and asked, "Why did you just stand there? Why didn't you help her?" His response was, "It wasn't my business. That was that man's business." I responded, "Beating a ninety-five pound woman does not

make you a man; watching someone else beat a ninety-five pound woman does not make you a man: It makes both of you cowards.”

The policemen continued to search the neighborhood for the abuser with no success. The young woman was inside the neighboring house for at least fifteen minutes. As she went outside to wait for the policeman, I noticed a change in her demeanor. I inquired, “Are you okay?” She responded abruptly, “I am fine. You know, he loves me. He’s my baby daddy.” She stood quietly and never uttered another word to me. The officer returned to take her statement. Five minutes passed and I heard a knock on the door. I was not surprised to see the officer standing there. “Ms. Sherow, he said, “I am sorry to bother you, but the young lady told me she received her injuries from falling down the stairs.” I told him, “I am sorry to hear that.” He asked, “Did you see the incident?” I responded, “Yes sir, but I do not know the young man. Besides, it does no good for me to help her if she does not want to help herself. It’s the culture, and there is nothing we can do about it.” (Approximately one-half of the protective orders obtained by women against intimate partners who physically assaulted them are violated. More than two-thirds of the restraining orders against intimate partners who raped or stalked their victims were also violated (NCADV, 2008 p.1).)

### ***My Demons***

I returned to my bed, and as I laid there staring at the wall, I began remembering and contemplating the woman’s definition of love. To her and women like her, love is being called a stupid bitch, being punched in the face until noses bleed or break, jaws break, eyes are blackened and swollen, being choked to unconsciousness, being spat

upon, having their hair pulled until it comes out at the roots, being dragged on the ground until some foreign object pierces their bodies. “Why did she not file charges against this horrible person?” I asked myself. Tears began to roll down my face; I could not contain the emotional outburst. My visions were so real, as though I were back in Laredo, Texas. “When will this horror movie end?” Once again, I saw my face bloody, felt it numb. I was hardly able to see through my swollen eyelids, streams of tears rolling down my face as I ran down the street from house to house knocking on doors with no assistance, while a dangerous man with a knife taunted me. I was terrified all over again. That night, moved by the incident I observed, I relived my IP violence. I cried again for several hours. Then, my crying finally ceased.

Today, reflecting on the two incidents, I also try to define their meaning. The Merriam-Webster Dictionary (2008) defines an assault as a “military attack involving direct combat with enemy forces or threat or attempt to inflict offensive physical contact or bodily harm on a person (as by lifting a fist) in a threatening manner that puts the person in immediate danger.” The first definition perfectly characterizes the incidents, although some would argue that the word "military" gives the abuser too much credit; however, more physical and psychological abuse is strategically committed—in order to fulfill a desire.

Although the violent incident that occurred that night was horrific, the woman felt guilty and, in fact, refused to press charges against the man who had brutally beat her. Her response to the situation was not unusual. The monster, who had no regard for her life or safety, would be given an opportunity to repeat his criminal behavior. I

wondered what strategies she would use to keep safe. Would she compromise her beliefs, resort to emotional coping, or try to exercise problem solving to ease the tension in the relationship? Strategies of protection are life-learned solutions. Hopefully, there would never be need for her to use those skills; however, the following day I saw the woman. Her face was battered and swollen and her lips were split; nonetheless, she was in the company of her abuser. I greeted her with a smile of concern and she turned away in embarrassment. As she turned away, I reflected on the statistics that point out that “One in seven homicides (13.5%) are committed by intimate partners. The proportion of murdered women killed by a partner is six times higher than the proportion of murdered men killed by intimates” (Stöck, Devries, Rotstein, Abrahams, Campbell, Watts, & Moreno, 2013 p. 863). I was saddened by the likelihood of her becoming a statistic.

My experiences were psychologically and physically traumatic as a victim of violence and in being a participant observer of another young woman’s abuse. My thoughts have always been that the violent incident against me was never my fault; however, I recall how often I pondered my actions and my observations. I would never know if I could have prevented either my situation or hers. Previous to the incident in my truck with my IP, police were called to my home twice because of my intimate partner’s violence against me, yet I failed to comprehend that my environment was volatile and I was in a truly dangerous situation. My personal circumstances, the circumstances of my neighbor, and the violent circumstances experienced by women globally every day led me to investigate the issue of violence against women and femicide through my autoethnography and art-based scholarly inquiry.

## **Autoethnography**

As the researcher, I have used autoethnography to study my life experience. According to Ellis (2004), subjectivity is not hindered but is allowable expression to inform the study. Ellis (2004) wrote that autoethnography is “part *auto* or self and part *ethno* or culture” (p. 31). In fact, Ellis, Adams, and Bochner, (2011) stated what other authors have explained:

Autoethnographers must not only use their methodological tools and research literature to analyze experience, but also must consider how others may experience similar epiphanies; they must use personal experience to illustrate facets of cultural experience, and, in so doing, make characteristics of a culture familiar for insiders and outsiders.

To accomplish this might require comparing and contrasting personal experience against existing research.

The autoethnography is a narrative that helps the researcher understand past experiences and, in turn, disclose truth (Bochner, 2001). The autoethnography I propose has the potential of fulfilling what Denzin (2000) characterized as important consequences. Specifically, autoethnography should provoke cultural critiquing and be a vehicle to create new sociological subjects and to form new social limitations (Clough, 2000).

### ***Visual Autoethnography***

In May 2007, according to Smith-Shank and Keifer-Boyd (2007) the 3<sup>rd</sup> International Congress of Qualitative Inquiry was dominated by presentations of

autoethnography and arts-based research. Smith-Shank and Keifer-Boyd observed research methods that included visuals were listed under the category as arts-based research and research method that were comprised of narratives were placed on panels; however, when the research was comprised of both arts-based research and autoethnography, the research was categorized as Visual Autoethnography. As Smith-Shank and Keifer-Boyd (2007) organized the *Visual Culture & Gender (VCG)* journal in 2007, they saw only one researcher who considered her work as an intersection between the two methods and posited other researchers work also overlapped with these methodologies.

In the journal *VCG*, Vol. 2, 2007, Smith-Shank and Keifer-Boyd (2007) “presented research that integrated narratives, visuals, and technology, bringing visual emphasis into autoethnography and narrative into arts-based research” (p. 1). These two scholars gave several examples of researchers in the *VCG* who amalgamated their search to create visual autoethnographies; for instance, the research of Paula McNeil entitled “Women Caught off Guard: A Photo Essay. McNeil used photography through family albums to reflect on her places of residence throughout her life (Smith-Shank & Kiefer Boyd, 2007). According to McNeil (2007) the albums reserved images of significant events, people and narratives concerning her family. McNeil posited that the family images became so important that at the age of 12 she began to use the family camera to record images. In her research, she elaborates on the importance on these images and how it affected her artistry and research.

Another example of a visual Autoethnography in the journal of *VCG* is the article “Our Grandmother’s Dausghters: The Work of Cynthia Hellyer Heinz. According to Smith-Shank and Keifer-Boyd (2007), researchers Heinz and Smith-Shank (2007) investigate the representations of women by Heinz creating drawings of her grandmother throughout time. Heinz placed her grandmother in environments where dust begins to cover the space, vegetables decay or rot (Heinz & Smith-Shank, 2007). This is all symbolic of the ageing or deterioration process of her grandmother and other women. This is all significant because of society’s perception and vision of women throughout time (Heinz & Smith-Shank, 2007; Smith-Shank & Keifer-Boyd, 2007). What was once beautiful, was now considered dried up and useless (Heinz & Smith-Shank, 2007). Although the scholars/artists Heinez (2007) and McNeil (2007) processes for using and creating images to combine with the text are different, both scholars/artist integrated narratives and visuals, which linked the methodologies of autoethnography and arts-based research which has now been categorized as Visual Autoethnography. A visual autoethnography can depict images that can heighten the emphasis of any autoethnography

### **Theoretical Framework – Philosophical Theories**

The idea of this research is based on several philosophical theories using experience as a teaching tool for learning. Jean Jacques Rousseau, a French philosopher, was one of the more influential theorists during the eighteenth century Enlightenment, best known for his writings on social freedom, social rights, religion, and education. One of Rousseau's principle works was his fictionalized *Emile on Education*, in five volumes,

which set out his philosophy on education (Reese, 1997). This book describes the education of Emile from birth to adulthood (Bloom, 1978), where Emile’s schooling consisted of learning through experiencing things of interest—with the prime objective of enhancing Emile’s senses and emotions. The teacher was only to facilitate inquiry, instead of forcing Emile to adhere to objectives (Noddings, 2007). Rousseau sought to change the system of education to free children from traditional educational settings, where the primary objective was to alter children's natural or spontaneous tendencies and discourage their expression, which he believed would blunt children’s developmental stages (Delaney, 2007). Bloom (1978) pointed out that Rousseau believed children’s direct experience or interaction with people and things were of greater importance than verbal instruction.

### ***Dewey on Experience***

John Dewey’s philosophy on education had some similarities to Rousseau's theories. The primary similarity between Rousseau’s recommendations and Dewey’s was their common emphasis on the child’s own motivation and direct action (Noddings, 2007). Dewey (1938) proposed that there were several types of experience, at the same time cautioning educators against educational experiences of disconnect or no continuity. Instead, he suggested educators practice “continuity or experimental continuum” with students (p. 33). The objective was to discriminate between educational experiences that created a progression in development and those that were not beneficial. Dewey explained that discrimination of experiences was needed while critiquing the traditional means of education and new or progressive educational implementations of curriculum.



As a child growing up, I had always heard my mother and other adults say, “experience is the best teacher.” Dewey reaffirmed this phrase in his books *Experience as Education* and *Art as Experience* where he maintained that learning begins with experience (Cahnmann-Taylor, 2008; Dewey, 1934). In *Experience and Education*, he expressed the belief that education served to insure learners’ growth. Growth became one of Dewey’s significant biological similes (Noddings, 2007). Dewey theorized that growth through progression was indicative of both experience and education. For him, people interacted with other people and their environment on a constant basis; therefore, their experiences became continuous. This suggested that the residual effect of a student’s previous learning experience advanced the student’s enthusiasm, engrossment, and proficiency to encounter a subsequent experience (Dewey, 1934). Some researchers believe Dewey’s objective was to lead educators to ask questions and think more deeply about links of the present and future, with the hope of curtailing educators from thinking of some predestined future education (Noddings, 2007).

John Dewey’s *Art as Experience* provided an analysis of aesthetics in education (Slattery, 2006). The author theorized that experience may be confirmed with ideas and emotions, even though consciousness emerges and, frequently, experience may be undeveloped (Dewey, 1934). Dewey (1934; 1958) reasoned that the desire to learn begins with an experience, and he wrote emphatically about the aesthetic experience. Dewey suggested that providing the aesthetic experience through formalism was dysfunctional (Cahnmann-Taylor, 2008). He contended that humans are cognizant

creatures who gather their sensory experiences. This theory echoed across other academic fields (Cahnmann-Taylor, 2008),

Dewey postulated:

Things are experienced but not in such a way that they are composed into an experience. There are distractions and dispersions; what we observe and what we think, what we desire and what we get, are at odds with each other.... In contrast with such experience we have an experience when the material experience runs its course to fulfillment. Then and then only is it integrated within and demarcated in the general stream of experience from other experience (1934, p. 26-27).

Hence, artwork completed to satisfaction, a solution to a problem, a game finished, concluding a conversation, authoring a book to the point of consummation instead of termination are experiences classified as whole experiences. Dewey (1934) contended there are no mechanical junctions, dead centers, and holes because of the continuous merging of experience. However, there are pauses and places of rest, but such pauses and places of rest accentuate and describe property of movement. Dewey also believed these experiences are a summation of the knowledge. Artworks are unified with different acts, episodes, and occurrences that dissolve margins and unify without losing character. Dewey explained that after contemplating an experience preceding an occurrence, a person may find that one experience is adequately dominant over others; therefore, that occurrence embodies the experience in its entirety. Dewey explained the significance of

the visual arts and concluded by stating that in this world full of barriers and inadequate social experience, works of art are the only possibly means of communicating wholly and without obstruction between people (Dewey, 1934; Slattery, 2006). Dewey posited that an artist's intent may not always be to communicate with the spectator, but the artist must keep in mind there is always a possibility of an audience. Art, therefore, breaks barriers separating humans and is both the greatest universal form of language and the most expressive form of communication (Dewey, 1934).

### **Origin of the Research**

I see myself as an artist/activist/educator and researcher. The origin of my research stems from a commitment to activism toward violence against women and femicide. This commitment has been supported throughout my career as a graduate student at Texas A&M University. In August 2007, I entered the College of Education in the Teaching, Learning, and Culture Department, where I enrolled in a Curriculum Development and Curriculum Theory course taught by Dr. Patrick Slattery and also audited a Qualitative Research course taught by Dr. Bugrahan Yalvac. There were several theorists discussed in both courses, but I found my beliefs in alignment with John Dewey and William Pinar with regard to curriculum theory. Although I have explored several research techniques, I decided on an autoethnography as my choice for research on the topic of violence against women and femicide.

Pinar (2004) postulated that on many occasions teachers are required to meet state requirements by attending district and regional staff development courses, which often focus on policies, procedures, or academic disciplines; however, curriculum theory

requires teachers to engage and use themselves reflexively with interdisciplinary study, which, in turn, intersects with self, society, school disciplines, and daily life.

Interdisciplinary studies, such as multiculturalism, women's and gender studies, autobiography, post-colonial studies, psychoanalytic theory, popular culture, postmodernism, cultural studies, and globalization should always be included in the development of curriculum (Pinar, 2004). John Dewey believed in democracy in education, and he also maintained that learning begins with experience (Cahnmann-Taylor, 2008; Dewey, 1934). I see myself as an artist/activist/educator and researcher; as such, I have always believed curricula should be interdisciplinary by amalgamating academic disciplines with women's and gender studies, post-colonial studies, popular culture, postmodernism, cultural studies, and globalization. By teaching through this approach, curriculum will pertain to the life experiences of students. As an artist, it is not unusual to tackle contemporary issues. Artists can attack social issues through curriculum/research by engaging students and society in conversations that challenge them, promote change, and apply information to their everyday lives. My research stems from information learned in curriculum courses, qualitative research courses, and my life experiences. As a victim of violence, I deliberated over the issues of violence against women and femicide as topics for curriculum and arts-based research. It is my belief these issues warrant inquiry; therefore, I reviewed research on violence against women and femicide. During my investigation, I found that my personal experience is considered qualitative research. Thus, an autoethnography, amalgamated with reflexivity on the information I discovered in investigating violence against women and femicide,

would help me render some of my findings for an installation. Barone (2008) and Finley (2012) postulated the idea that artists can render their findings. The statistics on violence against women and femicide that I encountered, as well as daily viewing of violence against women and femicide in visual culture, enhanced my passion for this subject and convinced me to proceed on this journey toward social justice and activism in opposition to violence against women and femicide.

### **Social Justice and Art**

One role of art education in social justice is activism toward change (Barone, 2008; Bell & Desai, 2011). According to Bell and Desai (2011), “Not only can art expose the norms and hierarchies of the existing social order, but it gives us the conceptual means to invent another, making what had once seemed utterly impossible entirely realistic” (p. 287). I saw my research as an exposé of the inequities of gender in order to provoke justice for all. According to Bell and Desai, (2011) social justice practices should empower people by providing “critical analytic tools” (p. 287) to comprehend domination and their social role within an outlaw system, to develop an intellect of intervention, and to overpower and modify oppressive behaviors within society. Some inequalities for activism include diversity, multiculturalism, democracy, disability awareness, gender equity, socioeconomic status, and sexual orientation. During the 1960s and 1970s, social concepts evolved from the Civil Rights and feminist movements. The purpose of these movements was to rectify social inequalities and provide all citizens with equal access to civil, social, and cultural opportunities (Dobash & Dobash, 1992). In the past, art education consisted of traditional Eurocentric ideas. These ideas

taught students to imitate only the European schools of art. As a result of equality movements, specifically in education, from the last century, stakeholders in art education work to address inequality by incorporating diversity in curriculum (Cho, 1998; Garber, 1995).

I believe two social issues that must to be addressed through curriculum and research are violence against women and femicide. Although there have been several research studies conducted on the subject of violence against women and femicide, more research is required as it applies to art and art education (Dalhberg & Krug, 2002). Socially engaged arts-based curriculum and research are the means through which my dissertation confronts these issues.

Sartre (1988) and Barone (2008) postulated that the artist is in constant opposition with traditionalists. Barone (2008), hooks (1994), and Sartre (1988) suggested artistic research should critique both political and social conventionality. At different stages across history, artists have emphasized social justice. Examples across the ages include Sophocles to contemporary artists Judy Chicago and Spike Lee (Barone, 2008). Artists Betty Saar and Kara Walker have attempted to shake up the orthodoxy by addressing stereotypical images and practices of African Americans. Barone (2008) and Felshin (1995) postulated that activist artists should expose society to important subject matter through dialogue. Some art-based research has investigated inequities inside sociopolitical interactions (Barone, 2008). This type of art has been used in curriculum and research to bring attention to the impact of “social practices and institutions on human beings” (Barone, 2008, p.36). These social practices of inequalities have been

called an outlaw culture (Barone, 2008; hooks, 1994). “An outlaw culture is one that promotes engagements with ... practices and ... icons that are defined as on the edge, as pushing the limits, disturbing the conventional, acceptable politics of representation” (hooks, 1994, p. 4-5).

Several researchers have used art-based research as public pedagogy to address issues dealing with social justice. Dr. Booker Stephen Carpenter’s work with the Texas A&M Water Filter Project addressed issues of social justice relative to water. Dr. Stephanie Springgay, “examines and values women’s embodied breast experience through *m/othering* and breast feeding” (p.19, Springgay 2008; Springgay & Freedman, 2010), with *M/othering* defined as being the total outlook considering the responsibilities and experiences of being a mother. Both researchers framed their work as social justice research. Dr. Stephen Carpenter used a multi-modal approach addressing and educating the public about the necessity of clean, potable water. Springgay materialized "sites of her *m/othering* body to discuss how shifts in the maternal body constituted pedagogies of excess” (Pinar, 2010, p. 23). These methods can enhance a learner’s ability to identify what issues are to be addressed through social justice. Cornelius, Sherow, and Carpenter (2010) conducted research on the lack of social justice for people with limited access to safe drinking water (p. 26). Their research was used in a performance piece as part of the curriculum provided to students at a secondary school. It highlighted evidence to support a position that exposed the issue of inequality in access to water and helped to make the issue part of the hierarchy of informative topics for social justice. Research and implementation of curriculum on social justice, according to Slattery, (2006) “helps to

find a way around the hegemonic forces and institutional obstacles limiting our knowledge, reinforcing our prejudices, and disconnecting us from the global community” (p.35). Therefore, I believe an autoethnography and an arts-based exhibiton to investigate the social problem of violence against women and femicide is an exemplary research project to combat an outlaw culture. Autoethnographic research amalgamated with visual culture was a feasible way to incorporate and explore progressive teaching as experience and learning procedures.

### **Visual Culture**

In this dissertation, autoethnography combined with the vehicle of art to enhance the autoethnographer’s understanding of the experience of violence against women and femicide and the outsider’s appreciation and cognizance of the same. Finding innovative ways to communicate with the public seems to be the primary objective of many people using visual culture. For many centuries, artists have used visual culture to communicate with the public. For example, in medieval times, church paintings, statuary, and Passion plays communicated biblical stories to a primarily illiterate population. Today, visual culture still communicates with society through some form of image or text through fine art as well as printed media such as magazines, newspapers, billboards, and graffiti. Technology is frequently employed to communicate through computers, the internet, television, and iPads (Mirzoeff, 2009). Powerful imagery of historical, political, and social events has often captured the world’s attention. Such imagery can depict oppression, racial tension, political propaganda, ecological devastation, and war while changing people’s behaviors, views, experiences, and lifestyles. Visual culture can be



experienced through various media (e.g., SL, Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube) using various apparatus (e.g., cell phones, computer cameras, and camcorders). Often, these technologies have contributed to exposing and helping society to be informed. For example, in the Boston Marathon bombing of April 15, 2013, police were aided by the public's use of telephone cameras. The FBI showed photographs and video taken with telephone cameras to provide the larger community with useful information. While technology is being used as a means of creating and presenting art, through the centuries, paintings and sculptures have been a manifestation of the culture's attitudes, beliefs, and values.

Visual culture has historically addressed social, cultural, and political agendas through advertisements, computer animations, fashion, and the fine arts. For example, Judy Chicago's installation "*The Dinner Party*" (1979) represents the oppression of historical women while, at the same time, immortalizing them for their accomplishments (Bresson, 2004; Fichner-Rathus, 2010). Chicago's desire was to educate the public regarding women's roles in history and the fine arts. This installation consisted of a triangular table with thirty-nine individualistic place settings representing high achieving women in history. The table settings consisted of a goblet and large porcelain plate, an object traditionally associated with women, with raised or carved areas. The plates symbolized each woman and were painted with traditional China painting techniques. They were placed on intricately embroidered runners that depicted the names of the woman represented at the individual place settings. The women's achievements were characterized through the visual design. The table was placed on a large triangular panel

platform adorned with the names of 999 women who had triumphed in their endeavors, suggesting the reinforcement of achievements for women memorialized through the use of china plates (Bresson, 2004). An example of these place settings is one dedicated to Sojourner Truth. Emphasized in this place setting are both Truth's African American heritage and the associated pain of slavery. The plate depicts an African mask in the center combined with a woman weeping for the suffering of slaves and a powerful figure on the right demanding freedom and equality. Beneath the plate is a woven runner created with African patterns as well as appliquéd printed fabric triangles. In this installation, Chicago pays tribute to the southern slaves who created quilts from scraps of fabric. Chicago also created this installation as a representation of the reclamation of a cultural past to uphold and structure current identity (Bresson, 2004).

Other examples of women addressing social, cultural, and political issues include Kathë Kollwitz's *Death and Mother*, which depicts three interlocked figures; the mother, clutching a child against her breast in terror, faces the spectator as Death consumes her body (Bresson, 2004). Barbara Kruger's *Untitled (Your Gaze Hits the Side of My Face)* investigates cultural constructs of gender and the male gaze in her works of art. The artist's practices, approaches, and techniques from contemporary mass media, along with her previous experience as a graphic designer, has allowed her to demonstrate the deviousness of media messages with which the viewer engages. Kruger has incorporated into her works the same mass media techniques used to sell consumer goods. Text, for example, is strategically placed as though it is a billboard. For Kruger, language has been a device for internalization of labeling people and injured roles (Kleiner, 2010, p. 768).

The Guerrilla Girls, a group of anonymous feminist artists who fight for the rights of women artists in a predominately male oriented field, are another example. Their objective is to emphasize the injustice of sexist and racist orientation in the field's major institutions, both physical entities and principles (Kleiner, 2010). This group of artists has worn gorilla masks in public for the purposes of anonymity. Their tactics have included art performances as well as displaying posters and flyers in public spaces. *The Advantages of Being a Woman Artist* is one such poster created by these activists; it displays a list of obstacles contemporary women artists endure. The objective of the Guerrilla Girls is to prompt change for women artists.

In another example, Bettye Saar's *The Liberation of Aunt Jemima* is characterized as a piece of art that liberates the African American women from stereotypes and servitude. This mixed media piece depicts a large, dark skinned mammy with a big white smile as seen in several nineteenth and twentieth century films and on the packaging of Pillsbury's Aunt Jemima's Pancake mix. For years, African American women were so-depicted; however, Bettye Saar's work differed substantially: She depicted Aunt Jemima holding a broom and rifle. The piece also depicts a portrait of a small white child with a black mammy clutching the child aggressively. A black fist within the piece, representing the black power sign, is a signal for a black empowered Aunt Jemima (Fichner-Rathus, 2010).

One reason for growth in visual culture has been the rapid intensification in the mass media. Our culture has exposed people to images through multiple outlets such as billboards, the internet, magazines, package designs, televisions, videos, movies, and

more. These various outlets has led to the need for analyzing and interpreting these visual images (Danko-McGhee & Slutsky, 2007). Art professors' visual culture curricula should investigate themes, interpret visual language, and elaborate on symbolism to enhance students' learning (Parsons, 1998).

Each culture has its own codes or symbols for communication, not only in the written word but also in the visual arts. Students must be able to decipher symbols both visually and through the written word (Danko-McGhee & Slutsky, 2007). Understanding the visual helps students to understand divergent cultures, time periods, and disciplines (Danko-McGhee & Slutsky, 2007). Students with access to computers and mass media have access to visual culture (Freedman, 1997). In fact, Mirzoeff (1999) posited that by the age of 18, the average American student has watched four hours of television a day and has gone to eight movies a year.

“The interpretive, didactic, and even seductive power of imagery should be given attention in school” (Freedman, 1997, p.10). According to Freedman (1997), viewing technological images, artistic practices, and the ways in which images come to meaning should be included in modern curricula. Visual culture has made certain types of violence more visible; in contrast, hidden violence that occurs in workplaces, homes, and medical and social institutions has been less publicized. Dahlberg and Krug (2002) postulated that biological as well as individual issues may be the source of more violence; they also indicated that other external influences, such as community, family, and culture, contribute to violence.

## **Violence against Women and Femicide in Visual Culture**

Violence against women has been expressed in visual culture over the centuries through the fine arts. Visual culture, however, has been defined in several ways. For example, Mirzoff (2009) defined visual culture in terms of the representation of events. In contrast, Barnard defined visual culture in terms of something created (Duncum, 2012). Regardless of the definition, the purpose of visual culture is communication.

Duncum (2012) suggested images in discourse must reflect values and beliefs before becoming part of art education. According to Duncum's definition of visual culture, *The Rape of the Sabine Women* (1627–1629) by Pietro da Cortona and *The Rape of the Daughters of Leucippus* (1617) by Peter Paul Rubens (Fichner-Rathus, 2010) represented violence against women in visual culture. Rape was a popular allegorical theme presented in paintings during the Baroque period. "Rape had numerous connotations for a seventeenth century audience. For example, it could be the justified as abduction of another's 'property' so as to secure the future of a people" (Minor, 1999, p.174).

In the Cortona painting, the artist has depicted a speech "known in oratory as the epideictic" (Minor, 1999, p. 174). According to legend, in 750 BCE, at a Roman festival, by order of the Roman leader, the Sabine women, who were there by invitation, were abducted (Minor, 1999, p. 174). While history does not assert that a rape occurred, the artist depicted movement through the twisting and turning of the bodies of both the men and the women as though they were struggling. The view of male domination and abuse were portrayed with Roman soldiers carrying away the Sabine women, perhaps not a

rape but surely violence. In *The Rape of the Daughters of Leucippus*, two earthly women are seized by Zeus' twin sons Castor and Pollux. The artist depicted a single moment in time, the forceful subduing of women (Fichner-Rathus, 2010). Again, perhaps not a physical rape but certainly a depiction of violence against women.

### **The Significance of the Study**

My study will be significant in several ways. It will accomplish the following:

1. Contribute to research describing the scale and impact of violence against women and the scale and impact of femicide.
2. Provide a curriculum development framework using an art installation on violence against women as teaching tools.
3. Validate knowledge of this researcher's perceptions regarding the subject of violence against women.

Although violence by IP declined during the later years of the twentieth century by nearly 50% in the United States, differences between women and men were readily noticeable—with rates for males who have had violence committed against them declining by 67.8% as opposed to only 30.1% for females. Researchers have seen stabilization in homicides by IP and credited this progress to social programs and legal interventions (Renzetti, 2008). Research, however, confirmed deadly violence is intensified toward women upon departure of intimate relationships with men. Researchers and advocates also indicated violence against women became more lethal after women educated themselves and made provisions toward independence. The media and law enforcement, unfortunately, did not provide detailed reports of events nor

provide facts characterizing victims' attempts to leave abusers. My research is particularly significant as society and culture tend to blame women rather than their abusers (Garcia & Tomas, 2014; Thapar-Bjorkert & Morgan, 2010). Furthermore, this research can provide information on the causes and effects of violence, which in turn, can enhance public knowledge and future policymaking on violence against women and femicide as well as the impact of violence against women and femicide on society.

## **CHAPTER II**

### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

This chapter consists of four sections. These sections help connect the literature on experiential learning and visual culture to the experience of violence against women and femicide, thus allowing the reader to understand how art can be used as a transformative and teaching experience regarding the processes of victimization and dehumanization of women.

In the first section, I have provided the historical background and philosophical ideas of Jean-Jacques Rousseau, John Dewey, and William Pinar. In the second section violence is discussed, especially as it is displayed against women. In the third section I have provided information about an art installation on the female experience. In the fourth and final section, I have identified visual culture as a medium of instruction, learning, social interaction, and culture. The purposes of my study include illuminating my perception of the culture of violence against women and femicide from personal experience and exploring the use of art as experience.

#### **Philosophical Ideas on Needed Change in Education**

There has been little change in the American public school system over the past one hundred years. The system continues to face economic problems and seems to be more service oriented. Unfortunately, many American schools are products of the assembly-line factory model (Pinar, 2004). Schools determination and push for efficacy, standardizations, and factory model curriculums has a tendency to diminish teachers'



capabilities for quality curriculum as teachers resort to robotic performance while trying to stay within the district's policy and procedures. Pinar (2004) advocated educational experience through interdisciplinary study in curriculum theory. The theoretical framework for developing this study was also based on experience and education.

Rousseau, a naturalist, believed children were naturally good; they should control their education through their indications of their interests. Students were also to learn through their experience. Teachers were only to be facilitators and should not project their ideas or objectives on the child. Simply put, teachers were only for guidance (Noddings, 2007).

John Dewey's views were similar to Rousseau's and his important theories consisted of growth and analysis of experience. For Dewey, the experience had meaning, and the experience was social and cultural. Dewey posited all experiences had continuity; therefore, teachers must know the foundation of their students' previous experiences. Students constructed meaning from experiences (Park, 2007). Experience also played a role in the theories of constructivism. Fosnot (1992) posited knowledge was developed when new experiences transpired. Pinar (2004) postulated public and private education was enticed by and emphasized the academic disciplines; nonetheless, concurrence with the academic disciplines was not always the case. As a reminder to committed educators, Pinar (2004) suggested curriculum theory required cultivating intellect and necessitated freedom from corporate objectives; however, as educational systems were not always in agreement with educators, these liberties were not always obtainable in public or private education. Factory model curricula are designed and taught in units; social control

intervenes with intelligence. Factory model instructional strategies include: problem solving, critical thinking, memorization, creativity, and calculation. Pinar (2004) suggested standardization decreased the excellence, diversity, and magnitude of the learning process in schools. Another factor of concern was that not all information learned using these strategies is transferable in the factory model. Unfortunately, teachers often become a part of this indoctrination when they do not allow or encourage student's views of attitudes, history, and ideas on social issues.

### **Accepting Violence as a Part of Life**

The social issue of violence can be addressed through curriculum. Violence should not be taken lightly nor considered as something in the past. Violence should not be given root as a way of life. "The twentieth century will be remembered as a century marked by violence. It burdens us with its legacy of mass destruction, of violence inflicted on a scale never seen and never possible before in human history" (Mandela, 2002, p. XIX). In many societies, violence has become a trickle-down issue. Violence starts at the headwaters of the river and flows downward; this is a river describing societies, governments, and households. As stated by Nelson Mandela, a survivor of apartheid and a citizen of its aftermath, this river of violence can and must be stopped. According to Mandela, no matter the age, race, country, occupation, no one is exempt from a culture of violence (2002). As Mandela thanked the World Health Organization (WHO) for its research on violence and health and for taking the issue forward, he stated, "We must address the roots of violence." Only then, can we transform a past century's legacy from a crushing burden into a cautionary lesson" (Mandela, 2002, p. XIX).

Perry (1970) postulated “that man’s culture is filled with conceptualisms of violence” (p. 2). For instance, religious, historical, sport, and political oratory are often structured around themes of violence. Spectators may become bored with watching the people involved in these human endeavors; however, people never grow tired of viewing violence within these same endeavors (Perry, 1970). Nonetheless, just because violence has always been present, we should not accept violence as an inevitable part of life (Dahlberg & Krug, 2002). We, as a society, always have had organizations or structures in place (e.g., public, religious, legal, and philosophical), to limit or prevent violence. Although these organizations, through the shared conviction of members, have made contributions in reducing violence, the successful elimination of violence in society has been unaccomplished (Perry, 1970). Currently, the issue of violence in society has become a public health concern (Shorey et al., 2012; Tjaden & Thoennes, 2000). Public health workers (e.g., researchers and practitioners) have devoted much time to comprehending the root of violence (Dahlberg & Krug, 2002, p.3). According to Cho (2012), violence has been linked to social, economic, and cultural conditions. Dahlberg and Krug (2002) posited, however, that attitudes and behaviors can be transformed. “Preaching love and brotherhood will not do the job. Peace and civilization depend, rather on institutions which shape our actions and ideals which disciplines our emotions” (Perry, 1970, p.2). Simply put, there must be additional plans in place to accompany the use of religious rhetoric in reducing violence. Examples of public institutions put in place for reducing violence include schools and law enforcement agencies.

Dahlberg and Krug (2002) endorsed an approach to the problem of violence against women through public health. Such an approach encouraged interdisciplinary and science-based efforts. For example, the public health sector has used information from several disciplines, including: (a) criminology, (b) economics, (c) education, (d) epidemiology, (e) medicine, (f) psychology, and (g) sociology. The use of information from these disciplines has assisted researchers in the field of public health to be revolutionary and reactive to numerous diseases, sicknesses, and injuries throughout the world (Dahlberg & Krug, 2002). In other words, there has been a collaborative and interdisciplinary effort to concentrate on the issue of violence against women. Rigorous scientific methods are employed in each of these disciplines to reduce violence against women. In doing so, researchers in these disciplines typically have concerned themselves with five actions: (a) uncovering facets of violence, (b) examining causes of violence, (c) investigating methods of violence prevention, (d) providing information for violence prevention, and (e) implementing intervention programs. As a result, public health systems have worked to achieve the goal of reducing violence against women (Dahlberg & Krug, 2002; Wood & Sommers, 2011).

A number of researchers have conducted research on violence (Perry, 1970) and violence against women (Michalski, 2004; Shorey et al., 2012), and several theoretical perspectives concerning violence against women have been developed; however, no one perspective currently dominates the field of research on the etiology of violence against women (Michalski, 2004). Within the last thirty years, there has been an increase in the number of journals accommodating a range of theoretical perspectives on the subject of

violence against women. Many of these journals provide readers with information regarding theoretical perspectives (Michalski, 2004; 2005). For example, researchers may categorize and analyze information differently (Michalski, 2005). Researchers may also choose to analyze the connection of violence with gender roles or cultural occurrence, whereas some have chosen to place their research efforts into analyzing traits and characteristics of the phenomenon or investigating the international frameworks of social learning (Gilchrist, 2010; Wilson, 2014). In addition, a number of researchers have probed the issue of resource constraints and social framework correlations of domestic violence, while other researchers have studied demographics and explored social groups at greater risk of violence (Johnson & Hutto, 2001; Michalski, 2005; Trainor et al., 2002).

In order to research the subject violence against women and femicide, one must be able to define the topic. Not all researchers have defined this matter in the same manner. According to Dahlberg and Krug (2002), the World Health Organization (2002) defines violence as “the intentional use of physical force or power, threatened or actual, against oneself, another person, or against a group or community, that either resulted in or has a high likelihood of resulting in injury, death, psychological harm, maldevelopment, or deprivation” (p.5). The United Nation’s Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women defines violence against women as “any act of gender-based violence that results in, or is likely to result in physical, sexual, or psychological harm or suffering to women” Watts & Zimmerman, 2002, p. 1232). According to Watts and Zimmerman (2002) and Wilson (2014), the declaration clarified

that violence against women was a violent action that potentially caused harm due to gender differences deeply rooted in gender inequality that sustained imbalanced power. According to Gillespie, Richards, Givens, & Smith, ( 2013), violence against women was not always considered a violation of women’s rights or a crime. In fact, this violence was tacitly condoned by society in the 1970s, as there were no laws against the abuse of women by intimate partners (Gillespie et al., 2013). Activists, however, persuaded the public that spousal battery was a social problem (Gillespie et al., 2013; Loseke, 1992). Prior to this activism, society believed that acts of violence against women were committed by strangers (Bergen, 1998; Gillespie et al., 2013). According to Brunner (2013), there were established hierarchies in society, and when hierarchy changed or its power diminished, uneasiness was created within the hierarchy. Society conformed and approved, therefore, to patriarchal structures, which showed power through domination and oppression. Violence has been used by some perpetrators to force subordination and help maintain power inequality between men and women (Antai, 2011; Heise, Ellsberg & Gottemoeller, 1999; Watts & Zimmerman, 2002). For example, some men have used violence to reinforce their position as the leader of a household or in a relationship.

Labeling violence against women solely in terms of injury or death has limited the understanding of the complete effect of violence against women on both individuals and the community, for this type of violence has encompassed a multitude of facets, including: physical force, threats, intimidation, neglect, suicide, deprivation, other self-abusive acts, and sexual and psychological abuse (Dahlberg & Krug, 2002; Watts & Zimmerman, 2002). Psychological problems can consist of “depression, posttraumatic

stress disorder, substance abuse, and suicidality” (Antunes-Alves & De Stefano, 2014, p. 62). The results of these facets can be latent and resurface years after the original abuse (Dahlberg & Krug, 2002). Violence refers to acts committed privately or publicly, regardless of what is thought to be justified provocation, reaction, or self-serving acts (Dahlberg & Krug, 2002). The phrase “violence against women” characterizes different types of acts conducted against women of all ages that go from, “sex selected abortion to the abuse of elderly women” (Watts & Zimmerman, 2002, p.1232). Some acts are considered geographical and culturally explicit, including female genital mutilation, acid throwing, honor killings, and dowry deaths. Regardless, acts categorized as domestic violence or rape are more predominant worldwide (Wilson, 2014; Watts & Zimmerman, 2002). However, all of these acts, including differential access to food/medical care, sex selective abortion, forced prostitution, and trafficking for sex should be considered violence against women (Watts & Zimmerman, 2002). Physical, psychological, or sexual abuse may entail several components, including: (a) intimidation, (b) isolation, (c) emotional abuse, (d) minimizing, (e) denying and female blaming, (f) economic abuse, (g) coercion and threats, and (h) manipulation of children to project guilt (NCDV, 2008). Physical actions committed in cases of violence against women have included: (a) kicking, (b) choking, (c) slapping and hitting with fists, (d) sexual violence, (e) assault with a deadly weapon, and (f) homicide (Zakar & Zakar, 2013; Wilson, 2014). A few emotionally abusive characteristics exhibited by perpetrators of violence against women have comprised: (a) intimidation, (b) belittlement of women, (c) humiliation, (d)

isolation from family and friends, and (e) forbiddance of victims from working outside the home (Watts & Zimmerman, 2002; Wilson, 2014).

According to Dahlberg and Krug (2002), violence is characterized by three different categories: (a) self-directed, (b) interpersonal, and (c) collective. Acts of violence can also include deprivation or neglect (Antunes-Alves & De Stefano, 2014; Dahlberg & Krug, 2002). Categorizing acts of violence has been differentiated between violence inflicted on self or by others and acts committed by an individual or a small group of people. Included in this typology was violence committed by larger groups such as political groups, militia groups, terrorist organizations, and states (Dahlberg & Krug, 2002). Self-directed violence included abuse to self and suicide. Interpersonal violence encompassed the family, intimate partner, and community. Collective violence included committing criminal acts for political gain, to advance social agendas, and for economic gain. This typology was not without flaws, and was not universal, but it did provide a structure or comprehensive outline about violence patterns throughout the world. In addition, this typology depicted types of violent acts, the significance of the environment, and the connection between perpetrators and victims (Dahlberg & Krug, 2002).

Injuries incurred by victims during acts of violence are not unusual. More injuries seem to have been sustained to the head, neck, and face of victims. Brink (2009) found that injuries can be indicators of violence and can increase the belief in violence. As a result of research on injuries (Dahlberg & Krug, 2002), one of the chief universal causes of the mortality rate for people ages fifteen to forty-four is thought to result from acts



associated with violence. Dahlberg and Krug (2002) posited preventive measures should be taken to reduce the impact of violence in the same way that public health has prevented and reduced problems such as workplace injuries, infectious diseases, and the handling of food and water.

### *Texas Statistics*

Researchers from the Texas Department of Public Safety's Uniform Crime Reporting (UCR) section (2007) identified 189,401 family violence incidents in that state for 2007. There were 201,456 victims reported in the incidents. Married couples had the largest percentages of incidents with common law spouses following second. Seventy-five percent of victims in these family incidents were female. Out of 42.6% of marital incidents, statistics for female spouses who were abused were 19.3% and 15.2% for common-law wives. Women were also beaten violently by their children and other family members (UNC, 2007). In the state of Texas, in 2007, there were 8,430 rapes committed against women. The rate of rape for 2007 was "35.5 for every 100.00 persons (p. 23)." According to UCR (2010) 193,505 incidents of family violence occurred in 2010. There were 211,769 victims reported during the incidents. Seventy-four percent of the victims were female. Family member violence showed the largest percentages of violence committed against female family members, with 16.9%, followed by married female spouses at 16.7% and 14.1% for common law wives (UCR, 2010). Also, in 2010, 7,626 rapes were committed in the state of Texas. The rate of rapes for Texas in 2010 was "30.3 rapes for every 100, 000 persons (p. 18)." The UCR (2013) posited 185, 453 incidents of family violence were identified in 2013, and 199,752 victims were reported

by the police department. Females classified as other family members were victimized at the highest percentage rate of 19.7%. Wives and common law wives were the next highest percentage. Wives as victims were at 14.94% and common law wives were victimized at 12.3% (UCR, 2013). In 2013, 7, 443 rapes were committed in Texas. The rate of rape for Texas was “28.1 for every 100,000 persons (p. 23).” The number of sexual assault incidents were 17, 844, and the number of victims were 18,612 during 2013. “The significant amount of sexual assault victims were female acquaintances (15.89%), other female members (11.2%), female strangers (9.32%) (URC, 2013, p. 49).”

According to UCR (2011), 1,303 Texas women were murdered by intimate partners. In Texas, there are more calls to the National Domestic Violence Hotline than in any other state besides California (TCFV, 2010); despite the number of calls, few family violence incidents were reported. Holder (2012) posited two million adults and 15 million children are exposed to violence each year. Bush-Armendariz, N.B., Heffron-Cook, L. & Bohman, L. (2011), posited IPV will be experienced by one out of three Texas adults within their lifetime. The UCR, (2011) reported 2,632 Texas women died as the result of family violence incidents from 1990 to 2011. Research shows that as a woman decides to leave the relationship, it becomes more volatile and lethal (Campbell, 2007).

According to Busch-Armendariz, Heffron, and Bohman (2011, p.2), “currently 5.9% of Texans are in an abusive relationship.” During 2011, at least 223,000 Texans used family violence hotlines as a resource for information assistance, and 79,000

victims, mainly women and children, required relocation through programs provided by family violence services since safety in their homes was questionable. Additional statistics suggest over 20% of women indicated experiencing some sort of physical abuse with 2% of female victims reporting sexual violence resulting in pregnancy. One percent of women confirmed both physical and sexual abuse from intimate partner violence (Bush-Armendariz, Heffron, & Bohman, 2011).

### ***Violence and Femicide in Multicultural and Multinational Settings***

Globally, violence against women is ubiquitous (Megias et al., 2011; WHO, 2005). During the last 20 years, substantiation of the increase of violence against women has been noted through research and has offered a global synopsis on the scale of abuse. As a result of the growing recognition of violence against women and femicide, guidelines by health organizations were developed for health workers to improve identification and support efforts for victims of violence (World Health Organization, 2002; 2013). If one has been exposed to or has experienced violence for a minimal or indefinite amount of time, the incidents can contribute to or create modifications in an individual's physical or psychological condition (Umberson, Anderson, Glick, & Shapiro, 1998). According to Stöckl, Devries, Rotstein, Abrahams, Campbell, Watts, and Moreno (2013), intimate partner violence is the primary cause of homicide for women worldwide.

Intimate partner violence against women has gained considerable attention lately (Wilson, 2014), partially due to health issues of women who are attacked (Devries, Mak, Bacchus, Child, Falder, Petzoid, Astbury, & Watts, 2013; Stöckl, March, Pallitto, &

García-Moreno, 2014). A multi-country study conducted by the World Health Organization between 2000 and 2004 found women ages fifteen to forty-nine years of age in ten different countries reported they had experienced physical or sexual assault from a partner (García-Moreno, Heise, Jansen, Ellsberg, & Watts, 2005; Stockl et al., 2014). Adolescent and young women have experienced a higher rate of IPV. This information has been validated by studies conducted in the United States (Catalozzi, Simon, Davidson, Breitbart, & Rickert, 2011; Stockl et al., 2014). Also, as noted in studies in Sub-Saharan Africa and India (Erulkar, 2013; Wagman, Baumgartner, Geary, Nakyanjo, Daaki, Serwadda, Gray, & Wawer, 2009), the HIV infection risk increased for young women when there was an increased rate of IPV (i.e., sexual assault and coercion). The increases for HIV could escalate during marriage or while the young women are in a dating relationship.

As observed in above mentioned studies, violence and femicide followed a similar pattern in the U.S. and overseas, with slight variations. Cho (2012) pointed out that intimate partner violence, while it affected several groups, the rate of effect varied across groups. He found that Asians were victimized less than African Americans. Furthermore, Cho showed that neither Latinos nor African Americans suffered more victimization than Caucasians. The racial factor was not an important predictor of perpetration when financial security, employment, education, and social network variables were controlled. Cho (2012) found age to be a benefactor in predicting sexual perpetration and older men were more likely to be the perpetrator of intimate partner violence. Cho concluded that since Latinas and African Americans had the lowest

financial security of many of the groups, and were more prone to IPV and improving the socioeconomic conditions of some communities can reduce intimate partner violence (Cho, 2012).

African Americans who had suffered childhood maltreatment, especially sexual abuse, were found to be more likely to be involved in intimate partner victimization as adults. The risk for adult femicide has been shown to be greater for African American women who were abused as children, since they are the largest number of victims of abuse (19.8% for African Americans contrasted with 10.7% for Caucasians; Patel, Bhaju, Thompson, & Kaslow, 2012).

Although women have the right to report IPV to the police, older African American women in the Deep South are intimidated from reporting sexual abuse out of fear of stigmatization in their family, community, and church. Older women were likely to report abuse from siblings and other adult relatives and more unlikely to report abuse by spouses, ex-spouses, and boyfriends. In fact, they have justified not leaving a marriage because of how long they had sustained the abuse and because of the lack of support of ministers, who would ask them to stay and bear it—but would gossip the women's confidences to the community. The responses of the women confirmed the pattern reaction of women to violence and femicide (i.e., fear of repercussion, insecurity about their economic standing if they left the abusive spouse, and fear that they would end in jail after years of suffering; Lichtenstein & Johnson, 2014).

A 2012 study focused on Native American women and sexual assault (Gebhardt & Woody, 2012), which included information on Alaskan Natives, pointed out that

sexual assault was prevalent, with 33% of all women physically and/or sexually assaulted since age 18, according to the National Violence against Women Survey (Tjaden & Thoennes, 2000). This proved that these groups were twice more likely to experience sexual assault and rape than any other group, with rates being higher for those living in New York City. As happens with other victims of sexual abuse and femicide, some long term effects were intense and included PTSD and risky sexual behaviors (Antunes-Alves & De Stefano, 2014). These groups of women sustained a higher degree of injuries requiring medical attention. In addition, they had to face offenders who were under the influence of alcohol or drugs and were armed. Also, the rate of charges and arrests for IPV to Native Americans was low. The incidents of violence were reported by other individuals instead of the victims of violence, possibly because of hopelessness of justice and fear of tribal stigma (Gebhardt & Woody, 2012).

In a cross-sectional study of 186 Chinese, Japanese, Korean, and Southeast Asian (e.g., Laotians, Cambodian, and Vietnamese) people, Lee and Law (2001) studied, among other factors, the perceptions of the severity of the problem and the perceived relationship between victim and perpetrator. Forty percent of Japanese and Southeast Asian respondents indicated violence against women as being severe with 83.8% of Southeast Asians feeling uninformed. Outstanding in this study was that 83.8% perceived feeling shamed and frightened, which limited them from getting help and healing. Family members did not appear to have any significant participation in sexual violence, except for spouses. Frías and Angel (2012) looked at Mexican women in Mexico, Mexican-born women living in the United States, and Mexican Americans in

the U.S., and found that Mexican-born women in the United States are less likely to suffer partner violence, contrary to the stereotype that Mexican machismo was transferred to the United States with Mexicans as they crossed the borders. According to Frías and Angel (2012), native born Mexican Americans have the largest incidence of violence against women with 32.7% of women experiencing violence, compared with 11.5% of those living in Mexico, and 20.0% of Mexicans born living in the U.S. Illiterate women and those with very little primary education in Mexico have the lowest levels of victimization. Femicide and violence against Mexican-born women living in the U.S. does not appear to be affected by education, and for every year women in this group are in the United States, the risk of victimization increases by 12.0% for each individual (Frías & Angel, 2012) .

In Ciudad Juárez and Chihuahua, Mexico, many women have been reported to have been abducted, sexually tortured, mutilated, murdered, or have just disappeared with no explanation (Ensalaco, 2006). The problem of femicide occurred from 1993 to present and approximately 875 young women have been slaughtered (Cepeda & Nowotny, 2014). Nineteen-ninety-three highlighted the beginning of the slaughter of women and of what was thought to be gender based violence in Juárez. This is still a major concern of the community. Failure by Mexican authorities to prevent, investigate the incidents, and punish the assailants prompted women to rally against this gender based violence (Ensalaco, 2006, p. 417). Corruption in the Mexican government is presumed to be the primary reason the murders have not been solved (Wilson, 2014).

Nonetheless, the struggle for human rights for women is seen throughout history in many ethnicities (Ensalaco, 2006).

Few studies have quantified the association of race, ethnicity, and place of origin with the risk for death from IPV because often the relationship between the perpetrator and the decedent is undocumented in mortality databases” (Azziz-Baumgartner, McKeown, Melvin, Dang, & Reed, 2011). Many researchers believe gender is the common factor (Wilson, 2014). “Gender is a system of inequality that is created and recreated in daily experience ... social construction of categories created through a system of boundaries that delineate female and male, feminine and masculine (Cepeda & Nowotny, 2014).” Gender inequity can catastrophically affect social, economic, cultural, and political factors that cause problems throughout the world (Ensalaco, 2006).

In Israel, intimate femicide has been studied by Sela-Shayovitz (2010), and others showed that from 1995–2007, native born Israelis (i.e., Jews and Arabs) had a low incidence of violence and femicide. Immigrants to Israel of Ethiopian background have shown an incidence of violence and femicide 21% higher in proportion to their total numbers, and those of Russian background have shown an incidence of 14.2%. Ethiopians presented an exceptional case because the rate of suicide after femicide was twice as great as of that in other groups. Immigrants from the former Soviet Union committed femicide under the influence of alcohol.

Jyoti Singh Pandey, a 23-year-old woman was gang raped in December 2012 and died in a Singapore hospital as the result of injuries caused by the rape. This heinous act led to street marches and protests. Since then, rape has been publicized by the Indian



police (Singh & Mullen, 2014), but incidents of violence against women and girls have not declined. Research on violence and femicide in India is scant. Nonetheless, since 2000, articles have appeared decrying the origins of violence against women dating historically to the Muslim and Hindu practice of female child marriages and to Sati, the custom of burning alive the wife of a dying man (Mani, 2005). While both customs were outlawed under British rule in India and by the Indian Republic, the denigration of women is an everyday occurrence as is seen, for example, in the infanticide of girls under the disguise of population control (Mani, 2005). Patel (1989), in research on domestic violence, pointed out that 1.2 million girls were killed as infants and separately, 1.8 million were killed before they turned six years old. In the same homes as girls were being killed, women were killed as well. The femicide of women in India includes forced acid and alcohol ingestion, starvation, beatings, drowning, and wrapping girls in wet blankets to induce pneumonia. Sharma (2005) gives specific data using a survey of autopsies: 33.6% deaths due to burning, 22.2% due to poisoning, and 5.5% due to hanging, drowning, use of weapons, or jumping from heights. When dowries stopped the murder attempts of the wife began. Burning of girls and wives were the more common types of violence committed. Several women (100,000) were killed in this manner by contracted killers. Sixty-three percent of dowry deaths occurred in the first three years of marriage (Sharma, 2005). Rape was not uncommon for girls sixteen to twenty years of age. Sixty-seven percent of the victims were from sixteen to thirty years of age. Sharma (2005) pointed out that dowry deaths occurred more often in the wealthier parts of India,

such as the Punjab. According to Sharma (2005) greed and ancestral cultural standards granting superiority to males were perceived as the cause for the dowry killings.

Wife beating was common internationally, with Kenya, Uganda, and Tanzania having 42% of women suffering physical abuse in their homes (Sharma, 2005). In China, Sharma (2005) stated that 57% of women suffered wife battering. *The Lancet* (Yee, 2013) reported that doctors and nurses were not trained to identify clues of sexual abuse and violence in Mumbai, India, because it was not considered a public health issue but, rather, a private affair. If a woman was abused, medical personnel thought it was the victim's fault. Often doctors did not investigate or treat women and test them for HIV or other infections for fear of repercussions from families.

Pakistan appeared to show a similar pattern. Secrecy of incidents of violence against women was prevalent and women were very limited in their ability or willingness to seek medical, psychological, and legal help (Zakar, Zakar, & Kramer, 2013; Baker, 2013; Baker-Pitts, 2014; Andersson, Cockcroft, Ansari, Omer, Ansari, Khan, & Chaudhry, 2010). Not only were they limited by their inability to escape femicide and violence but were blocked by a social and legal structure that shuns divorce and promotes the subservience of women to the religious male authority in the community and in the home (Zakar, Zakar, & Kramer, 2013). Pakistani women were reported as using emotional coping strategies, such as pleading, denying the problem, using religion, and placating the husband. Researchers alleviated interviewee's anxiety and suspicion while asking questions about sexual abuse and violence by using a dummy questionnaire to ask about women's medical health. These procedures explained how researchers could

penetrate an extremely closed culture surrounded by secrecy and mistrust. According to Zakar, Zakar, and Kramer, (2012), women used emotion-based strategies to avoid contact with their husbands in order not to incite their anger. The women also became more involved in religious practices avoid brutality and justified perpetrator's actions by accepting such actions as the common lot of humanity. Another strategy used by these women was covert problem solving methods, such as using support from family and neighbors to combat the problem of IPV. This technique was not always a reliable form of support. Zakar et al. (2012), posited women in this sample did not seek help from professionals because they had found them ineffective, nor would they utilize shelters because of societal ostracism. The same scenario is repeated time and again. One interviewee in the study shared that she continued to reconcile with her husband because of his promises of repentance. Finally, however, the beatings that she and her son endured convinced her to finalize her departure from the relationship (Zakar et al., 2012).

According to Karmaliani et al. (2012) violence is systemic in society against both men, women, and displaced children. They advocated interventions of health-based microfinance and family based models (Karmaliani et al., 2012). When Pakistani men were interviewed, they helped explain why femicide and violence were prevalent against women. Pakistani men justified IPV when women did not adjust to their construct of an ideal wife promoted by their religion and culture (i.e. "docile bodies," subject to control, discipline and violent punishment; Zakar et al., 2013).

Much of the statistics on femicide come from organizations proactively creating public awareness regarding femicide and violence. One of these is the Small Arms

Survey (2011), drawing on the disaggregated data on femicide produced for the *Global Burden of Armed Violence 2011* (Alvazzi del Frate, 2011). According to Alvazzi del Frate (2011), femicide is higher in countries and territories affected by high or very high overall homicide rates. With a rate of 12 per 100,000 people, El Salvador is the country with the highest femicide rate, followed by Jamaica (10.9), Guatemala (9.7), and South Africa (9.6).

Mathews et al. (2008) pointed out that there is not enough information on developing nations about violence against women and femicide. Drawing from the first South African Survey of 1999 on femicide, the authors looked a cross-sectional mortuary-based national retrospective study of female homicide victims over 13 years at a medical legal laboratory (MLL) between January 1, 1999, and December 31, 1999. They found that perpetrators of intimate femicide–suicide were more likely to be of white or Indian backgrounds than of African racial background and least likely to be of mixed race; more likely to be younger; more likely to be employed; and more likely to be working in the security industry (police, army or as a guard) than a blue-collar worker. They were also more likely to own a legal gun (Mathews et al., 2008). The Medical Research Council (2004) found that the female homicide rate was 8.8 per 100 000 women aged fourteen years and older. In North Carolina, the reported a rate was 3.5 per 100,000 women aged fifteen years and older (Moracco, Runyan, & Butts, 2003).

In sub-Saharan Africa, eighteen countries were studied. It was found that the justification of women for IPV is similar to those given in other cultures where women who accept the cultural definitions and cultural allowances for IPV are usually more

abused, often endangering their lives in many ways, including possible infection with HIV-AIDS (Uthman, Lawoko, & Moradi, 2010). The more polygamy existed in the country, the more women tended to justify IPV. With greater literacy and greater gross domestic product, among other variables, the justification reduced (Uthman et al., 2010). In South Africa, based on laws penalizing the abuse of women, between April 2006 and March 2007, of the 52,617 rape reports, only 7% were prosecuted successfully. Mogale, Burns, and Richter (2012) stressed that the failure of the courts to prosecute these cases in a manner that would achieve conviction was limiting the laws in place to act as deterrents or punishment to prevent femicide and violence against women. According to Uthman et al., (2010) and Mogale et.al, (2012) unfair biases were found against the victim when convicting and sentencing cases of violence against women. In summary, with slight variations, femicide and violence and the targets' reaction to their victimization appear to be similar across cultures. Some cultures, or nations, have more data to prove or disprove patterns and idiosyncrasies in victimization, femicide, and in the inability of the target to get out of the situation and start anew. This does not disprove that femicide is a worldwide epidemic that needs to be studied and treated everywhere, starting within our own communities and nation.

### ***Children Who Witness Intimate Partner Violence***

Whitfield, Anda, Dube, and Felitti, (2003), posited “although women and men can be either victims of perpetrators of IPV, and are each reported to initiate the violence with equal frequency, reports have shown that women are more likely than men to suffer injuries as a victim, whereas men are more likely to be perpetrators of these injurious”

(p.168). According to Abramsky, Watts, Garcia-Moreno, Devries, Kiss, Ellsberg, Jansen, & Heise, (2011) violence committed against children in their early years are risk factors for IPV. Children who witness intimate partner violence or femicide may also be negatively affected by IP aggressive behavior. Some children suffer from depression, Post Traumatic Syndrome, low self-esteem, and etc. (Abramsky, Watts, Garcia-Moreno, Devries, Kiss, Ellsberg, Jansen, & Heise, 2011). Wood and Sommers (2011) posited that ten million children in the United States witness intimate partner violence annually. Looking at gender differences, on how children handle social conflicts after witnessing intimate partner violence, Woods and Sommers (2011) found male and female children displayed more aggression in handling conflict than children who had not witnessed IPV; however, they found male children exhibited more violent behavior in conflict than female children.

### ***Society's Acceptance and Denial of Violence***

The single best prevalent explanation for perpetrators committing acts of violence against domestic partners is the feeling of power or control (Antunes-Alves & De Stefano, 2014). Unfortunately, Antunes-Alves and De Stefano (2014) found that violence for many women occurred on a continuous basis for at least ten years, as the women may be acquainted, interact, or live with their perpetrators. In many cases, society accepts as truth that women are to blame for their situations (Antunes-Alves & De Stefano, 2014), under the common belief that perpetrators were provoked through women's behavior—by women's inability to be subservient or by infidelity. "They asked for it" is a statement assumed by much of society and even attributed to women who have been raped (Watts

& Zimmerman, 2002). Some social perception literature on sexual violence beliefs are grouped together as “rape myth acceptance” (RMA; Megías et al., 2011 p. 913).

Stereotypical ideas of violence against women and femicide persist, such as the victim deserved the assault, there were false accusations permitted against the perpetrator, rape is not violence, there is no pain with rape, women want to be raped, and they enjoy rape (Megías, et al., p. 913). Society is terribly misinformed about rape committed against women. According to Slattery (2006), in 1990, Clayton B. Williams, a candidate for governor of Texas, commented to a group of reporters that “bad weather is sort of like rape: As long as it’s inevitable, you might as well lie back and enjoy it (p.262).” For the 2012 elections, one man running for Congress made an ignorant and shocking statement about rape. Todd Akins, a United States Representative, was asked by a St. Louis television station about his beliefs about abortion resulting from cases of rape.

Representative Akins responded by stating, “It seems to be, first of all, from what I understand from doctors, it’s really rare. If it’s a legitimate rape, the female body has ways to try to shut the whole thing down (Gentilviso, 2012).” Many people were infuriated by such inexcusable ignorance and this resulted in an outpouring of disbelief and rage from both female and male supporters. Rape is defined as a sexual assault (Deming, Coven, Swan, & Billings, 2013); therefore, rape is a violent act (Slattery, 2006). According to Stein (2012), President Obama responded to the press and to the American people the following morning concerning Representative Akins’ statement. “Rape is rape, and the idea that we should be parsing and qualifying and slicing what

types of rape we are talking about doesn't make sense to the American people and certainly doesn't make sense to me (Stein, 2012).”

Men's subordination of women may not always be the explicit cause of violence; however, violence is implicitly indicated in these men's behavior. Watts and Zimmerman (2002) suggested, for example, that men may rape women they believe to be sexually provocative and may argue violence was justified as punishment due to women's sexual transgression. Unfortunately, women rarely challenge society's ideology of appropriate feminine behavior for fear of retaliation; therefore, women may become vulnerable to violence because they take no action against male perpetrators (Watts & Zimmerman, 2002). According to Dahlberg and Krug (2002), reducing violence successfully has been attributed to the involvement of individuals and the community to generate policies to prohibit violence against women.

As mentioned above, sexual assault is frequently an under-reported offense; therefore, it is difficult to calculate the number of occurrences (Megias et al., 2011). Deming et al., (2013) posited that statistics reveal the United States has a one in six rate for rape committed against women during their lifespan; “29% are between the ages of 18 to 24 when they are raped (p.465).” Rape is prevalent on college campuses (Deming et al., 2013; Tjaden & Thoeness, 2006). In 2007, one in five college women reported a sexual assault experience in a large research sample of two universities (Paul, Walsh, McCauley, Ruggiero, Resnick, & Kilpatrick, 2013). Although sexual acts of violence against women more often are depicted as involving strangers, the truth is that the majority of perpetrators in these acts are known to the women. This is called



acquaintance rape (Clay-Warner & Burt, 2005; Deming et al., 2013; Fisher, Cullen, & Daigle, 2005). Some rapes transpire by force while women are asleep, effected by alcohol or drugs. Although rape by a stranger is classified as a crime by legal statute, rape by intimate partner, husband, forced sex, or sexual intimidation in the workplace or school are generally accepted and socially ignored (Watts & Zimmerman, 2002). The Men Can Stop Rape Project (1987) found that “58,000 soldiers died in the Vietnam War. During that same period of time, 51,000 women were killed more commonly by men who supposedly loved them.” The Men's Rape Prevention Project originated in 1990 as an extension of the DC Men Against Rape Organization, which originated in 1987. The purpose of the Men's Rape Prevention Project (1990) was to redefine the characterization of men, prevent violent behaviors projected towards women by men, and educate the public on rape and the consequences of such acts.

### **Art as the Female Experience**

The female experience was not considered important until the 1970s. The Feminist Art Movement also fomented in the 1970s. The goal of this movement was to change art culture, which had been dominated by the Western perspective, through the addition of suppressed women's perspective. Today, art historians contemplate whether the Feminist Art Movement was really a movement or just another phase of the Avant-garde (Broude & Garrard, 2005). According to Broude and Garrard (2005), Lucy R. Lippard disputes emphatically that feminist art was “not a style of art nor a movement.” Lippard theorizes feminist art was a “value system” and a groundbreaking plan, a way of life. Lippard regards feminist art as a lifestyle and views feminist art in the same

retrospect as other non-styles such as Dada and Surrealism. Feminist artists have always believed content and experience were more important than the traditional supporters of Western European art who believed that form and style should be held in the highest regard. Feminist artist disregarded the visual arts' historical past. By the same token, the ideas of Modernism and Feminism were in conflict. Modernist theory embraced formal values where feminist theory did not (Broude & Garrard, 2005).

Feminist art assisted in the introduction of postmodernism to the United States (Withers, 1994). From feminist art came some principles of postmodernism, such as: (a) the knowledge that gender is constructed socially, (b) crafts, performance art, and video are not considered "high art," and (c) the cognizance behind the assertion of universality wherein lies a collection of specific perspectives, and prejudices, leading in turn to the indication of importance of pluralist diversity instead of complete oneness (Broude & Garrard, 2005). The experience of women was considered a new aesthetic category and a new theoretical experience. As a result, people today are not looking solely at the white heterosexual male experience in visual art. Works of art are being created about conditions of race, sexuality, gender, or class, and the viewer can respond to the work by identifying with their condition (Broude & Garrard, 2005).

*Womanhouse*, for example, was developed over a six-week period in 1971 by twenty-one students enrolled in the Feminist Art Program at the California Institute of the Arts and under the direction of Judy Chicago and Miriam Schapiro. This collaborative environment made a significant contribution to the feminist art scene. Chicago believed there was no framework that existed that provided knowledge of the

struggle for women; nor was there a proposed appropriate method for response or action to women's experience (Raven, 1972). *Womanhouse* was an environment that housed the artworks of women artists created from their experiences. The female experience was considered a new aesthetic category and a new theoretical experience. Now, people were not just looking at the white heterosexual male experience. According to Raven (1972), *Womanhouse* was considered the house of female reality where viewers could experience women's concerns, understanding, and facts of being women.

Violence against women and femicide are part of the female experience and signs of hatred and inequity. These signs are still displayed randomly by men in public institutions, college campuses, and neighborhoods. These dominations and oppressions are a part of the female experience. The use of violence is simply another indicator that the idea of social justice for all people is not as pervasive as some claim.

The *Womanhouse* venture was not alone in its mission. The Clothesline Project was developed by the Cape Cod Women's Agenda as a public installation to educate society, raise social conscious about violence against women, break the silence, and bear witness of violence against women (Clothesline Project, 2011; Goodnow, 2005). Images created on T-shirts by women survivors of violence or families of victims of gender-based violence, displayed messages of domestic violence in public spaces. According to Goodnow (2005), the clothesline is associated with women's responsibility for laundry chores and women as information was exchanged over backyard fences.

### *Voices of Feminist Artists on Violence against Women*

Although the female experience has been in existence since the beginning of history, its acceptance has received little notice. For example, Artemisia Gentileschi, considered the first feminist artist, suffered the violation of rape at the age of sixteen. Although the man who committed this act was exiled, his sentence was not enforced. The man returned to the city and caused Artemisia a great deal of humiliation. In her humiliation, Gentileschi rebelled against the treatment of women and the actions of the seventeenth century papal court by using her visual voice (Garrard, 1989). The artist created two paintings entitled *Judith Slaying Holofernes*. In these two works she depicted herself as Judith, along with her maidservant, violently overcoming Holofernes and severing his head from his body. These works are powerful in their reflection of anger towards men, something that had never been depicted previously. Gentileschi and her maiden are equipped with swords, staring Holofernus in the face and overpowering him in a close and intimate space depicting women's empowerment (Garrard, 1989).

There have been several women artists who took on the role of social justice activist/educator/researcher. Leslie Labowitz and Suzanne Lacy, as examples, sought to bring attention to violence against women by creating two public performance pieces in 1977 entitled *Record Companies Drag Their Feet* and *In Mourning and In Rage*. *Record Companies Drag Their Feet* was created by Labowitz as a performance piece to protest the glamorization of lyrics in pop music and art on record and album covers depicting violence against women. In December of 1977, Leslie Labowitz and Suzanne Lacy performed *In Mourning and In Rage*. It was created as an expression of disapproval

regarding mass media's sensationalism about the Hillside Strangler's violent murders of women. Labowitz and Lacy created an extraordinary theatrical event using unforgettable visual imagery. Powerful imagery of mourners observed feminist women wearing black robes as they emerged from a hearse and as they proceeded up to the Los Angeles City Hall steps to reveal facts on violence against women and femicide (Fichner-Ratus, 2010; Withers, 1994). The imagery of this piece changed the arbitrary characteristics credited to several initial art performances. "I am here for the rage of all women. I am here for women fighting back!" were proclamations that replaced the apathy of the voices in *Abolition's* (Withers, 1994, p.171).

Ana Mendieta created several performances on the subject of rape. However, the documented performance piece entitled *Untitled (Rape Scene)* is considered her most significant. This work was created in reference to the vicious rape and murder of Sara Jane Otten, a female student who attended the University of Iowa. In her work, Mendieta left her apartment door ajar for other students to enter the room. The documentation of this event was a single photograph. The photograph depicted Mendieta inside a disheveled and dim room, positioned with her trousers and underwear around her knees, blood on her lower extremities, and her torso on a table, looking as though she had been raped. This was a shocking work to all who entered the room. Mendieta later explained that this work was produced in response to violence against women, not just Sara Jane Otten (Manchester, 2009).

Nan Goldin's work entitled *Heart Shaped Bruise* was a precursor to several of her works dealing with abuse. In this work, Goldin depicted a female displaying a bruise

in the shape of a heart on her thigh. However, the heart shape is incomplete or broken. The shape of the bruise symbolized both the psychological and physical effects of the woman's situation or relationship. Although there was love, there were limitations on the relationship (Kaplan, 2001, p. 11). Disconnect in the shape of the heart represented a touch and the touch was a wound. Many understood this work as a relationship of abuse for women at the hands of men. Goldin's *One Month after Being Battered (1984)*, is a photograph depicting a horrifying image of Nan abused; it is from the view of abused women. The subject insinuates a stereotypical role of "female masochism. I love him because he is cruel to me" (Kaplan, 2001, p. 11).

### **Using Visual Culture to Start Dialogue**

The films *Strange Fruit* and *American History X* are two examples of visual culture used to start dialogue. *Strange Fruit* is based on the poem written by Abel Meerpool and recorded as a song by Billie Holiday. In *Strange Fruit*, the director examines lynching and its link to racism, police brutality, and hate crimes when genital mutilation and rape was committed against victims and crowds of adults and children cheered on the perpetrators. From the film *American History X*, the director shines light on a linkage between "racism, lynching, fear of rape, black male sexuality...and hegemonic curriculum practices that denigrate schooling and deaden our capacity to experience...moments" (Slattery, 2006). The content in these films moved me immensely. Without any explanation, the first time I heard the song *Strange Fruit*, I knew its meaning. While I sat trying to control the tears, overwhelming emotion,

sadness, fear, and pain swept over me while I listened to the horrifying words of the song. My experience was the same when I watched the film *American History X*.

Violence is still perpetrated randomly in many institutions, neighborhoods, and countries. Wherever the use of violence against women and femicide occurs, it is another indicator that the idea of social justice for all people is not as pervasive as some claim. As scholars, it is our job to provoke examinations of curriculum and of uncomfortable truths regardless of the consequences. Our curricula should encourage growth in children as well as establish and promote change. My dissertation is one step in the direction of working towards social justice for women.

## **CHAPTER III**

### **METHODOLOGY**

This chapter consists of three sections. In the first section, I have provided information on autoethnography and arts-based research. In the second section, I have discussed my construction of my visual autoethnography, “Spoiled and Unspoiled,” art installation on violence against women and femicide. In the third section, I have discussed procedure, and in the fourth section I have discussed data analysis process. In all four sections, I discussed the procedures and protocol for my study on violence against women and femicide.

#### **Methods**

##### ***Autoethnography and Arts-Based Inquiry***

Autoethnography is a research technique used by researchers to understand cultural phenomenon through their personal experience. According to Ellis, Adams, and Bochner (2011) this type of research has challenged official practices of executing and handling research with political and social justice in mind. Researchers have practiced principles of autobiography and ethnography to prepare and write autoethnography. Autobiography records researchers’ past experiences. These past experiences are not necessarily recorded for publication purposes but are constructed in retrospect or through memory as the researcher's recorded cultural experiences. Autoethnographers, as researchers, record their personal, cultural experiences and interpret the meaning of these experiences (Ellis, Adams, & Bochner, 2011).



Autoethnography became a prevalent method because theorists wished to reform social science. In doing so, they reconsidered the objectives of social inquiry during the postmodernism period (Ellis et al., 2011). Ellis et al. (2011) postulated that theorists understood autoethnography contained multiple parts useful in identifying significant experiences that conveyed ethics and principles. This method enhanced peoples' understanding of themselves and others who had experienced similar phenomena. Understanding the value of autoethnography has given us a larger view of the world, while avoiding the trap of defining what research results were significant and of value (Ellis et al., 2011).

In my dissertation, the tools I used to collect data and display findings included both artistic and qualitative methods. In fact, my dissertation has confirmed Finley's statement that "Critical arts-based inquiry situates the artist-as-researcher (researcher-as-artist) in the new research paradigm of qualitative practitioners committed to democratic, ethical, and just research methodologies (2011, p.235)." Thus, as an autoethnographer, I became the artist-as-researcher, reflecting on my experiences to create my works of art and then sharing those works with others while, at the same time, observing their reactions. I also observed gallery attendees to record reactions and responses of their experiences as they analyzed artwork in the exhibition.

### ***"Spoiled and Unspoiled" A Visual Autoethnography Installation***

The *Spoiled and Unspoiled* installation were created as a part of my research. This exhibition consisted of eight works of art created to reflect violence against women and femicide. These works of art were exhibited in an art installation at an educational

exhibition space, Wright Gallery at Texas A&M University. Documentation was recorded from construction of my experience and the understanding and knowledge I gained about violence against women and femicide and the observation of twelve participants and their experiences viewing the art. Socially engaged arts-based curriculum and research is how the works of art in my dissertation confronted the issues of violence against women and femicide. The art installation, *Spoiled and Unspoiled*, was the final manifestation of my research in violence against women and femicide. The art exhibition objectively typified the process and outcomes of my autoethnography.

The installation addressed violence against women and femicide as well as gender social constructs through arts-based research using a combination of visual methodologies. I drew from philosophy of contemporary art, autoethnography, performance and visual autoethnography, feminist theories, and arts-based inquiry to theorize the methodologies. My dissertation consists of a combination of my autoethnography, literature review, participant observation, and visual autoethnography, plus curriculum on violence against women and femicide. I focused on the psychological and physical state of myself and other victims as we endured present and past assaults. These images of visual culture were created from my research using a personal collection of photography studies to create paintings, pastels, and mixed media works of art, to reveal representations of various events and circumstances which were inter-connected and influenced people's lives. The multimedia artworks allowed participants to explore and characterize tragic events through mood, emotion, dramatic lighting, and ambiguous space, while using the human figure as a vehicle to emphasize destruction, oppression,

violence, and, finally, empowerment. These images were indications of gender control situations and addressed society's views of violence against women and femicide. My arts-based research allowed me to use visual culture to pictorially expose my own physical and psychological state as well as the physical and psychological states of other victims; it also showed some alternative ways victims used to avoid conflict in violent situations, as well as visually depict the destruction of violence—and the final empowerment of women as they moved from violence. My installation depicted my reality and the reality of women who have been victims of violence or femicide and the themes and concepts that can elicit contemplated responses and complicated conversation from the viewer. The works of art in my installation ignited reflections of experiences in the spectator's life or the lives of people around them.

A pamphlet was provided for all attendees of the exhibition. The purpose of the pamphlet was to give warning to the content of the exhibition to allow the participants to decide whether or not to view the exhibit. The pamphlet's content comprised of information on violence against women and femicide which included statistics on sexual assault on college campuses and female homicide by intimate partner in the United States of America. The pamphlet also included my artist statement, photography on some artworks in the exhibition and informational content on the reasons for development of the works of art. Located on the back of the pamphlet was additional information for assistance for victims of violence if needed (See Appendix C).

This dissertation also contains a sample curriculum which was resulting from my literature review, my experience as a victim of violence and my experience as an

educator, and artist. The curriculum amalgamates the information on violence against women and femicide, art history, and studio exploration in order to combat this inhuman action.

### ***Materials and Processes***

There were several different media and processes used to create this visual art exhibition. To create works of art, I used oil paints, pastels, birch boards, canvases, and Willis Sandpaper. Additional supplies included mirrors, crime scene tape, chess boards and chess pieces, and films or PowerPoints on violence against women and femicide. A journal was kept during the creation of the works of art.

Pastel painting, oil painting, and mixed media are different art processes. Prior to creating my works of art, I researched and described my experiences and the experiences of other women who had endured violent episodes. Writing descriptive words also helped me to decide the content of my works of art. While working through the written process, I also made a decision on the size of the works of art. It is my belief that the severity of this problem warranted large works of art, as though they were billboards on the subject. Part of my process also entailed working from models as references. I photographed several models placed in different scenarios in varied settings. Over millennia, it has not been unusual for artists to use references to create art. I used cropping to emphasis or reveal specific critical physical and psychological information depicted in the art. I did this by using distortion, exaggeration, or by highlighting specific emotions.

Prior to beginning my pastel paintings, I made the decision to use Wallis sandpaper for the large pastels and Canson for the small pastel. I used a variety of papers, which performed differently when used with wet mediums. Thus, when I considered the idea of applying an acrylic underpainting to my composition, I decided to forego that process, primarily because acrylic paint easily could cause the pastel to not adhere as well to the Wallis Sandpaper surface.

First, I blocked in the large shape from dark to light, working first with Nu Pastel (i.e., hard pastels). Then, I applied Rembrandt pastels, considered medium to hard; and Sennelier pastels and Schmincke pastels, considered soft pastels, on top of the hard pastels. The second layer of pastel covered the whole surface and established the primacy of dark bold values. Then, I added, light, midgrade, and half tones to the composition. I repeated the process in several layers of soft pastels before I finished each piece.

The compositional and content discovery process in my oil paintings and mixed media works is similar to my pastel painting, so I need only mention that I used gesso to prime my birch plywood panels in preparation for my paintings. I applied several layers of white gesso and sanded between each application of gesso in order to ensure a smooth surface. The finely primed ground served two purposes for the creation my art works, to prevent excessive use of paint and to provide a ground that enhanced surface coverage.

After the preparation process of the boards for my oil paintings, I drew my compositions and began an underpainting in monochromatic layers of acrylic paint. I used black, white, grays, and phthalocyanine blue. I applied these colors from dark to

light. The underpainting supported the gesso ground and allowed me to construct the composition in acrylic paint prior to completing the composition in oil paints.

The mixed medium works “*Red Queen*” and “*Do Not Cross II*” were created differently. For the artwork called “*Red Queen*,” I used an enlarged chess board with a cloth surface and plastic chess pieces. I painted representations of female faces on the black queen and used marker to write the names and ages of women murdered in 2011, 2012, and 2013 in the state of Texas. “*Do Not Cross I*” consisted of large constructed handheld mirrors that were painted with acrylic paint and entailed images of six women. “*Do Not Cross II*” also was mixed media. This work was created with police crime scene tape in the shape of a female victim lying on the floor. Documentaries focused on violence against women were streamed for the gallery attendees to view on a television.

### ***Artifacts***

Five artifacts were produced through my dissertation. These artifacts included: (a) the Visual Art Stimuli: Art Installation exhibition, *Spoiled and Unspoiled*; (b) a journal used to record additional details concerning the preparation of the art works; (c) a second journal used to record the observations of the participants; (d) pamphlet describing the exhibition; (e) artwork for the exhibit; and (f) a curriculum design and educational experience on violence against women and femicide for college students.

## **Procedure**

### ***Overview***

My dissertation in total has combined a literature review, autoethnography, arts-based inquiry, and photography as tools to analyze participants’ experiences in violence

against women and femicide. One focus of my dissertation was on the emotional and physical state of the researcher as I became a target of violence. A second focus of my dissertation was the process of overcoming the condition of victimization reflected in my works of art. My autoethnography, combined with a visual culture art installation, used narrative images to expose psychological states at different stages during my path to rebuild an inner self. The works of art were exhibited in the Wright Gallery in The Architecture Center, Langford Building A at Texas A&M University. I observed spectators' behaviors and interactions with the art and recorded my perception of their behavior at the exhibit.

### ***Participants***

Participants in my dissertation included me, as the researcher, and one group of twelve gallery spectators which consisted of seven females and five males. The spectators included both males and females who viewed my works of art at the Wright. The spectators' ages ranged from eighteen to eighty years of age, potentially including members from the Bryan and College Station, Texas, community.

### **Observation Protocol**

The questions that guided the observation included: (a) What was the gender of the participants? (b) Was there a dialogue between participants' while viewing the art? (c) Did participants look at works of art more than once? (d) Did participants touch or point to the art? (e) Did participants move closer to or farther from the art? (f) Did participants interact more with 2-dimensional or 3-dimensional art? and (g) Did participants photograph the works of art (see Appendix D)?

### ***Compensation***

There was no monetary compensation for participants. The data collected for my dissertation was not integrated into a course; therefore, participants were volunteers. Potential compensation for participants in this study included: (a) cultural and social awareness of violence against women, (b) current information on abuse as a social problem, and (c) dialogue for social change through visual culture by analyzing, interpreting, and experiencing a multimedia art installation.

### ***Confidentiality***

There was no consent forms needed for the research of my dissertation. A waiver of consent based on a pamphlet was created indicating what was going on at the exhibit. The data obtained for my dissertation was placed in secure storage. I created a personal journal to record additional details concerning the environment during the art installation, including: (a) ambiance, (b) emotion, and (c) gesture. All data was saved and stored on both a flash drive and CD for security purposes and placed in secured storage for three years. For increased protection and confidentiality, only the researcher and co-chairs of the dissertation committee have access to the data. The researcher provided anonymity by identifying each person observed with an alphabet letter. Informational data will be destroyed within two years after the research is completed. Participants' identities were withheld from any publications.

### **Data Analysis**

The analysis of the data followed a series of steps focusing on specific data streams. The first data stream involved the current literature review with a section on



visual cultural activism related to violence against women. The second data stream involved my art installation. Using autoethnography methods, I analyzed data collected from my observations of spectators at my art installation. Finally, I analyzed the salient themes resulting from my analysis of literature and autoethnography of my art installation. In doing so, I assessed my role in a personal experience of violence and gave a thorough description of the time leading up to that experience. In the discussion of research, I identified alternative ways I reconstructed experience from reality and the final empowerment for women from violence: My installation created the potential for igniting reflections of experiences in spectators' lives. Finally, I analyzed the observational information for participants' interactions and behaviors as they viewed and examined the installations.

### ***Limitations***

Although this study was subjective in nature as an autoethnography, this was not a limitation because the information provided was amalgamated with an autoethnography, literature review, visual autoethnography consisting of fourteen works of art shown in a public space, plus a recorded observation of participants viewing the visual autoethnography, whose reactions were observed based on specific questions as part of the protocol required by the Institutional Review Board (IRB). The limitations of this study consisted of the time constraint that hindered the completion of more works of art as a result of my experience and using a larger sample as further verification of the information. Another limitation was that the participants were aware of my observation; therefore, they may have altered their behavior.

### ***Trustworthiness***

Trustworthiness was shown as I used several different methods to conduct the research in order to validate my findings. I used my autoethnography, which was my experience with violence; I provided a literature review on violence against women and femicide, which provided a framework to understand research pertaining to my experience and the experiences of other women; and, I observed the experience of the participants as they viewed the visual autoethnography on violence against women and femicide. Questions for the protocol for the observation were created prior to the exhibition. The IRB committee approved the protocol.

## **CHAPTER IV**

### **FINDINGS**

This chapter discusses the results obtained from the analysis of my autoethnography, my visual autoethnography, and observations of participants at the visual autoethnography exhibition. Below, I started by analyzing my autoethnography and visual autoethnography of the works of art rendered as a result of my findings and research. Then, I analyzed and summarized my observational findings of the participants who attended the exhibition located at the Wright Gallery in Langford Architecture Center Building A at Texas A&M University in College Station, Texas, from October 13, 2014, to November 12, 2014.

#### **Literature Review Reflection**

As I reflected on my literature review, I found that no ethnicity or nationality is exempt from this pandemic of violence against women and femicide. I reviewed violence and femicide in various cultures, from Americans of various ethnicities, to Native Americans, to Mexicans, Asians from the Pacific Rim, African Indians, Pakistanis, Israelis, and South Africans. The thing several of these women from so many different cultures had in common was gender, and they suffered sexual and physical violence across cultures and ethnicities. Femicide is committed worldwide daily to women and girls of all cultures.

Prior to my research, my knowledge was limited on the subject of violence against women and femicide. Through my research I found women across cultures were

ashamed of their experience of violence at the hands of both familiar individuals and unknown assailants. Many abused women experienced fear. For example Ethiopian women that immigrated to Israel out of fear of retribution and continued abuse committed suicide. The Pakistani wives lived almost continuously prostrated on their prayer rugs, knowing that only in prayer would the perpetrator husband not inflict femicide or any kind of violence against them. Indian women sacrificed their daughters and then were sacrificed themselves for the sake of a dowry or fewer mouths to feed. All of these women and others lived in fear of the next attack, whether they rationalized it or not. Psychological violence was not less harmful than the physical. Pakistani women rationalized that the shouting and demeaning, justifying their husbands' actions as a consequence of the imperfections of humans.

Many women I researched lived in a world of shame and dark secrecy, maybe shared with only a few; and, in the case of several Indian women, they were not even acknowledged by medical personnel in hospitals. The medical recourse was often the last resort by friends or family. For other women around the world, the need for saving face in their family and community was far more important than their lives. African American women in the Deep South would not even consider going to their pastor for fear their concerns would not be kept private and for fear of retribution. Retribution also was a concern of medical personnel if they reported the crime and perpetrator; these professionals feared victims' husbands might attack them physically. It was a concern of women in all communities that their situation would worsen if they did not keep their husbands abuse a secret.

In some cultures improving the socio-economic status will reduce femicide and violence and in other cultures it would increase violence or femicide. Women who cohabited were more likely to be victims of violence and femicide compared to those with spouses. More violence appeared to occur because of customs or beliefs held by the culture, either patriarchal, religious, or due to displacement through migration or war. Men who commit violence against women partners also perpetrated femicide and violence against children of both sexes. Women who accepted the cultural norm of intimate partner violence were more likely to be the victims of femicide and violence. In many cultures, some women were blamed for provoking violence or femicide committed against them, and the women felt threatened by the legal system and the steps that they had to take to get their cases to the courts, where they were once again violated. Furthermore, legal system became the perpetrator in its inability to understand the plight and stressors of a woman victimized by violence and possible femicide. In the recent past (and even today), witnesses, lawyers, and judges did not understand the plight of the victim and could not believe what she had gone through because of their lack of training. In fact, legal proceedings have contributed to making women feel powerless, for even the law that is to protect them, turns against them. Two cases in the United States that gained national attention on the subject of violence against women were the rapes of two teenagers in different incidents. In one, District Judge Jeanine Howard, of Dallas County, sentenced a man to five years' probation and community service at a rape crisis center, after he openly admitted he raped a fourteen year old girl in a music practice room at Booker T. Washington High School in Dallas, Texas. Judge Howard made a public

statement to the Dallas Morning News saying “the girl was not the victim she claimed to be.” The judge's statement insinuated that the girl was licentious (WFAA Staff, 2014). Another case that received attention for inappropriate sentencing was the case of fourteen-year-old Cherice Moralez, who was raped by her teacher and committed suicide. Judge G. Todd Baugh sentenced Stacy Dean Rambold to 30 days in jail for the Moralez rape and commented that Moralez, the victim, looked “older than her chronological age (Ford, 2013).” In other countries, the corruption in the courts is such that perpetrators are exonerated, as is the case in South Africa, where out of 52,617 cases of rape only 7% were prosecuted.

In 1994 the Violence Against Women Act was passed by The United States Congress. With the passage of this Act, funding was provided for many domestic violence services in every state in the nation, and laws were passed on both the state and federal level to criminalize violence against women and femicide (Lehner & Allen, 2009). Even in the U.S., while women have more resources, the shadow of secrecy and of protecting and saving the reputation of the perpetrating intimate partner continues to create a barrier for women who need financial assistance and community support to terminate dangerous relationships. Although women in the U.S. may deal with less stress within our legal system than women in other countries and they are helped financially to relocate through the Government Justice Department, which administers grants for women through the Office of Violence Against Women (OVW) that was created in 1994 by Congressional legislation; nonetheless, I saw there were still cases that indicated the

stigma of victim blaming that plagued women remained prevalent even within the federal government and state court systems.

Even in the U.S., while women have more resources, the shadow of secrecy and of protecting and saving the reputation of the perpetrating intimate partner continues to create a barrier for women who need financial assistance and community support to terminate dangerous relationships. Women in the U.S. may deal with less stress within our legal system than women in other countries and are helped financially to relocate; nonetheless, I saw there were still cases that indicated the stigma of victim blaming that plagued women remained prevalent even within the federal and state court systems.

### **Visual Autoethnography Observations**

My observations took place from October 13 through November 12 at varied times in the Architecture Center Langford Building A's Wright Gallery at Texas A & M University in College Station, Texas. There were no titles provided for the artworks and no order posted by which to view the art; however, all of the participants started on the left side of the gallery for the viewing. The participants viewed the works of art uninterrupted without any directives. There was a pamphlet that referenced the subject matter of the artwork placed on a table and a waiver of content for observation. During my observations, only one participant proceeded to the table for a pamphlet concerning the exhibition. Some participants spent more time than others viewing the artworks.

### ***Participant A***

Participant A was a female who visited the Wright Gallery alone. There were no other participants in the gallery during her viewing; therefore, there was no dialogue between her and other participants. Participant A viewed “*Do Not Cross*” for four minutes. She looked down at each mirror then backed away to look at the reflection. She touched the crime scene tape and then backed away from the work to view it from afar. After she viewed the work from afar, she again moved closer to the work to look at the mirrors on the far left side. The participant stood there for a few seconds and moved to the series called “*Next*” and viewed it very slowly. She backed away from the paintings and stood for a few seconds. She moved forward, perhaps to analyze the art. She then viewed “*Next II*” very quickly. She did not touch the pieces. Participant A viewed the series “*Pandemonium*.” She moved closer to “*Pandemonium I*” and touched the piece and appeared shocked because the pastel rubbed onto her hand. Participant A moved on to “*Pandemonium II*” and backed away from the pastel painting to view it from afar. After she viewed *Pandemonium II*, Participant A looked in the mirror placed beside “*Pandemonium*.” Participant A stood in front of the mirror 15 seconds, and then she moved on to the mixed media piece called “*Red Queen*.” She walked around the board three times studying the drawings and names on the white queen and black queen. After studying the writing on the white queen a third time, she sobbed. After she composed herself, Participant A viewed the painting entitled “*Closed*.” She viewed the painting as she wiped her eyes, presumably still moved from viewing “*Red Queen*.” She did not back away from the art piece while she viewed it, nor did she touch the piece. Participant



A viewed “*Carol’s Web*” next. She did not back away or move forward to view the work. She did not touch the artwork. She viewed the art with no expression on her face, almost as though she was dazed. Participant A viewed “*Do Not Cross II*” also. She stood in front of the outlined shape of the body and watched the documentaries intensely for eight minutes. After viewing the documentaries, she walked to the back of the gallery and viewed the “*Liberty*” series. She moved closer and then moved farther away to view the artwork. After viewing the artwork from afar, Participant A looked in the mirror placed besides the painting. She then moved closer to the artwork to view the pieces individually. The last series of paintings Participant A viewed was “*Broken.*” She viewed the first painting extremely quickly and viewed the last two paintings of the series very slowly. Participant A viewed “*Do Not Cross*” a second time before leaving the Wright Gallery. The participant was most engaged with the “*Red Queen,*” which was three dimensional.

### ***Participant B***

Participant B was a male who attended the Wright Gallery alone. There were no additional participants in the gallery during his viewing; therefore, there was no dialogue between him and other participants. Participant B viewed “*Do Not Cross I*” for one minute. He did not back away as he viewed the artwork. The participant moved on to the series called “*Next.*” Participant B viewed the series very quickly and moved to the next series. He did not move forward or backward to view the pieces. He did not touch the pieces. Participant B viewed the series “*Pandemonium.*” He moved closer to “*Pandemonium I.*” He did not touch the artwork. Participant B moved on to

*"Pandemonium II"* and backed away from the pastel artwork to view it from afar. After viewing *Pandemonium*, Participant B did not look in the mirror placed beside it. Nor did he view the mixed media piece *"Red Queen."* Participant B viewed the painting entitled *"Closed."* He did not move closer or farther away to view the artwork. Participant B next viewed *"Carol's Web."* He did not back away nor move forward to view the work. He did not touch the artwork. Participant B did not view *"Do Not Cross II."* Participant B then viewed the *"Liberty"* series. He did not move closer but then moved farther away to view the artwork. Participant B did not look in the mirror placed besides the painting. The last series of paintings Participant B viewed was entitled *"Broken."* He viewed *"Broken I"* extremely quickly and viewed the last two parts of the series very slowly. Participant B did not view any works more than once.

### ***Participant C***

Participant C was a female; she entered the Wright Gallery alone. There were no other participants in the gallery during her viewing; therefore, there was no dialogue between her and other participants. Participant C viewed *"Do Not Cross"* for three minutes. She backed away to look at the reflection. After viewing the work from afar, participant C again moved closer to the work of art to look at the mirrors on the far left side. The participant stood there for a few seconds and moved the series called *"Next."* Participant C viewed *"Next I"* and *"Next II"* very slowly. She backed away from the paintings and stood for a few seconds. She moved forward to study the art. She did not touch the pieces. Participant C then viewed the series *"Pandemonium."* She moved closer to *"Pandemonium I"* but did not touch the artwork. Participant C moved on to

*“Pandemonium II.”* She walked away from the artwork to view it from afar. After she viewed *“Pandemonium,”* Participant C looked in the mirror placed beside *“Pandemonium II.”* She moved on to the mixed media piece called *“Red Queen.”* She studied the drawings and the names on the white queen and black queen. She picked up the white queen and read the names, then placed it back on the board in the same position she had found it. Participant C viewed the painting entitled *“Closed.”* She viewed the painting, moving slowly toward the artwork called *“Carol’s Web.”* She did not back away or move forward to view the work. She did not touch the artwork. Participant C also viewed *“Do Not Cross II.”* She stood in front of the outlined shape of the body and watched the documentaries for two minutes. After viewing the documentaries, she walked to the back of the gallery and viewed the *“Liberty”* series. She moved closer and then moved farther away to view the artwork; then, she looked in the mirror placed besides the painting. I observed her move further way to view the artwork again. The last series of paintings that Participant C viewed was entitled *“Broken.”* She viewed the paintings very slowly. I also saw her looking in the mirror placed beside *“Broken.”* Participant C was more engaged with the *“Red Queen,”* which was three dimensional.

#### ***Participant D***

Participant D was a female and she came to the Wright Gallery alone. There were no other participants in the gallery during her viewing; therefore, there was no dialogue between her and other participants. Participant D viewed *“Do Not Cross”* for three minutes. She looked at the reflections on the wall and then moved forward to look at the mirrors. Participant D stood there for a few seconds and moved on to the series called

*"Next."* Participant D viewed the series *"Next I and II"* very slowly. She moved closer and then away from the paintings. Participant D then viewed the series *"Pandemonium."* She moved closer to *"Pandemonium I"* and then farther away for viewing. Participant D moved on to *"Pandemonium II."* She backed away from the pastel to view it from afar. After viewing *"Pandemonium II,"* Participant D looked into the mirror placed beside *"Pandemonium II."* After standing in front of the mirror, she moved on to the mixed media piece called *"Red Queen."* Participant D bent over to view the information on the white queen. Next, Participant D viewed the painting entitled *"Closed."* She did not back away from the art piece to view the work, nor did she touch the piece. Participant D viewed *"Carol's Web"* next. She backed away and also moved forward to view the work. She did not touch the artwork. Participant D viewed *"Do Not Cross II."* She stood in front of the outlined shape of the body and watched the documentaries for four minutes. After viewing the documentaries, she viewed the series *"Liberty."* She moved closer and then moved farther away to view the artwork. Participant D looked in the mirror placed near the painting. The last series of paintings that Participant D viewed was *"Broken."* She viewed the series very slowly. She was also observed viewing the paintings in the mirror. Participant D was more engaged with the *"Red Queen,"* which was three dimensional.

### ***Participant E***

Participant E was a male and he attended the Wright Gallery alone. There were no other participants in the gallery during his viewing; therefore, there was no dialogue between him and other participants. Participant E viewed *"Do Not Cross."* He looked at

the reflection of “*Do Not Cross I.*” The participant stood there for a few seconds and moved on to the series called “*Next.*” Participant E viewed the series “*Next*” very quickly. He did not move forward or backward to view the pieces. He did not touch the pieces. Participant E viewed the series “*Pandemonium.*” He moved closer to “*Pandemonium I,*” touched the artwork, and looked at the pastel residue on his hand. Participant E moved on to “*Pandemonium II,*” backing away from the pastel to view it from afar. After viewing *Pandemonium II*, Participant E looked in the mirror placed beside “*Pandemonium II.*” After standing in front of the mirror, he moved on to the mixed media piece, “*Red Queen.*” He looked at it and moved quickly to the next work of art. Participant E viewed the paintings entitled “*Closed.*” and “*Carol’s Web*” from across the room. He did not back away from the art piece for viewing, nor did he touch the piece. Participant E did not view “*Do Not Cross II.*” He also did not view the series entitled “*Liberty*” or “*Broken.*” The participant was more engaged with the two-dimensional artwork.

### ***Participant F***

Participant F was a female, and she came to the Wright Gallery alone. There were no other gallery goers during her viewing; therefore, there was no dialogue between her and others. Participant F viewed “*Do Not Cross.*” She looked at the reflections, stood there for a few seconds, and moved to the series called “*Next.*” Participant F viewed the series “*Next*” very quickly and moved to the next series. She did not move forward or backward to view the pieces. She did not touch the pieces. Participant F viewed the series “*Pandemonium.*” She moved closer to “*Pandemonium I*” for viewing. Participant

F moved on to "*Pandemonium II*," backing away from the pastel to view it from afar. After viewing *Pandemonium II*, Participant F did not look in the mirror placed beside "*Pandemonium II*." She moved on to the mixed media piece called "*Red Queen*." She walked around the board once and leaned over and studied the drawings and names on the white queen and black queen. Participant F viewed the painting entitled "*Closed*." She did not back away from the art piece for viewing, nor did she touch the piece. Participant F viewed "*Carol's Web*" next. She did not back away or move forward to view the work. She did not touch the artwork. Participant F moved on to the series "*Do Not Cross II*." She stood in front of the outlined shape of the body and watched the documentaries for three minutes. After viewing the documentaries, she walked to the back of the gallery and looked at the "*Liberty*" series. She viewed the artwork from afar. Participant F did not look in the mirror placed besides the painting. The last series of paintings Participant F viewed was entitled "*Broken*." She viewed the first painting in the "*Broken*" series and stood in the mirror and viewed the paintings. After standing in the mirror she viewed the series very slowly. The participant was more engaged with the three-dimensional "*Red Queen*."

### ***Participant G***

Participant G was a male and he entered the Wright Gallery alone. There were no other participants in the gallery during his visit; therefore, there was no dialogue between him and other participants. Participant G viewed "*Do Not Cross*" first. He looked at each mirror, then backed away to look at the reflection. After viewing the work from afar, Participant G stood there for a few seconds and moved to the series called "*Next*."

Participant G viewed “*Next I*” very slowly and moved quickly by “*Next II*.” He did not move forward or backward to view the pieces. He did not touch the pieces. Participant G then viewed the series “*Pandemonium*.” He moved very close to “*Pandemonium I*,” but he did not touch the artwork. Participant G moved on to “*Pandemonium II*.” He backed away from the pastel to view it from afar. After viewing *Pandemonium II*, Participant G looked in the mirror placed beside “*Pandemonium*.” After standing in front of the mirror five seconds, he moved on to the mixed media piece called “*Red Queen*.” He viewed “*Red Queen*” very quickly and moved on to the painting entitled “*Closed*.” He did not back away from the art piece for viewing, nor did he touch the piece. Participant G viewed “*Carol’s Web*” next. He did not back away or move forward to view the work. Participant G did not view “*Do Not Cross II*.” He walked to the back of the gallery and viewed the “*Liberty*” series. He moved closer and then moved farther away to view the artwork. Participant G did not look in the mirror placed besides the painting. He reviewed the paintings and then moved closer to the artwork to view the pieces individually. Participant G did not view the last series of painting entitled “*Broken*.” The participant was more engaged with “*Pandemonium*,” which was two dimensional.

### ***Participant H***

Participant H was a woman who visited the gallery with a man, Participant I; therefore, there was dialogue between her and the other participant. Participant H viewed “*Do Not Cross*” for four minutes. She looked down at each mirror then backed away to look at the reflection. She called the male participant back to look at the images painted on the mirrors. He looked again quickly and continued to the next work of art.

Participant H stood at “*Do Not Cross*” for a few seconds more and moved to the series called “*Next*.” Participant H viewed “*Next I and II*,” slowly moving closer and further away from the series. Participant H continued to the series entitled “*Pandemonium I*.” She moved closer to and further away from the artwork. Participant H called her companion back to the artwork for viewing. There was conversation between the two participants. They were also observed pointing three times at the artwork. The male participant moved on, and Participant H moved to “*Pandemonium II*.” She backed away from the pastel to view it from afar. After she viewed “*Pandemonium II*,” Participant H looked in the mirror placed beside “*Pandemonium II*.” She stood at the mirror for five seconds and changed the placement of her body. Participant H then moved on to the mixed media piece called “*Red Queen*.” She walked to the front of the chessboard and studied the drawings and names on the white queen and black queen. She signaled for the male participant to return and she pointed to the text on the white chess piece and began a dialogue. After the dialogue, the male participant moved on to other pieces of artwork. Participant H continued scrutinizing the text as she kneeled to look closer. Participant H viewed the painting entitled “*Closed*,” briefly. She did not back away from the art piece for viewing, nor did she touch the piece. Participant H viewed “*Carol’s Web*” next. She backed away and moved forward to view the artwork. She did not touch the artwork. Participant H also viewed “*Do Not Cross II*.” She stood in front of the outlined shape of the body and watched the documentaries for two minutes. After viewing the documentaries she walked to the back of the gallery and viewed the “*Liberty*” series. She moved closer and further away to view the artwork. Participant H looked in the mirror



placed besides the painting. She then move on to the next work of art. The last series of paintings Participant H viewed was entitled “*Broken.*” She viewed the series very slowly but looked at the last painting longest. Participant H was more engaged with the “*Red Queen,*” which was three dimensional.

### ***Participant I***

Participant I was a man who visited the gallery with a woman, Participant H; therefore, there was dialogue between him and the other participant. Participant I viewed “*Do Not Cross*” quickly and moved to the series entitled “*Next.*” Participant I was called back by his companion to look at the images painted on the mirrors. He looked again quickly and continued on to the “*Next*” series. Participant I viewed “*Next I*” and “*Next II*” very quickly. Participant I continued to the series entitled “*Pandemonium.*” He moved closer to and further away from the artwork entitled “*Pandemonium I.*” There was dialogue between the two participants. Participant I was also observed pointing at the artwork. Participant I moved on to “*Pandemonium II.*” He backed away from the pastel to view it from afar. Participant I did not look in the mirror placed beside “*Pandemonium II.*” Participant I then moved quickly past the mixed media piece entitled “*Red Queen.*” Female Participant H signaled him to return, and she pointed to the text on the chess piece and began a dialogue. After the dialogue, male Participant I moved on to other pieces of artwork. Participant I viewed briefly the painting entitled “*Closed.*” He did not back away from the art piece for viewing, nor did he touch the piece. He viewed “*Carol’s Web*” next. He did not back away nor move forward to view the artwork. Participant I did not view “*Do Not Cross II.*” He viewed the “*Liberty*” series and moved

closer and further away while viewing the artwork. Participant I did not look in the mirror placed besides the painting. He moved on to the next work of art. The last series of paintings Participant I viewed was entitled “*Broken*”. He viewed the series quickly. Participant I was more engaged with the two-dimensional works of art.

### ***Participant J***

Participant J was a female and she arrived at the Wright Gallery alone. There were no other participants in the gallery during her viewing; therefore, no dialogue between her and other participants was observed. Participant J first viewed “*Do Not Cross*.” She looked down at each mirror then backed away to look at the reflection. She viewed the work from afar, and then moved closer to study the artwork. Participant J moved to the series called “*Next*.” Participant J viewed “*Next I and II*” very slowly and moved to the next series. She did not move forward or backward to view the pieces. She did not touch the pieces. Participant J then viewed the series “*Pandemonium*.” She moved closer to “*Pandemonium I*” and moved on to “*Pandemonium II*,” backing away from the pastel to view it from afar. After viewing “*Pandemonium II*,” Participant J looked in the mirror placed beside “*Pandemonium II*.” After standing in front of the mirror, she moved on to the mixed media piece called “*Red Queen*.” She walked around to the front of the board, bent over it and read the text on the white queen. She wiped her eyes and continued to the painting entitled “*Closed*.” She viewed the painting “*Closed*,” however, she did not back away from the art piece for viewing, nor did she touch the piece. Participant J viewed “*Carol’s Web*” quickly and moved to view “*Do Not Cross II*.” She stood in front of the outlined shape of the body and watched the documentaries

for ten minutes. She was careful not to step on the outline. I observed tears running down her cheeks. After she viewed partially information of the documentary films, she walked to the back of the gallery and viewed the “*Liberty*” series. After viewing the artwork from afar, Participant J looked in the mirror placed beside the series. She then moved closer to the artwork to view the pieces individually. The last series of paintings Participant J viewed was entitled “*Broken*.” She viewed the series very slowly. She stood in front of the mirror gazing at her reflection. The participant was more engaged with the “*Red Queen*” which was three dimensional.

### ***Participant K***

Participant K was a female. The participant visited the gallery with a male, Participant L; therefore, there was dialogue between her and another participant. Participant K viewed “*Do Not Cross*” for three minutes. She looked down at the mirrors and looked at the reflections from the front and side, then backed away to look at the reflection. Participant K stood there for a few seconds more and moved to the series called “*Next*.” Participant K viewed “*Next I*” and “*Next II*,” slowly moving closer and further away from the series. She did not look at them individually. Participant K continued to the series entitled “*Pandemonium I*.” She moved closer to and further away from the piece of art. Participant K called her male companion back to the artwork and there was dialogue. The male participant moved on and Participant K moved to “*Pandemonium II*.” She backed away from the pastel to view it from afar. After she viewed “*Pandemonium II*,” Participant K looked in the mirror placed beside “*Pandemonium II*.” She stood before the mirror for a few seconds and moved on to the

mixed media piece entitled "*Red Queen*." She walked to the front of the chessboard and scrutinized the text of names on the white queen. She called for the male participant to return and she pointed to the text on the chess piece and began a dialogue. After the dialogue, the male participant moved on to other pieces of art work. Participant K viewed to the painting entitled "*Closed*" quickly and viewed "*Carol's Web*" next. She backed away and moved forward to view the artwork. She did not touch the artwork. Participant K viewed "*Do Not Cross II*" also. She stood in front of the outlined shape of the body and watched the documentaries for four minutes. After viewing the documentaries, she walked to the back of the gallery and viewed the "*Liberty*" series. She moved closer and further away to view the artwork. Participant K looked in the mirror placed besides the painting. She then moved on to the next work of art. The last series of paintings Participant K viewed was "*Broken*." She viewed the first painting and moved to the mirror. She stood in front of the mirror and viewed the series. Participant K very slowly studied the "*Broken*" series individually after looking at the paintings in the mirror. Participant K was more engaged with the "*Red Queen*" which was three dimensional.

### ***Participant L***

Participant L was a male who visited the gallery with a female, Participant K; therefore, there was dialogue between him and another participant. Participant L viewed "*Do Not Cross*" quickly. He glanced at the mirrors and looked at the reflections and moved to the series entitled "*Next*." Participant L viewed the "*Next*" series quickly and continued to the series entitled "*Pandemonium I*." He moved closer to and further away from the artwork entitled "*Pandemonium I*." Participant K called Participant L back to

the artwork to view the art piece entitled “*Do Not Cross.*” Then Participant L moved on to “*Pandemonium II.*” He backed away from the pastel to view it from afar. After he viewed “*Pandemonium II,*” Participant L moved on to the mixed media piece called “*Red Queen.*” He walked to the front of the chessboard and studied the drawings and names on the white queen. Participant L moved on to the next work of art. Participant K called for Participant L to return to the piece entitled “*Red Queen,*” and she pointed to the text on the chess piece and began a dialogue. After the dialogue, the male Participant L moved on to “*Carol’s Web.*” He backed away and moved forward to view the artwork. Participant L then moved on to view the artwork entitled “*Closed.*” Participant L glanced at the painting “*Closed*” and continued viewing on to the next artwork. Participant L did not view “*Do Not Cross II.*” He walked to the back of the gallery and viewed the “*Liberty*” series. He moved further away to view the artwork. Participant L did not look in the mirror. The last series of paintings Participant L viewed was entitled “*Broken.*” He viewed the series very quickly, but looked at the last painting longer. He did not look in the mirror. Participant L was more engaged with the two-dimensional works.

## **Analysis of Observations**

### ***Participants***

There were 12 participants observed during my observational period of October 13<sup>th</sup> through November 12<sup>th</sup> 2014. The selections of participants were randomly based on who entered the gallery. There were seven female participants and five male participants. Each participant chose to view the exhibition. Through my observation all the

participants walked slowly while viewing at least one work of art. However, I discovered that the female participants walked slower around the gallery and scrutinized several of the works of art which were entitled “*Do Not Cross*,” “*Next*,” “*Red Queen*,” and “*Pandemonium*” more slowly than the male participants. For example, Participants A, C, D, F, J, and K slowed several times to examine works of art. Also, female participants exhibited more emotional expressions through their facial features and physical outbursts than the male participants. Female participants A and J exhibited tears. None of the male participants exhibited emotion. There was dialogue between the male and female participants who entered the exhibition together. The female participants initiated the conversations each time. The female participants used the sensory of touch as they view the works of art, while the male participants only viewed the work. In the case of Participant A, the act of touching the surface of the work and reacting to the material approximated the ways that some people touch bruises when they see them on victims of domestic violence. Several of the female participants pointed at the works of art as if to analyze specific parts more closely while the male participants viewed the work without gesturing. The female participants initiated conversation to the male participants with whom they entered the gallery simultaneously about the works of art, and the male participants dialogued when prompted. Although the female participants interacted with the two-dimensional works of art, they interacted most with the “*Red Queen*.” The artwork entitled “*Red Queen*” was a mixed media piece of art with the names of one-hundred-nineteen women and their ages written on a white queen in red. The female participants pointed at the text, bent over to look at the text, picked up the white queen

from the chessboard and laid it back on its side. Some of the male participants viewed “*Red Queen*” but did not interact with the artwork. None of the male participants interacted with “*Do Not Cross II*,” which was a mixed media three-dimensional piece; however, all the female participants interacted with the artwork entitled “*Do not Cross II*.” All the male participants viewed two-dimensional work. Some male participants did not view all the art works, whereas the female participants viewed all the works of art. Female Participant A reviewed an artwork more than once without being prompted to revisit the art. None of the male participants revisited the art pieces without being prompted by a female participant. None of the 12 participants photographed the art. Participant A asked me ie., the researcher did I know the artist and did I have any information on the works in the exhibition. I explained I was the artist and I directed her to the pamphlet located on the table. I asked if she had any more questions. Participant A inquired if the names on the white queen were significant in that they represented females killed by violence. As I responded “the names are the 119 women murdered in 2013 due to IPV she then began to sob. I asked if I could help her in any way. The participants response was “no”. Several couples walked to the door entrance of the gallery as though they were going to enter; however, the couples did not enter after the male accompanying the female conversed with her for a few seconds.

The male and female couple participants separated after viewing the first work of art. Through my perceptions the female participants appeared to analyze the works of art more thoroughly. I saw this through the longer lengths of time they stood in front of the works of art, their use of interaction with the art, the fact that several of them signaled to

another participant and dialogued with him when pointing toward the works of art. Furthermore, more female participants stopped to view the exhibition which was on the topic of violence against women and femicide during my observational period than male. I found this important because there was an extreme amount of press about the exhibition in the community and through the university about the exhibition and its renderings topics on violence against women and femicide.

From my perception, I found that the male participants that entered the exhibition with a female participant spent more time analyzing the artwork due to the fact that the female participant signaled for him to view the works of art again with dialogue upon re-viewing the art. Through my observation, the female participants that attended the exhibition with a male participant walked slower through the exhibition, even more slowly than the female participants that attended the exhibition alone. It was my perception that the female participants who attended with the male participants were very interested in the male participant understanding the artworks, however, the male participant's behaviors seem to imply indifference.

### **Curriculum on Violence against Women and Femicide as a Social Issue**

#### ***Introduction and Content***

This sample curriculum was developed for use in grade 12, higher education, communities' and societies' milieus. The objective of this curriculum is to use visual art and art history to a) educate twelfth graders, university undergraduate students and the public at large on the topic of violence against women and femicide using art as a component to create consciousness and stimulate dialogue on the subject and b) enable



others to become self-empowered in order to combat the issue through providing exposure to the subject of violence against women and femicide. This curriculum will empower students through creative visual expression, images and art historical concepts (using the artworks of other artists) to raise consciousness on the topics of violence against women and femicide. [This approach will provide the mechanisms for a) preparing high school students for the College Board Advanced Placement Art History Exam; b) providing course development frameworks for dual-credit courses in which high school students attend university-level art appreciation and art history courses; and c) generate the content for Art, Level IV courses Response/Evaluation criterion “(B) analyze a wide range of artworks to form conclusions about formal qualities, historical and cultural contexts, intents, and meanings.”]

### ***Women Combating Violence through Visual Culture***

The prevalence of violence against women and femicide worldwide has caused health organizations to conduct research. Images from visual culture have generated interest among community members concerning these two social issues. An example of visual culture depicting violence against women involves the incident with Raymell Mourice Rice, a professional football player, who was captured on video assaulting his wife.

Artists have historically addressed social, cultural, and political issues through advertisements, computer animations, fashion, and the fine arts. While focused on these issues, some contemporary artists may choose to use a variety of materials and mediums, such as mixed media to traditional (i.e., painting, drawing, photography etc.) to create

their works of art (Cornelius, Sherow, & Carpenter, 2010). Understanding images in visual culture helps students to understand divergent cultures, time periods, and disciplines (Danko-McGhee & Slutsky, 2007). Visual culture has made certain types of violence more visible, such as wars, gang fights, fighting amongst the public on television. Artists may choose to communicate social issues such as violence with a variety of mediums, and contents and with many different purposes.

Several Artists have explored violence against women and femicide. For example, Ana Mendieta's performance piece, "*Untitled Rape Scene*", was created in reference to the brutal rape and murder of Sara Jane Otten, a student who attended the University of Iowa. Mendieta's work aids society in understanding the traumatic and deadly experience of violence against women and femicide (Manchester, 2009). Nan Goldin's work, entitled "*Heart Shaped Bruise*", portrays the abuse she suffered while in a relationship with and intimate partner (Kaplan, 2011). The research for this dissertation highlights the effectiveness of works of art structured in narratives to evoke an internal response in the audience. The response intended in the research was for the audience to recognize the plight of women caused by violence and femicide. I hope that this curriculum could create awareness and generate dialogue for social change and enable personal empowerment.

In this curriculum you will find sample lessons on Artemisia Gentileschi, Performance Art, Collage Studio Explorative and Art-based Autoethnography that will help to increase knowledge—through an artistic framework—about violence against women and femicide.

## **Violence against Women and Femicide**

Violence against women and femicide is prevalent worldwide and violates female human rights. According to research (Wilson, 2014; World Health Organization, 2013), one out of every three women experience some form of violence. “Intimate partner violence is defined as physical, sexual, psychological, or emotional violence or a threat of violence perpetrated by a current or former partner (Azziz-Baumgartner, Mckeown, Melvin, Dang, & Reed, p. 1,078).” Rape is a common example of violence against women. Statistics reveal one out of six women in the United States is raped in their lifespan. Twenty-nine percent of women are raped between ages 18-24. Rape is prevalent on college campuses (Deming, Coven, Swan & Billings, 2013; Tjaden & Thoennes, 2006). In 2007, one in five college women reported a sexual assault (i.e., rape) in a large research sample of two universities (Paul et al., 2013). Women experience acquaintance rape more frequently than stranger rape. (Deming et al., 2013).

Renzetti (2008) notes that femicide is one of the primary causes of death for women between the ages of twenty and forty-nine in the United States. “Victims of domestic violence are at risk for femicide (Richards, Gillespie, & Richards, 2014).” Unfortunately, almost one-third of female homicide victims are killed by intimate partners (Federal Bureau of Investigation [FBI], 2001). Women of all races are affected by this problem (Renzetti, 2008). The natural reaction of women to femicide is fear over repercussions, including lowered social or economic status and increased violence from intimate partners (Lichtenstein & Johnson, 2014).

## **Curriculum and Activities**

The curriculum was created on the basis that violence against women and femicide is a violation of human rights. .

### ***What are some purposes of art?***

- Art can create cultural, social, political, and consciousness of the happenings in the world around us.
- Art can enable us to discover and acknowledge diversity in people by examining a variety of cultural traditions, religions, and life experiences.
- Art can be used to examine themes, context, content, across time and cultures.

### ***How can art be integrated with violence against women and femicide?***

- Art and violence against women and femicide can be linked by looking at culture in the history of art and in present day events.
- Art and violence against women can be integrated by showing different time periods to highlight the subject of violence and women.
- Violence against women and art can be linked by investigating previous religious events or ideology recorded in art history that show women persecuted and then comparing that time period to present day.

### ***What are the types of violence experienced by women, and what are some ways this violence is directed at the victim?***

- Women can experience physical and psychological violence.
  1. Students should investigate the ways in which women can experience physical and psychological violence.

- Women who are victims of violence can also be subject to financial control.

***What types of violent behaviors are exhibited by the perpetrators of violence?***

- Some types of violent behaviors exhibited by the perpetrators are: screaming, spitting, kicking, hitting, stomping, throwing acid, shooting the victim, coercion, etc.

***What types of behaviors are exhibited by society in reference to the victims' experiences?***

- Some types of behaviors exhibited by society with regard to the victim are: victim blaming, minimizing, and denial of the problem.

**Artemisia Gentileschi and the Baroque Era**

***Key Words***

Artemisia Gentileschi, Orazio Gentileschi, Agostino Tassi, Caravaggio

Baroque, Tenebrism

***History***

Artemisia Gentileschi (1593-1652) was the daughter of a well-known artist and painter by the name of Orazio Gentileschi. Her medium of choice was oil paint and was trained under the supervision of her father, Orazio Gentileschi (Fichner-Rathus, 2013). Later, Artemisia became an apprentice to Agostino Tassi, an artist hired by her father. Agostino Tassi raped Artemisia. Charges were brought against him and the verdict of guilt was handed down by the court; however, the sentencing was minimal. Agostino was sentenced to one year in prison but did not spend time in prison. Artemisia suffered both traumatic psychological and physiological effects from her rape. Some scholars

believe this tragic incident, along with her inequitable treatment as a female artist, is reflected in her work. She wrote “people have cheated me.” Ultimately, Artemisia insisted a patron use her work to commission a male painter for a work of art (Davies, Hofrichter, Jacobs, Roberts, & Simon, 2014).

As an artist, Artemisia Gentileschi was considered by some as the first feminist painter. She was the first woman accepted into the Accademia del Disegno School of Art. Her works are described as dramatic and impassioned (Fichner-Rathus, 2013). Artemisia’s art was created from biblical stories with female heroines. Examples of her works of arts portraying female empowerment include *Judith Decapitating Holofernes*, and *Judith and Her Maidservant with the Head of Holofernes*.

The Baroque period (1600-1750), like the Renaissance period (1400-1600) was considered an age of genesis. The name Baroque is said to have derived from the Portuguese word *barroco*, which means “irregular shaped pearl (Fichner-Rathus, p.389, 2013).” Some characteristics of art during this period, different from previous periods included, dramatic use of light, use of motion and space, creation of the spectacle or theatrical.

One famous artist during time period was Caravaggio. His work has been described as revolutionary and he was said to have numerous followers (Davies, Hofrichter, Jacobs, Roberts, & Simon, 2014). His work was characterized as stylistically new, including the introduction of naturalism and tenebrism. One unusual characteristic about his work was his use of ordinary people as models. He did not distort the figures as

in the Mannerism period nor did he idealize them as in the Renaissance period. The objective of this lesson is to allow students to respond to and evaluate content, context, historical culture and events, and formalism to explain the similarities, differences and relationships displayed in the artworks of Artemisia Gentileschi and Michelangelo Caravaggio. Explain why their ideologies may have differed.

***Questions for Discussion:***

How could the incident of rape, the treatment of Artemisia Gentileschi during the trial, treatment of women during the Baroque period and the treatment of women artist influence works of art? How does the treatment of Artemisia as a woman and as a victim of a violent crime compare to the treatment of women today? What is your experience after reviewing historical text and viewing = works of art by Artemisia Gentileschi.

***Interdisciplinary Connections: English or Language Arts and Art History***

The students should read information on the history of the Baroque period and write about their viewing experiences Artemisia's works of art.

***Materials Needed***

The materials needed for this project is visuals of Artemisia Gentileschi's paintings such as, *Judith Decapitating Holofernes*, *Judith and Her Maidservant with the Head of Holofernes*, *Judith Slaying Holofernes* and *Judith and her Maidservant* and visuals of Caravaggio's painting *Judith Beheading Holofernes*. The students will also need to provide paper for the project. The Web page for viewing works by Artemisia

Gentileschi is

[http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/Category:Judith\\_beheading\\_Holofernes\\_%28Naples%29\\_by\\_Artemisia\\_Gentileschi](http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/Category:Judith_beheading_Holofernes_%28Naples%29_by_Artemisia_Gentileschi)

The web page for Caravaggio's Judith Beheading Holofernes is

[https://images.search.yahoo.com/images/view;\\_ylt=AwrB8pY6ug1V7DQAVp.Jzbf;\\_ylu=X3oDMTIyaTg3dDhqBHNIYwNzcgR](https://images.search.yahoo.com/images/view;_ylt=AwrB8pY6ug1V7DQAVp.Jzbf;_ylu=X3oDMTIyaTg3dDhqBHNIYwNzcgR)

### ***Studio Exploration***

To understand the images and life of Artemisia Gentileschi, review history on the treatment of women from 1600-1750's, historical information on Artemisia Gentileschi and her works of art, and integrate this information into a map using images and text listing critical events of her life and the Baroque time period. Also, compare and contrast one of her works of art to that of Michelangelo de Merisi Caravaggio, the artist who introduced the new style called Baroque. Students will write an essay to indicate similarities, differences and relationship in how the artist expressed content, context, formalism in the art. Students will also create a visual map of the events of both artists' lives to examine similarities and differences that may have led to difference in their depiction.

### ***Evaluation***

The assessment is based on whether the students are able to respond to and evaluate several works of art through a compare and contrast essay and creating a visual



representation of a map on the events that may have led to the difference in the artists' works. The students will be evaluated on their ability to draw conclusions in reference to formalism, historical, context, cultural content while extrapolating the meaning of artworks. The students must mention at least five similarities and five differences.

### **Performance Art**

Leslie Labowitz and Suzanne Lacy created two public performance pieces in 1977 entitled *Record Companies Drag Their Feet* and *In Mourning and In Rage* (Withers, 1994) *Record Companies Drag Their Feet* was created by Labowitz as a performance piece to protest the glamorization of lyrics in pop music and art on record and album covers depicting violence against women. The performance piece was created as an expression of disapproval regarding mass media's reporting about the Hillside Strangler's violent murders of women (Withers, 1994).

Emma Sulkowicz, a Columbia University Visual Arts student, was raped her sophomore year of college by the same assailant who raped two other female students. After she and the other students reported the incidents, they were granted hearings and the perpetrator was found innocent of the crimes by the college review panelists. During her Time Magazine interviews, Sulkowicz speaks of her physical and psychological trauma, how the trauma affects her each day, and how she is taunted by her rapist who on campus (Gray, 2014). To protest the decision of the panelist, Emma Sulkowicz has vowed to carry her mattress around campus as a performance work of art until her alleged rapist is expelled or removed from campus (Kim, 2014). After witnessing her

Mattress Performance called “*Carry the Weight*”, students from several universities have joined the protest with Sulkowicz. The objective for this art project is to respond to and evaluate the historical, cultural, and contextual effects on performance art. Identify historical examples of performance art, and identify its impact in the art field. Develop a plan for a performance event. Create themes and scripts of dialogue geared toward social or cultural issues such as violence against women, and execute the performance in public.

### ***Questions for Discussion***

For the discussion, students investigate how laws, policies and procedures affect the victim. When are protests acceptable in the community? What type of policies would be feasible for combating violence against women and how can those polices be implemented? Why is education on victims’ rights important? What are different community expectations on violence against women and state or government expectations? What are the expectations of performance art? How can students arrange art performances? What subjects are acceptable for performance art and when is performance art necessary? Does performance art challenge the notion of activism?

### ***Interdisciplinary Connections: English or Language Arts and Theater Arts***

First, students should write a plan for conducting a performance art piece. Second, students should learn the content, expectations, and acquire history about the subject matter.

### ***Materials Needed***

The materials needed for this project are visuals of performances art pieces by Leslie Labowitz and Suzanne Lacy entitled “*Record Companies Drag Their Feet*” and “*In Mourning and In Rage*” and Emma Sulkowicz’s mattress performance, “*Carry the Weight*” should be viewed by participants. Websites for “*In Mourning and In Rage*” and “*Record Companies Drag Their Feet*” and by Leslie Labowitz and Suzanne Lacy is <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=idK02tPdYV0> and <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AiLb2XMfvdE>

### ***Studio Exploration***

The studio experience will be motivated by the work of artists such as, Leslie Labowitz, Suzanne Lacy and Emma Sulkociwz. The students will create a performance piece on violence against women and femicide. Students should create a plan of the content and themes of their performance piece individually or as a group. Students should then investigate what type of environment and costumes, if any, are needed to create the performance piece. Students will prepare any props and scenes needed for the performance piece. Finally, all students must locate and consider the proper space for viewing the performance piece. The students work will then be performed for public viewing.

### ***Evaluation***

The assessment is based on the students’ ability to integrate response and evaluation of performance art pieces in preparation for and execution of performance

(create costumes and props if needed; procure location of performance) and create themes and content on social issues and execute the performance art.

### **Autoethnography and Visual Autoethnography**

The information above informs the participants in the lessons on critical matters in society related to violence against women and femicide. This lesson is derived from my experience of violence against women. The lesson becomes personal for the participants as it requires them to investigate their lives on the subject of violence against women and femicide. Autoethnography is defined as research by the researcher on his or her experience. Visual autoethnography is categorized as an autoethnography using visuals to gain knowledge through research. My research as an autoethnographer required me to (a) review literature on violence against women and femicide, (b) create my autoethnography, and visual autoethnography, and (d) make meaning of or synthesis the information reviewed from my experience. At the end of this project, students should gain insight into questions such as; (a) What is an Autoethnography or a Visual Autoethnography? (b) How can social issues of violence in society be explored through an Autoethnography or a Visual Autoethnography?, and (c) How do visual artists use violence as a theme? The objective of this project is to allow students the opportunity to develop a visual awareness of and understanding of historical and cultural events, and personal experiences as foundations for creating an exhibition. The student must develop concepts, themes, and content, and combine personal experience of artworks while demonstrating the ability to use several art media to create the art.

### ***Questions for Discussion***

For discussion, students could investigate how violence is displayed in society through the following questions: (a) What is their experience with violence? (b) What is considered acceptable violence in society and worldwide? (c) Why is education on violence important? (d) What is relationship and difference between wars, gangs, and violence against women?; and (e) What is the harm caused by the violation of body boundaries, trust, safety, security, and psychological virginity inherent in every human being?

### ***Interdisciplinary Connections: English or Language Arts***

First, students should write an autoethnography, on an experience dealing with social justice and violence. Since students are from diverse backgrounds and different genders, it is better for them to choose what type of violence experience they will address.

### ***Materials Needed***

The students or community participants will make this decision based on their projects. Students may choose to access the works of artist Ana Mendieta as a resource (to also include her rape scene).

[https://images.search.yahoo.com/search/images;\\_ylt=A0LEVyCKShFV6l4AN9FXNy0A;\\_ylu=X3oDMTByMjB0aG5zBGNvbG8DY](https://images.search.yahoo.com/search/images;_ylt=A0LEVyCKShFV6l4AN9FXNy0A;_ylu=X3oDMTByMjB0aG5zBGNvbG8DY)

### ***Studio Exploration***

The studio experience will be motivated by the work of artists such as me and my installation *Spoiled and Unspoiled* accompanied by an autoethnography. Students will

create an art installation on violence and its consequences. For the first step students should prepare a list of ideas of themes, social and cultural events and that can be combined with life experiences. Step two consists of creating five planned, sketched narratives of the content themes, social context of their works of art. The underlying meanings and themes created in the works of art are important, so each student will be required to discuss their autoethnographic questions with the instructor for guidance and approval. During step three, students should investigate appropriate materials to be used to create the works of art. In step four, students would prepare the apparatus and grounds for the works of art as needed. The installation should be completed in any medium by the end of the semester, with specific deadlines for each work of art. Photos and illustrations can be used as references accompanied by a short two-page literature review on their topic. Students may wish to complete the installation as several collages, paintings, photographs, pastels, sculptures or a combination of these. For the fifth step, all students must locate and consider the proper space for viewing the installation; this includes the arrangement of the walls and lighting. The student work will then be exhibited for public viewing in the institution. Students will write a short two-page description of their experience and what they learned through their autoethnography and visual autoethnography.

### ***Evaluation***

The assessment of this project is based on the students' ability to demonstrate the development of ideas, themes, and content for artwork based on social, cultural, historical events and their personal life experiences. Students will also be evaluated on

completion of five narrative works in any medium, and the ability of the students to communicate their ideas through narrative autoethnography, visual autoethnography and process or materials, and to demonstrate sufficient knowledge to install the exhibition.

## CHAPTER V

### AUTOETHNOGRAPHY AND VISUAL AUTOETHNOGRAPHY

In Chapter V, I synthesized the information of my literature review, my autoethnography, and my visual autoethnography. I then summarized my observational perception findings on couple participants who attended the exhibition located at the Wright Gallery in Langford Architecture Center Building A at Texas A&M University in College Station, Texas.

#### **Autoethnography Reflections, Reconstruction, and Interpretations**

My work was not about race. My work has always been about the human condition. A composite by birth of different nationalities, I inherited not only the genes of my ancestors but also their cultures. My brown skin did not isolate me from other cultures or the experiences of women from other racial backgrounds; thus I was able to understand the common experience of victimization through violence that plagues women from all cultures.

In the summer of March of 2006, I sat through the court proceedings of a friend of the family who killed her husband in self- defense while he committed violence against her. The jury found her guilty, and after several hours of deliberation the jury announced they could not or would not agree on the sentencing. The judge sent them back several times and still the jury could not sentence my friend. Days later, the judge sentenced her to twenty years. The sentencing was devastating to friends and family and all who knew the circumstances.



As I reflected over my past experience with violence and the incident of a neighbor, I found that women of different nationalities can fall to prey a perpetrator of violence, and violence is more often committed by someone they know. Upon reconstruction of my experience I came to believe violence against women not limited to individual cultures. I believed violence against women and femicide occurred across cultures. My research verified that violence occurred in many cultures, including cultures in America, Mexico, Asia, Africa and the Middle East. As I conducted research, I found a common thread in gender and that women suffered sexual and physical violence across cultures and ethnicities. Also, I found femicide is committed worldwide daily to women and girls of many cultures in several countries.

Prior to my research, my knowledge was limited on the subject of violence against women and femicide. I was ashamed and afraid. I was convinced by my intimate partner not to notify the authorities, friends, and family, and the situation would get better. Through my research I found women across cultures were ashamed of their experience of violence at the hands of both familiar individuals and unknown assailants. I experienced fear when there was uncertainty in my circumstances and several women in my research also lived in fear of the next attack. I reflected and found that there was psychological and physical violence in my relationship and that both types of violence are harmful.

I believed that when women improved their socio-economic status, they were empowered. I found that in Hispanic and Mexican cultures that was not always the case. I was surprised to find that women who cohabited were more likely to be victims of

violence and femicide compared to those with spouses. It was my perception the couples that lived together had the option to leave at any time; therefore, there was no reason for violence.

I was provided for many domestic violence services in every state through the Violence Against Women. As a victim of violence, I reaped the benefits of this act. Throughout my state, I was provided with shelter until I was able to relocate from my previous environment. I was also provided with financial assistance upon relocation.

### ***Intimate Partner Violence Seen By Children***

Research shows that I, like many women, had a greater chance to end up in a violent relationship. On several occasions, I watched my father commit acts of violence against my mother. As we grew older, he committed violence against us, his daughters. Children who witness intimate partner violence or femicide may also be negatively affected by the aggressive behavior in violence against women. As I reflected and reconstructed my memory of past events, I realized as children and young adults, my sisters and I were terrified of my father. We were always on edge and slept very little on the weekend in fear that episodes of aggression would occur at any time. We often asked my mother why she stayed in the marriage with my father. Through my research and reconstruction of conversations with my mother, I now understand her reasons for staying with my father: (a) she feared she would not be able to provide for the needs of her daughters, (b) she was afraid of the repercussions of his violent behavior against her or us if she had ended the relationship, and (c) my father always apologized and begged for forgiveness and promised his behavior would change. He would curtail his aggressive

behavior for a short period of time, known in the literature as “the honeymoon period,” and, then, return to the same destructive behavior.

### *Self-Protective Strategies*

Powers and Simpson (2012) used sexual assault research to form a definition of self-protective behaviors using four typologies. The typologies included non-forceful verbal resistance; non-forceful physical resistance (e.g., fleeing the environment or hiding from the assailant to avoid physical injury, like the Pakistani women found in the literature); forceful verbal resistance (e.g., screaming or yelling to force emphasis on the perpetrator’s behavior); and forceful physical tactics (e.g., hitting, kicking, biting, and struggling).

My self-protective strategies to combat victimization included: (a) contemplating ways to neutralize the anger or conflict and (b) seeking help through the police department to defuse the situation. Powers and Simpson (2012) found that more women preferred to hide from violence instead of reporting the assault out of fear that involving police might escalate the abuse. I convinced myself that as long as my abuse was not physical it could be endured. Forceful tactics and non-forceful tactics used by victims while trying to combat their abusers have been used. Some non-forceful tactics consisted crying, hiding, fleeing, or appeasement. Non-forceful tactics do not require the victim to engage the abuser by threats or intimidation. The victim is always compliant. I realize now that I was an enabler. After the last incident of violence I experienced, I found the courage and the ability to take the risk of fleeing and reporting the person who committed violence against me.

Through my reflections, I remembered that my mother also used self-protective strategies to deal with her victimization. For example, she utilized community and religious support connections: (a) family, friends, and the minister would occasionally intervene during aggressive episodes; (b) there were immediate family interventions planned to combat the problem; (c) she constantly involved herself in religious activities and events through the church, (d) she was extremely careful in her responses during the incidents in order to never incite aggression, and (e) she gathered her children and left the environment.

### ***What is Empowerment?***

As I reconstructed my life, I understood that several things helped me to become empowered. According to Goodnow (2005), the reconstruction of the event, refusing denial as a coping mechanism, realizing where the blame lay, and separation from my volatile situation were stages of healing and empowerment. Separation is not necessarily an immediate process for victims of IPV. In fact, it has been documented that women may remove themselves from a relationship several times before actual separation is accomplished.

There were at least two honeymoon stages where my intimate partner begged to be forgiven. I accepted his apology both times and returned to the relationship. During the honeymoon stage, I was still researching different avenues of escape from my relationship. After the second incident of violence occurred, I decided to leave the relationship if one more incident occurred. I was physically and psychologically abused for a third time and left the relationship. I became aware that in order to have a safe and

secure life I would need to sever all ties, break all forms of communication, move to a new address and possibly location in the state, and ask for assistance through government services, such as the police department and women's shelters. Another means of support in my favor was the fact that I communicated with family and friends about the violence and they were supportive and encouraging.

One of the volatile characteristics demonstrated by perpetrators of intimate partner violence is coercion. Research shows that it is the purpose of an abusive intimate partner to separate his victim from family and friends. To avoid any more of this, I pressed charges against the perpetrator and followed through with the process. It is interesting to note that Jewkes' (2002) findings were also true in my situation: my education, income, and community roles played an important part in my empowerment. I was a faculty member at a community college and I had contacts and friends who came to my aid, and I also sought government assistance? In my case the police were not helpful; they did not contact me for three weeks after I pressed charges. If the perpetrator had not had the pattern of disappearing across the border into Mexico after his criminal activity, I could have been harmed during that three-week time period. By reconstructing my memory, I was able to see the empowerment I gained. This empowerment enabled me to provide protection for many other abused women, such as the young lady who was being kicked and severely abused in the street by her IP. I scared him by approaching him in the midst of his act of violence and ran him off as another neighbor called the police. Unfortunately, the young woman followed the typical pattern of abused women.

She denied to police that she had been attacked and was seen in his company the following day.

### ***A Changed Perception***

The process of my dissertation, art installation, and observation changed my perception in many ways. I think the most important thing I have learned is that my experience as a woman and a human being matters. I am not the other sex, or the second sex. I am a positive, productive contribution to this world. I found that while living in a volatile situation, I could not think clearly, or function at a norm capacity. I did not see my violent situation as creating these problems of chaos or confusion. My perception on violence against women and femicide changed. My research provided me with information that characterized and created an understanding of physical and psychological which produced a consciousness that will allow me to be observant and helpful in regards to situations with other women. Many times, as explained in my research, women blame themselves, family and friends blame women, and the community or society blame women. I waivered back and forth as to whether I was at fault, even though blaming myself did not seem right. The literature review validated my perception I was not at fault and it also helped me to understand the behaviors I used to try and stop the violence. Understanding these behaviors brought to light that many women used some form of protective strategies even though they lived in fear. Although I knew it was not my fault, there were other cultures where the women blamed themselves even though they tried to use their protective powers to remove any threat of violence. My perception changed as this dissertation has also helped me to better

understand the violent environment I lived in as a child and to better understand my mother as she tried to protect her daughters. Whereas, previously, I could not understand why my mother stayed with my father, I now understand, she believed as do other women in a violent situation, she needed to stay in order to keep her children safe.

As I created my installation, my perception why I was creating the installation also changed. For many years, my perception in regards to my offense was I would wake up over time and the incident would just be gone from my thoughts. I felt as though it would be like an old hat or an old shoe. I would notice, I would not think of it or focus on it at all; however, my thoughts of that incident never faded. In my head, I believed creating this exhibition was just for me to render my results, but in all actuality rendering the exhibition served as another purpose also. Creating this installation helped me to come to terms with my anger about the incident, the pain, the suffering, and embarrassment I endured, the time it takes to heal, views on the news on the topic, opinions of family, friends and society and the understanding of whom I had become. I still startle easily at loud noises and I am suspicious of people I pass in dim lit areas. The installation helped me reflect very deeply on when, where and how these behaviors occurred and how to put myself at ease. For instance, I now always park in well-lit areas. This alleviated that tension of the element of surprise by a perpetrator. My perception of the installation was it would just be another art exhibition, however I observed women crying as they viewed the art. This installation was more powerful than I thought. The images evoked overwhelming emotions for some attendees.

## Visual Autoethnography

One product of this experience was my artwork, in which I portrayed the pain and suffering of violence against women and femicide. For this dissertation, I developed artwork directly connected to attempting to create an awareness of violence against women and femicide. Through transforming the consciousness of the viewer to an inner reflection, it promoted understanding the experience of violence against women and femicide.

The installation I created consisted of seven works of art, depicting my experience and the experiences of women on whom violence has been perpetrated. All of these artworks were viewed by an audience that became participants in my research. I observed the participants three days a week during the month the exhibit was installed in the gallery space. Below are my visual autoethnography creations provided for my art exhibition. The artworks in this dissertation are organized by the placement the participants viewed the works upon entering the exhibit. I believe the organization of the information is important in understanding the results of my observations.

### ***“Do Not Cross”***

The first work of art in the series, entitled “*Do Not Cross*” (see Figure 1) consists of five mirrors painted with acrylic paint. The women in the mirrors hold their hands up and out as protection from the viewer, as if the viewer were in the process of hitting or stepping on the women. I believe that mirrors have been significant to women because society has dictated that women be aware of their appearance. Women have carried mirrors in their bags to apply and check their makeup since before the time of Marie



Antoinette. Vanities or dressing tables have been made for centuries, with large mirrors that cater to a woman's needs. Handheld mirrors made for girls and women to be placed on nightstands have been around since ancient Rome. The need to supply girls and women with mirrors has been indicative of societies' needs to encourage the role of women. The handheld mirrors created for the show were large, heavy, and painted black to indicate the burden bestowed upon the women. The women with the mirrors were presented in various poses. Many of these victims have closed their eyes and raised their hands as if they were protecting themselves from spectators. This same behavior has occurred in violent relationships. Many times women in violent environments will take defensive stances, a reflection of their defensive state of mind.



Figure 1. "Do Not Cross I" Mixed Media. Photograph by Marcel Erminy

In this visual autoethnography piece, my first intentions were to place the mirrors on the floor as though they were tile. The viewer would look downward to step over the mirror, which would create some discomfort, and their reflection in the mirror would implicate them with the crime scene. This would also create awareness of the problem of violence against women; however, after viewing the reflections of the mirrors on the wall while placed on the floor, this work of art morphed into something else because of the placement of the paintings, the hands appeared—as if interacting with each other. The mirrors were placed on benches and arranged to display more than one reflection in their diamond shapes. Several of the diamond shapes appeared to be piercing the others, which represented the violence endured and the injuries incurred. The paintings on the mirrors were no longer paintings. Instead, the paintings were reflections and they were no longer alone in the scenario. Through several images the same phenomenon could be observed. A crime scene tape was placed around the images to represent the many women who had been victims of violent crimes. The viewer's shadow is also reflected onto the wall, which implies the viewer is at the crime scene. There were also mirrors strategically arranged throughout the exhibition. A mirror was placed near "*Pandemonium II*" and across from the artwork entitled "*Next*," and beside the two series "*Liberty*" and "*Broken*." The objective for the placement of three mirrors was to situate and engage the viewer in the narratives and have the viewer think about the scenario. Another goal for the mirrors were for the viewers' to analyze themselves, asking themselves what role would they have they played in the scenario, the victim,

spectator, or perpetrator? The mirrors also reflected that numerous nationalities play a part in this scenario of violence and pain.

*“Next Series”*

The first painting in the “*Next*” (see Figure 2) series consists of several dolls broken into pieces signifying the mutilation and destruction of women. In preparation for the painting, several doll pieces were chewed by my dog, rubbed on the floor, and stomped on to create the battered and mutilated look. Several of the body parts appeared as though they were not only connected to one body but also to body lying near it. This effect was created to enhance the viewers’ knowledge of the connectedness. One doll was depicted blindfolded as if she did not want to see the carnage, a male doll was depicted sitting on children’s learning blocks watching the carnage. This piece was a recreation of my memory of a male spectator watching impassively as his friend beat a young woman. My goal, at first, was to paint the broken pieces with doll characteristics, yet, in the middle of my painting some of the pieces took on human characteristics. This gave the painting a surreal look. My research indicated that in Africa and Mexico, bodies of women have been found or recovered mutilated. In India, some women are burned (Sanghavi, Bhalla, & Das, 2009) alive, others are drowned or killed after being severely beaten. For some cultures, the murder of an intimate partner is justified by calling it an honor killing. Overall, women in any country are not limited to one type of death. In the United States more women are murdered by gunshot, for example. But, here and elsewhere, women are stabbed, covered in acid, choked, beaten, and assaulted.



Figure 2. “Next I” is Oil Paint on Birch Board. Photograph by Erminy

In the second painting of the series, “*Next II*” (see Figure 3), a male manikin was shown standing between a doll representation of a female and a human female. This represented the severing of ties to family and friends. The female doll was depicted looking straight at the viewer as though pleading for help. The doll’s eyes appeared to follow the viewer’s every move. A manikin figure was depicted abusing the female doll. The human female figure appeared, hands raised, battered, and bloody as though she was defending herself against her attacker. Her body was turned away from the doll. This representation portrayed the denial and depersonalization that often characterizes a victims psychological response to abuse (i.e., she appeared to pretend that the violence against women/including her own, did not exist).



Figure 3. “Next II” is Oil Paint on Birch Board.

### ***“Pandemonium Series”***

The series “*Pandemonium*” (see Figures 4 and 5) represented the confusion and chaos in victims’ lives as they tried to make decisions concerning the circumstances of the physical and psychological turmoil. The woman in this series appeared to be looking at her reflection as if it were ripples of water with which she hopes to wash away the dirtiness and of life. Water has sustained us through life. In the Christian faith water purifies through baptism. The Hindus in India have bathed and, thus, purified themselves in the Ganges for millennia. The face of the victim in this work had many vibrant colors to indicate battering and bruising. The ethnicity of the woman is not revealed because all women of all races are plagued by violence. Cultural, communal, and religious beliefs



can cause even more disorientation in victims of violence. In some instances, victims have decided to reject institutionalized forms of inequality by leaving the volatile environment to seek help. In many cases, however, victims have chosen to remain in an explosive situation, with consequences that can be devastating and often deadly.



Figure 4. “Pandemonium I”, Pastel on Wallis Sandpaper. Photograph by Erminy



Figure 5. “Pandemonium II”, Pastel on Wallis Sandpaper.

As the first pastel of the series, “*Pandemonium II*” represented the confusion and chaos in victims’ lives as they try to make decisions concerning the circumstances of their physical and psychological turmoil. However, the image was large in size and represented the progression of violence without intervention or removal from the negative environment. I depicted that the closer a person is to the problem the more unrecognizable the solution becomes—a visual pun. The painting represented what I have come to understand: within the issues of violence against women and femicide there have been too many distractions, interruptions of truth, and uncertainty of facts. As I reflected on my situation, I noticed how confusing it all was to me. The closer I was to the problem, the harder it was to distinguish the truth. My intimate partner was someone I loved and yet he committed this horrible crime against me. I could not see my perpetrator’s real persona. So, in planning “*Pandemonium II*”, I decided to illustrate my inability to see by creating a close up view of this work of art.

Both pastels in the “*Pandemonium*” series are large. Pastels can be created on several different tooth’s of paper. In this series I chose to use Wallis Sandpaper. It is not unusual for pastel artists to use sandpaper because the pigment of the pastel adheres to the paper better; however, the artist must also take into consideration the size of the pastel painting to be created. I have come to believe that the size of a work, just as light, mood, and emotion, should always be considered as part of the composition.

The use of sandpaper is an abrasive and harsh process. Sandpaper is painful for the artist if blending has been done with the fingers over a long period of time. Artists have used finger cots to prevent injury; however, using finger cots often have inhibited

an artist's ability to achieve desired results. My fingertips were chafed and bled. I resorted to using finger cots one-third of the way through creating the series.

### ***“Red Queen”***

Chess is a strategic game dating back to the sixth century. Each chess piece has a pattern, a technique for moving across the board and capturing pieces. In the game of chess, the queen is the most powerful piece. She can move backward, forward, side to side, and diagonally. A pawn that has traveled safely to the opponent's far side of the board without being captured can be exchanged for a piece with greater power, and that includes the powerful queen—if she has been captured. The piece “*Red Queen*” (see Figure 6) was created in reference to the strategic power used by women in violent relationships to maneuver through the volatile environment. I, like other women, used self-protective behaviors. Women have resorted to government agencies such as law enforcement, women's shelters, group homes, and community and church support systems to combat victimization. However, these are only interventions and women have always known that the possibility existed that none of these strategies may curtail the IPV. Nonetheless, women tortured by violence have investigated these stopgap efforts until they make a decision to leave the punishing environment.

The pieces in a chess game are black and white. “*Red Queen*” started as a real chessboard, with modifications to both the white queen and black queen. In my research, I gathered information on the number of women murdered in 2011, 2012, and 2013 in the state of Texas. I applied, in red marker, to the white queen the names and ages of the one hundred and nineteen women who were murdered in the state of Texas in 2013, plus



additional names and ages of women murdered in 2011 and 2012. The white chess piece turned on its side and marked in red represented the bloodshed by those women.

Although the captured black queen sat outside of the perimeters of the chessboard, her fate was different. She watched the demise of the white queen in horror.

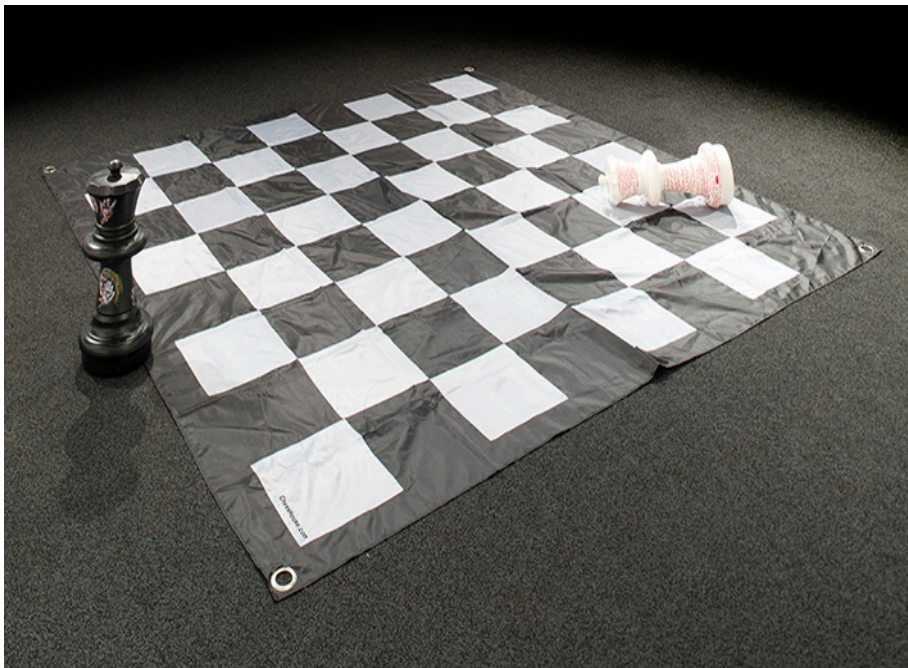


Figure 6. "Red Queen", Mixed Media. Photograph by Erminy

### ***"Closed"***

The narrative painting "*Closed*" (see Figure 7) documented and exposed the thoughts, feelings, and emotions experienced by an abused victim through critical research. My personal intentions and desire in this narrative were to externalize and evoke a sensory understanding of knowing intimately the subject and the subject matter

of the painting. Through my experience, I was able to comprehend the loneliness of the victim. The figure sat isolated in the darkness, embracing herself as though she was hiding or protecting herself in a dark corner, her eyes and head down in a submissive and frightened manner. The victim was badly bruised and displayed a look of hopelessness. Numerous women in violent environment feel powerless. Some women have lost their self-esteem and no longer trust in the people of their community or society. Due to their inability to remove themselves from the situation, women have frequently been blamed for the incidents of violence they experience, and friends and family have ostracized them. It is no wonder they have been plagued with the belief they have nowhere to turn.



*Figure 7. "Closed", Oil Paint on Birch Board.*

### ***“Carol’s Web”***

The work entitled *Carol’s Web* (see Figure 8) was created with pastel. In my reconstruction of memories of IPV, I recalled feeling vertigo. My equilibrium was disturbed and with this imbalance came nausea and a feeling that my head had spun out of control. In a short period of time, the nausea evolved to anxiety and depression.



Figure 8. “*Carol’s Web*”, Pastel on paper.

### ***“Do Not Cross Series”***

The second work in the series “*Do Not Cross*” was titled “*Do Not Cross II.*” This work consisted of a crime scene tape outlining a female figure in front of and extremely close to a television. There is no visual for “*Do not Cross II.*” The viewers had to look downward at the outlined shape to move closer to the television. My objective was to

evoke uncomfortable feelings and cautionary reaction in the viewer and cause him or her to bear witness to the death of the victim.

All along, in the exhibit section, the television played several documentaries on violence against women in a looping process. The documentaries provided statistical information about violence against women and femicide in the U.S. and other nations more affected by violence against women and the laws created to protect women. The documentaries also described the behaviors of perpetrators and the testimonies of victims.

During my research, I realized that women of all cultures, ethnicities, and nationalities were plagued with the problem of violence and femicide research conducted by the World Health Organization and other organizations on violence against women validated that the problem exists in every country. It has not been an issue of race but one of the manifestations of dominance and power. To lose women of any ethnicity to violence is devastating for it takes away women's human right, creates a public health issue, and affects the economy.

I have always believed that in art, underlining themes, and meanings are universal. Art does not dictate color. Rembrandt and other famous artists created works of art and I, an American, understood the content and context of a painting without having to inject race into my interpretation. I am of mixed race: French, Native American, Anglo Saxon and African American. I was not raised with an emphasis on race, but on the common experience of being human. My mother raised four girls as strong women. She never mentioned race.



Figure 9 “Do Not Cross II”, Mixed Media

### *“Liberty Series”*

The first narrative in the series entitled, “*Liberty*,” (see Figure 10) represented my ability to reflect over past violent situations and use the circumstances to empower myself, and other women, in the search for justice. The viewer encountered two women in closed composition. The women were not engaged in conversation, but there was an implied communication connection. The heroic character’s hand extended beyond the compositional frame in an authoritative, forceful, and powerful manner which



symbolized the woman's conviction of emancipation and ability to seek justice. The foreshortening and movement of the hand, along with the dramatic lighting, heightened the viewer's consciousness of time. The intensity of the image's emotions and actions projected out of the painting and onto the viewer. The dialogue between the subject and viewer was confrontational, evoking emotions and challenging the viewer. The narrative character exhibits an expression of rage, which indicated the knowledge and the clarity of the situation.



Figure 10. "*Liberty I*", Oil Paint on Birch Board

The second of the narrative works was entitled "*Liberty II*" (see Figure 11) and displayed the themes of empowerment and freedom. I felt a sense of empowerment after enduring and defeating my victimization. Through my empowerment, I was able to

defend another victim of violence. The idea for "*Liberty II*" was spontaneous. The narratives share the same concept; however, they could be displayed individually for public viewing. The attitudes of the two subjects were dissimilar. The first painting depicted two characters embracing as one looked away from the viewer and the other gazed confrontationally or aggressively directly toward the viewer. The action of the heroic woman facing the viewer differed from the usual reactions of society when placed in the situation of IPV. Society frequently ignores the cries of abused victims; however, this character comforted and protected the victim. The facial expression of the woman facing the viewer is one of frustration, anger, sorrow, and one of power, while the psychological state and body gesture of the second figure appeared to be hopelessness. The characters were placed in a dark environment, which throughout history indicated a threat, evil, the enigmatic, despair, and even pandemonium.



Figure 11. *“Liberty II”*, Oil Paint on Birch Board.

### ***“Broken Series”***

*“Broken”* (see Figures 12, 13, and 14) consisted of a series of three paintings in black and white gradient values, which displayed the progression of abuse on a young woman. The paintings were prepared on birch board with a gesso ground. The mediums used to paint these works were acrylic paints applied over gesso and oil applied over acrylic. The first painting of the series (see Figure 12) displayed the young woman in a normal state with no evidence or trace of physical or psychological abuse shown on her face. The woman was expressionless. She appeared to be neither happy nor sad. The woman was unfamiliar with the viewer and looks directly at him or her as though he or



she was approaching the work of art, as though the figure in the painting was expecting an introduction. Her face was partially in a shadow, which added to the mystery of her existence; and her eyes followed the viewer around the room.



*Figure 12. "Broken I", Oil Paint on Birch Board*



Figure 13. *“Broken II”*, Oil Paint on Birch Board



Figure 14. *“Broken III”*, Oil Paint on Birch Board.

In the second painting of the series (see Figure 12), the viewer was able to notice a slight change in the woman's facial expression and position of the head and overall physical condition. The emphasis was placed on the face using size, light, and distortion of the features. The figure looked outward, creating a more intimate or personal scenario with the viewer. Although in real situations of abuse, frequently victims deliberately hide the injuries of violent offense committed against them, during the observation of the painting the viewer was able to identify evidence of abuse. We saw this evidence in the facial expression of the young woman as well as in the appearance of some physical abrasions on her face. Intentional alterations of a photograph of the subject were used to assist in the metamorphosis of the facial appearance. Metaphorically ripping, tearing, and crumpling the photograph helped the researcher understand the severity of the victim's condition and the viewers who were touched by this problem. Between each act of the destructive progression of the photograph, a painting with elements of distortion was created, recording the effects of violence and representing the traumatic psychological and physical state of the victim. The atmosphere of the art piece was volatile. The figure extended out of the compositional frame and the frame projected toward the viewer. This created a more catastrophic and claustrophobic effect. This was significant as space defined mood, emotion, and the moment. The figure was purposely placed in a dark environment, which also highlighted the emphasis on the face. Although time seemed suspended, the painting reflected progression.

I created the third painting in the series "*Broken III*" (see Figure 14) to represent the mutilation or death of a young woman by her intimate perpetrator. I reiterated the

brutality of treatment women endure in all cultures in several of my works of art. I thought it imperative that the spectator understand the physical and psychological state during the term of violence. "*Broken III*" was the largest of the series paintings, focusing on the devastating destruction of violence committed against women. There was great change in this stage of the woman's appearance. The painting showed the progression of time and the wear of the human condition. Again, there was evidence of abuse to the figure, which created tension between the viewer and the victim as she extended out of the compositional frame. The woman's eye followed the viewer as though she was asking for assistance as she continued watching the viewer.

### **Anticipation and Resolve**

Since I first began my journey of writing my autoethnography and creating my visual autoethnography, there have been several incidents of violence against women and femicide with elevated media coverage worldwide. I was amazed at how the media had taken notice of the social problem of society that negated women's human rights. Prior to the exhibition I possessed this emotional anticipation of the show's success. I was extremely anxious about the show. My thoughts were I would have the opportunity to tell my story and the stories of other women through visual form. Images are extremely powerful. Before we learned to read and write we communicated through images and symbols. Film producers use images to carry us to other regions of the world and they are also very affective of creating images that terrifies us. My experience was like a horror movie. I wondered could I communicate that experience effectively. I knew the show was going to be very personal to me because I was going to have to dialogue about

my situation and I felt some people would not understand why I would allow the perpetrator more than one opportunity to commit a violent act against me. I also knew I was going to have to answer questions on how I philosophically came to create the art and I would have to respond “through my experience.” Still today when I communicate about my situation or violence against women and femicide in general, tears well up in my eyes; therefore, I expected the people who attended the community to see the pain in me which carried over into the art work. I was uncertain if I could contain the emotions that in some cases followed the dialogue. Even though I knew the violence committed against me was not my fault, I knew there is still some shame within. I felt naked-exposed even though many years had passed.

I notified my mother several weeks prior to the exhibition, and she assured me she would attend. I explained to her the topic of my installation was violence against women and femicide and the conversation was over almost as quickly as it began. She never mentioned the topic again; however, she did comment at the end of the show how much she enjoyed the event. That was the extent of our conversation on the topic of the exhibition. I was not unusual for her to respond in that manner to this topic.

Although my mother and I had very little conversation concerning the topic of violence against women, several women approached me at the exhibition and commented on works of art in reference to their lives or the lives of women they knew. Some of the women asked me how I felt about exposing my past life-experiences to the community. I responded by explaining “I am not the only person here that feels as though their past experience have been exposed, uncovered, or made visible. This

exhibition is needed to emphasize the importance of raising awareness of violence against women and stop femicide. I am willing to take the first blow of victim blaming, or minimizing if results of awareness are heightened.” After viewing the exhibition, several other women asked, why I decided to create works of art that placed me in a vulnerable state of being for the public? I explained I knew I was exposing things that made me uncomfortable; however, this subject makes many people uncomfortable. I expounded on the statistic of violence against women and femicide. I explained, experiencing discomfort was a minor price to pay considering women are murdered daily from IPV. If my works of art and the information I have provided here today saves one life then, my discomfort for this short period of time was well worth it.

#### **Couples Viewing the Installation During My Observation Period**

I observed twelve participants. Of those twelve participants, these included two couples of male and female. While observing the participants for the exhibitions I noticed the male and female couple participants separated after viewing the first work of art. Through my observations, the female participants appeared to analyze the works of art more thoroughly. I observed this through the longer lengths of time they stood in front of the works of art, their use of interaction with the art, the fact that several of them signaled to another participant and dialogued when pointing toward the works of art. Furthermore, more female participants stopped to view the exhibition which was on the topic of violence against women and femicide during my observational period than male. I found this important because there was an extreme amount of press about the exhibition

in the community and through the university about the exhibition and the topics of violence against women and femicide.

From my perception, I found that male participants who entered the exhibition with a female participants spent more time analyzing the artwork due to the fact that the female participants signaled for him to view the works of art again, with dialogue upon reviewing the art. Through my observation, the female participants who attended the exhibition a male participant walked more slowly through the exhibition, even more slowly than the female participants who attended the exhibition alone. It was my perception that the female participants who attended with the male participants were very interested in male participants' understanding of the artworks; however, male participants' behaviors seemed to imply indifference. This was implied through their (a) blank facial expressions and the shrugging of their shoulders, (b) limited amount of time spent viewing the works of art, (c) limited dialoguing with the female participants, and (d) the fact no male participants reviewed the artworks twice without being recalled by female participants.

### **Future Work**

For future work, researchers may create a whole curriculum on violence against women and femicide, which includes art activities, and present the content in museums and galleries along with lectures on the topic of violence against women and femicide to raise and enhance awareness. Artists and researchers may create a curriculum integrating art to work with women who are victims of violence—in shelters or prisons, for example— in order to enable them to be empowered through access to information and

through the ability to synthesize that information and to render their experiences in art. Researchers may investigate violence against women and femicide by interviewing victims and then undertaking a follow-up study three to five years later to determine the status of the victims and their reported sense of personal empowerment.



## **CHAPTER VI**

### **CONCLUSION**

From the time I started the research and writing of my dissertation, my ideas regarding intimate partner violence (IPV) and femicide have come to encompass a wider understanding of the plight of women. In the process of reading the almost staggering statistics for women in the U.S. and other countries, my awareness of what it has taken for me to be healed from IPV has become deeper. My observations of the participants in my art installation also contributed to my awareness. I came to see the value of the exhibit in helping to create awareness for the plight of women, while also giving me fresh ideas for curricular implementation regarding social justice. This autoethnography has increased my understanding of who I was under IPV and who I have become as my sense of selfhood has progressed. I now understand how other women of IPV can be empowered and become liberated through art installations.

My research showed me that I, like other survivors, have used protective strategies to circumvent abusers' escalating violence. In addition, much like most research reflects, the stages of women's degradation through violence follows a similar pattern. Women experience denial, fear of retribution by the intimate partner, fear of social ostracism from family and friends--who might even deny their acquaintance and support, and fear of unfair treatment by the law. These experiences represent a psychological roller coaster spanning from blaming the perpetrator to self-blaming and justifying the perpetrator's actions, to finally, receiving support, and making the choice to leave the abusive situation. For many women, IPV can become a generational curse

affecting children, culture, and society. Unfortunately, for other women, femicide becomes the consequence of IPV.

My study, through the installation, addressed several objectives stated in the problem section of this dissertation. The most important objectives were to create awareness of the issues of violence against women and femicide; to create an understanding of the same issues; to educate the community; and finally, to stimulate dialogue for social change. Several of these objectives were accomplished successfully. Watching the twelve participants' behaviors and interactions as they observed the installation reflected the awareness that women already had about a subject they could empathize with: the effect of violence against women. In fact, at least two of the female participants cried while viewing my installation; perhaps because they had experienced pain themselves in other areas of life, or because they might have been victims of IPV or silent observers of the same. Men viewed the installation quickly and even skipped some works. It could be that they could not understand its message, or empathize with this type of pain. However, if they were with a woman, she became the motivating factor for their awareness and understanding. She would call them back and have them look at the art work more closely. The number of participants that attended, about three hundred, included many members of the at-large community of Bryan and College Station. This indicated that the installation has created community awareness on the issues of violence against women and femicide. As a consequence of the community's interest in the topic, a dialogue was started with members of the press and people associated with Blinn Community College and Texas A&M University.

The success of the installation points to the value of the approach as applied to curriculum development on social justice in regards to violence against women and femicide. The installation and my observations of the participants' reactions have been the impetus for the development of the curriculum in chapter four. Through my autoethnography, I can now reflect on the value of having been freed from IPV and its awful consequences (e.g., femicide). Additionally, I have found in the curriculum a source of empowerment for myself. This happened as I produced the installation rooted through my experience, the researched literature, and the phenomenological research in observing the participants. I found that the curriculum I created has the potential to transform people's lives and goals. This autoethnography, therefore, encapsulates the process from being a victim of abuse to being a woman with power. I was victimized, I survived, and now I can help others overcome their painful memories.

My research has the potential of pointing others to the usefulness of implementing curriculum based on Dewey's theory in *Experience and Education* and Pinar's theory in *Currere*. Both can be used as techniques of transformation and empowerment for several who are afflicted with violence. Using these approaches, I would, in the future, continue to work on creating awareness about violence against women and femicide through community activism, and curriculum for higher education.

#### **Addressing the Stages of IPV, and the Human Condition through Art**

There are several stages in the cycle of violence. Through the collective works contained in this dissertation, an awareness of the nature of abuse, the stages of violence against women through the victim and the perpetrator, and how the threat of femicide

influences women and their families were communicated. For the purposes of this dissertation I call the stages tension building, incident, and honeymoon (Walker, 1997). The first stage that I address is the tension building stage. In the tension building stage, the perpetrator becomes aggravated with his present situation. This can mean he is frustrated in his job, with his family, and friends or just events around the world. During this stage the perpetrator may show some violence. The violence could consist of psychological aggression or physical violence. The female shows caution in addressing everyday issues. The second stage is the incident stage. During the incident stage, the perpetrator will become physically violent and he will also use controlling psychological tactics to isolate or endanger the victim. The third stage I address is the honeymoon stage. From my experience, during the honeymoon stage the perpetrator is very apologetic and kind to the woman. He communicates to the woman love promises to never hurt the woman again. I did not address this stage in my works of art. I could have created this stage by depicting a man smiling sitting near a woman who looks distraught, while the man wears a t-shirt called a wife beater. Although I believe this is an important stage, I chose not to depict it because I believe philosophically this is just a wait stage. During the wait stage the woman could make a decision to leave the relationship because the perpetrator believes after his apology from his actions all is good. It's an opportune time to leave the relationship. After the honeymoon stage, the cycle repeats itself; therefore, I believe depicting this stage would not have the impact that I want to convey. After the honeymoon stage the cycle repeats if the woman does not leave the relationship.

Another issue I emphasized in this dissertation through text and images was the continued physical and psychological abuse of victims. I believe reading or hearing about mutilation of women and femicide may catch someone's attention; however, viewing images of these heinous crimes may affect spectator for life. I created several works of art depicting the human condition suffering from abuse.

A factor to keep in mind is that art installations can be a very effective means of creating awareness throughout the community. Images are powerful tools that help individuals decipher information about current events, history, and culture. Images create awareness of social issues and trends and create a consciousness where observers are moved to reflect on images and their message. The images used in this study promoted awareness, sensitivity, and enhanced the audience's understanding for the issues of violence against women and femicide. In my paintings, I used particular colors purposefully. Red, orange, and yellow reflect and promote feelings of uneasiness and anxiety. Several large images on a canvas created feelings of claustrophobia, a desperation to get out, and the desire to escape. The light in my paintings was the faith in God that I could glimpse his presences; it reminded me, and hopefully viewers, that I could get out.

I created the tension building stage in the series "*Pandemonium*". This series demonstrated the chaos with the tension building stage by showing the uncertainty of the situation. Another stage of the cycle of IPV that was displayed in my works of art was the incident stage (Walker, 1997). During this stage perpetrators commit acts of violence against partners. These acts include bullying, coercion, physical and psychological

violence to persuade the partner to submit. For my exhibition I created a series entitled “*Next*” to depict the bullying by a male manikin as he grasped the female doll around the neck. I also included several dolls with mangled and mutilated body parts to represent violence against women.

The pamphlet providing statistics on violence against women and femicide enhanced the power of the exhibition by educating viewers to the number of women abused or dead as a result of IPV. This dissertation points to the importance of having this sort of presentation in various towns and cities to combat the issues of violence against women and femicide.

When my images are linked with educational elements (i.e., the pamphlet with data on violence against women and femicide, information on the rendering of several paintings from the artist experience, and results of the research) the experience of viewing the images becomes a more persuasive element for the transmission of reality. But there is more, the images are powerful emotional tools. As viewers react both intellectually and emotionally in compassion and concern to the plight of women in abused situations and their aftermath, there is the hope that society and culture will arise and create values, morals and laws to protect women. Furthermore, the images may create values to assist women in distancing themselves from IPV.

This dissertation provides a review of research on violence against women and femicide. By bringing information on these two issues together, this dissertation allows for easier understanding for women and the importance of healing and prevention. I believe one of the positive outcomes from the dissemination of findings in this

dissertation contributes to making the 20<sup>th</sup> century the last century of violence. This dissertation supports the benefit of developing curricula around the issues of violence against women and femicide. The curricula can be developed with the goal of enhancing consciousness with similar components as the sample curriculum in this dissertation (i.e. art history, literature review on the topic of concern, art studio explorations, and activities to arouse consciousness of the particular issue).

In bringing together art, curriculum studies, and research on violence against women and femicide, this dissertation sets a model for future researchers on the integration of art with other fields to combat negative social influences. Not only is this research unique in emphasis, but the use of an art installation to study the enabling of transformation and therefore change, is original. This approach enhanced the dissertation and made it a useful tool for implementing social change in culture and society.

A successful curriculum on social issues, integrated with art and autoethnography, can challenge society to change. Although a curriculum on violence against women and femicide is unlikely to be used in public schools, the topic of violence in schools integrated with art and an autoethnography may be appropriate.

My experience in creating the works of art for my installation not only enabled me to transform personally but also helped me to reflect on the human condition of pain, terror, despair, abandonment, and hopelessness. Creating the works of art and preparing the installation helped me to contextualize and understand my experience. Not only did it help me to gain a deeper understanding for the nature of violence against women and femicide, but also allowed me to question the nature of perpetrators, the specific

situations of abuse I went through, and the players involved in my experience. In addition, the installation provided a history of who I was as a person, who I had become as product of violence, and the empowerment I had experienced after separation from my abuser.

The other powerful consequence of my watching the installation and the participants' reactions was reflection on the protective measures I could now use to prevent further abuse. I gained the freedom to speak about my story. I shared my story with friends as I shared the art installation with students in an art appreciation class. Finally, I was able to help those who had experienced sexual assault and had not dared to share it with anyone. I was able to give them friendly advice and refer them to agencies for help.

I hope this dissertation has shown the transformative effects of IPV, both psychological and physical. As expressed in my autoethnography, this time period for me has been shortened by attaining more knowledge on the plight of other women faced with violence and femicide. Some of the deep wounds and impact of violence against women may not come to the surface at once, some wounds remain latent. As for me, through the empowerment that comes through successful experiences, coupled with the support of others, I believe many latent wounds were resolved. This dissertation may not be the last step to final empowerment, but has been a defining step.



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## **APPENDIX A**

### **Problem Statement**

My study addresses the need to

1. Increase cultural, social, and political awareness and understanding of violence against women;
2. Create an understanding of the experiences of victims;
3. Educate the community by raising awareness about abuse and femicide as social problems;
4. Generate dialogue for social change.

## **APPENDIX B**

The Purpose of my Autoethnography, Visual Autoethnography and Art

Exhibition was:

1. To understand the researcher's perception of the culture of violence against women and femicide from her personal experience,
2. To understand the process leading to violence against women,
3. To understand my experience as a victim of violence and to render my findings through a visual autoethnography and art installation.

### **Research Questions that Guided my Autoethnography.**

My study seeks to answer the following research questions:

1. How do my reflections expand present knowledge and understanding of violence against women and femicide?
2. How does my art provide insight into femicide and social justice inquiry?
3. What meanings are constructed by the researcher from experience?
4. What behaviors are observed by the researcher of participants as they view an art exhibition on violence against women?

## APPENDIX C

For emergency assistance  
please call 911.

For additional information or help,  
please contact:

Twin City Mission  
Domestic Violence Services at  
979-775-5355 or 888-452-9253,

National Domestic Violence Hotline  
at 1-800-799-SAFE,

The National Sexual Assault  
Hotline at 1-800-656-HOPE,

National Coalition Against Domestic Violence at  
202-745-1211.

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TEXAS A & M UNIVERSITY  
WRIGHT GALLERY  
LANGFORD ARCHITECTURE CENTER  
BUILDING A  
330 BUZZELL STREET  
COLLEGE STATION, TX 77843

### SPOILED AND UNSPOILED ART INSTALLATION

By Ernie Sherow



Please Be Advised: This arts-based installation entitled "Spoiled and Unspoiled" was created as a result of research findings on the sensitive subject matter of violence against women and femicide and may be considered disturbing. This body of work also involves exploring and characterizing tragic events while using the figure as a vehicle to emphasize the destructive force of violence and the empowerment of healing. The installation contains powerful imagery and may cause uneasiness, discomfort, or trigger recollections of violent incidents in the minds of viewers. Please note: One or more individuals may be present to observe viewers' interactions with the works on display October 14 - November 13 on Tuesdays, Thursdays, and Fridays between 8am-5pm for scholarly research.

## SPOILED AND UNSPOILED

### Violence Against Women and Femicide

According to research (Michalski, 2005; Tjaden & Thoennes, 2000) and interested groups (i.e., the National Coalition Against Domestic Violence [NCADV]), one out of every four women experiences some form of violence. Statistics reveal one out of six women in the United States is raped in their lifespan. Twenty-nine percent of women are raped between ages 18-24. Rape is prevalent on college campuses (Tjaden & Thoennes, 2006; Deming, Coven, Swan & Billings, 2013). In 2007, one in five college women reported a sexual assault experience in a large research sample of two universities (Paul et al., 2013). Women experience acquaintance rape more frequently than stranger rape. (Deming et al., 2013).

Renzetti (2008) notes that femicide is one of the primary causes of death for women between the ages of twenty and forty-nine in the United States. Unfortunately, almost one-third of female homicide victims are killed by intimate partner (Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI, 2001). Women of all races are affected by this problem (Renzetti, 2008).

### Artist Statement

I am deeply saddened by the treatment of women. Women face inequity and injustice culturally, socially, and politically all over the world on a daily basis. Though there are calls for change, the realities of women's experiences demonstrate the magnitude of the problem. The trafficking of and acts of brutality and murder against women and girls occur daily—not only in foreign lands, but also in the United States of America.

As an artist/researcher/educator, I have always tackled social issues. My objective is to engage society in conversations that challenge and promote change. This "Spoiled and Unspoiled" installation consists of artworks reflecting my research on violence against women and femicide. My artworks are tools used to access, examine or analyze the experiences of violence against women and femicide. These works are a form of communication that allows me to address the experiences of life using mood, light, emotion, and the human figure as vehicles of expression. I depict themes or concepts that elicit contemplative responses from viewers. Although these works of art depict physical, psychological, moral or cultural deterioration of the human condition, my installation was created to empower.

### Spoiled and Unspoiled Artworks

#### "Distortion"

The series "Distortion" represents the confusion and chaos in victims' lives as they try to make decisions concerning the circumstances of the physical and



psychological turmoil in their lives. Cultural, communal, and religious beliefs can cause even more disorientation in victims of violence. In some instances, victims will decide to reject institutionalized forms of inequality by leaving the volatile environment to seek help. In many cases, though, victims choose to remain in an explosive situation, with consequences that can be devastating or even deadly.



#### "Liberty II"

The second narrative in the series entitled, "Liberty II," represents the ability of some victims to reflect over past violent situations and use the circumstances to empower themselves, and other women in the search for justice. The heroic character's hand extends beyond the compositional frame in an authoritative, forceful, and powerful manner which symbolizes the woman's commitment to achieving emancipation and willingness to seek justice.

## **APPENDIX D**

### **Observation Protocol**

1. What is the Gender of the participants?
2. Is there a dialogue between participants' while viewing the art?
3. Do the participants look at works of art more than once?
4. Do the participants touch or point to the art?
5. Do the participants move closer to or farther from the art?
6. Do the participants interact more with the 2d or 3d art?, and
7. Do the participants photo the works of art?