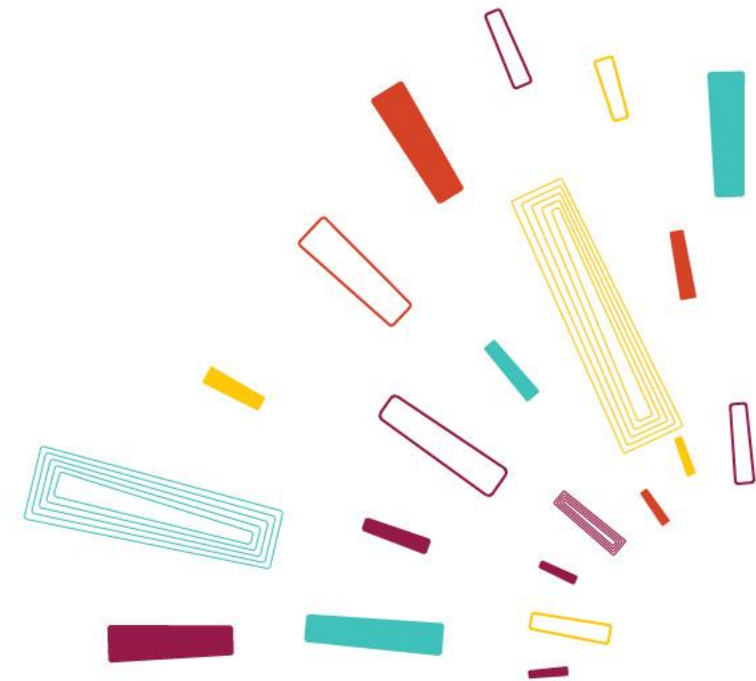


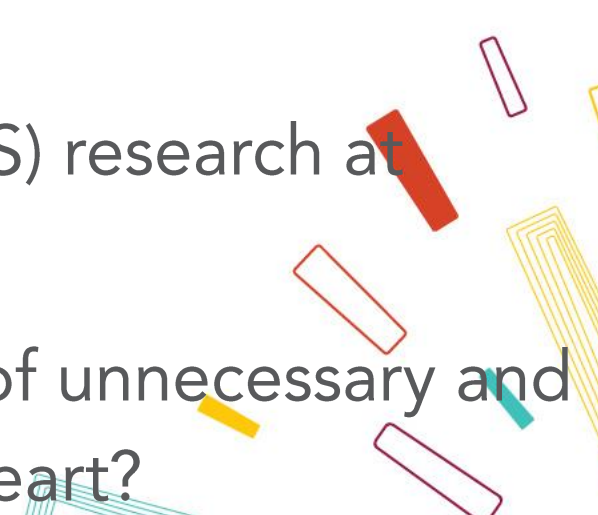
# Violence Against Women (VAW) & Mission in Latin America

David y Claudia Bahena



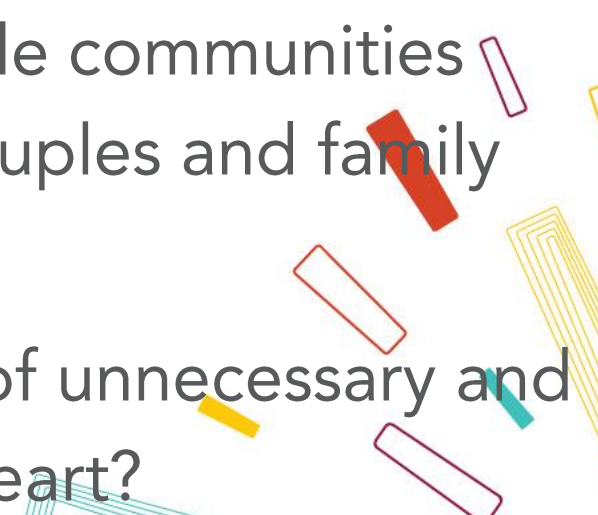



# Personal Journey (David)

- I. I do not come as an expert on the subject.
  - II. Instead, I come as a repentant macho in the transformation process.
  - III. What I share is part of my doctoral studies (DIS) research at Biola university..
  - IV. When you look out into the world, what kind of unnecessary and unjust suffering do you see that breaks your heart?
- 

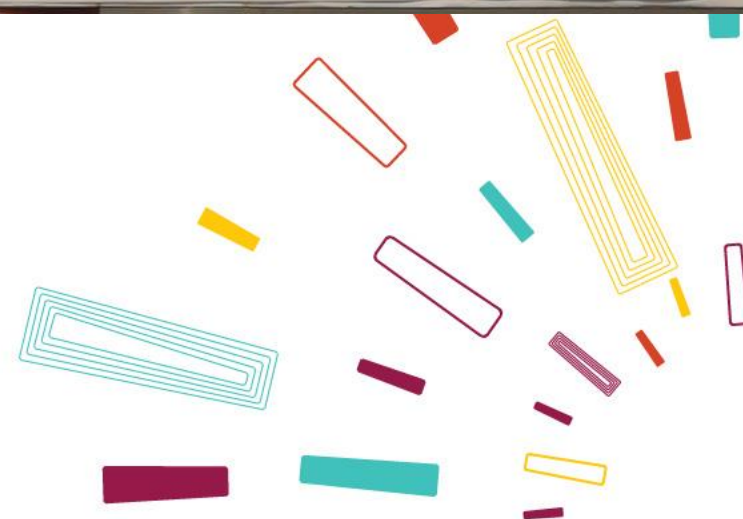
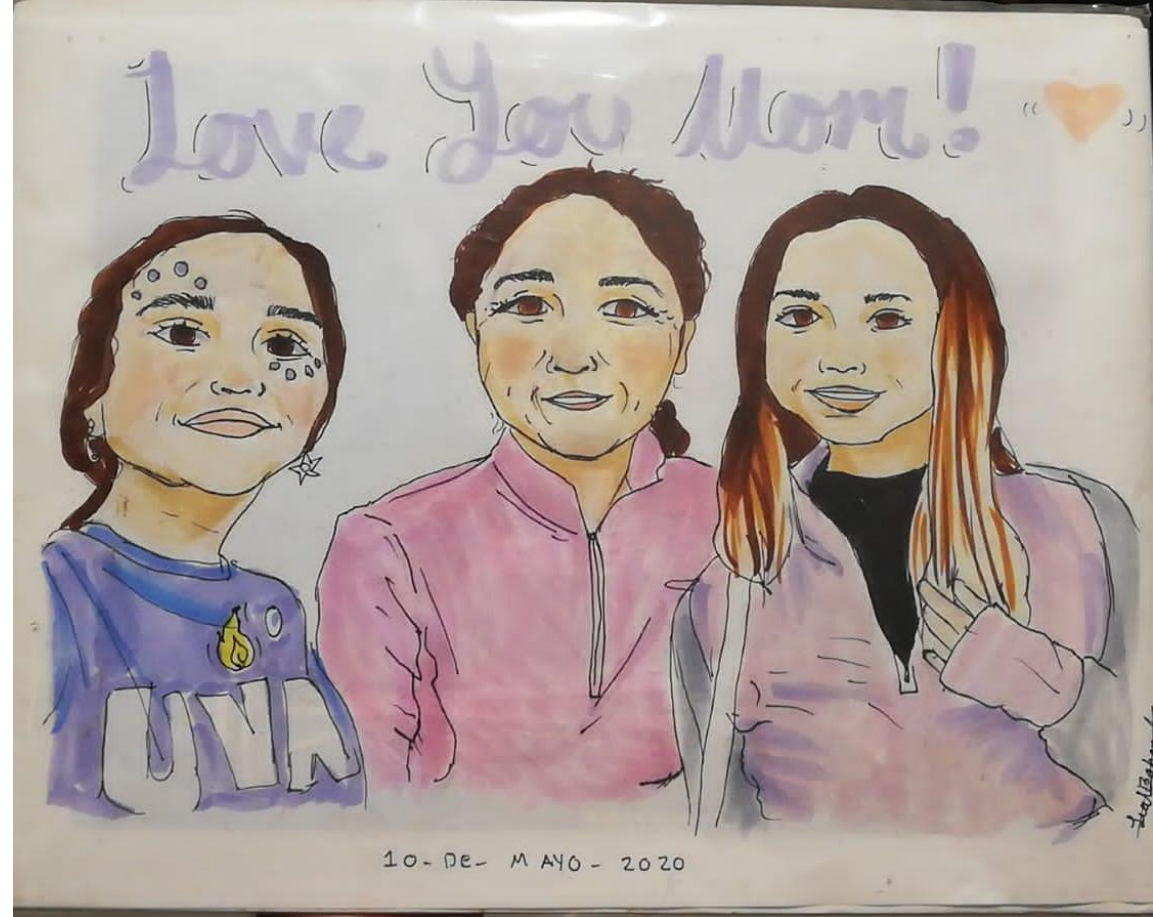


# Personal Journey (Claudia)

- I. I grew up in a very conservative family.
  - II. It took me years to become aware of VAW.
  - III. Seeing, the suffering of women from vulnerable communities helped me, and also getting to know other couples and family models.
  - IV. When you look out into the world, what kind of unnecessary and unjust suffering do you see that breaks your heart?
- 



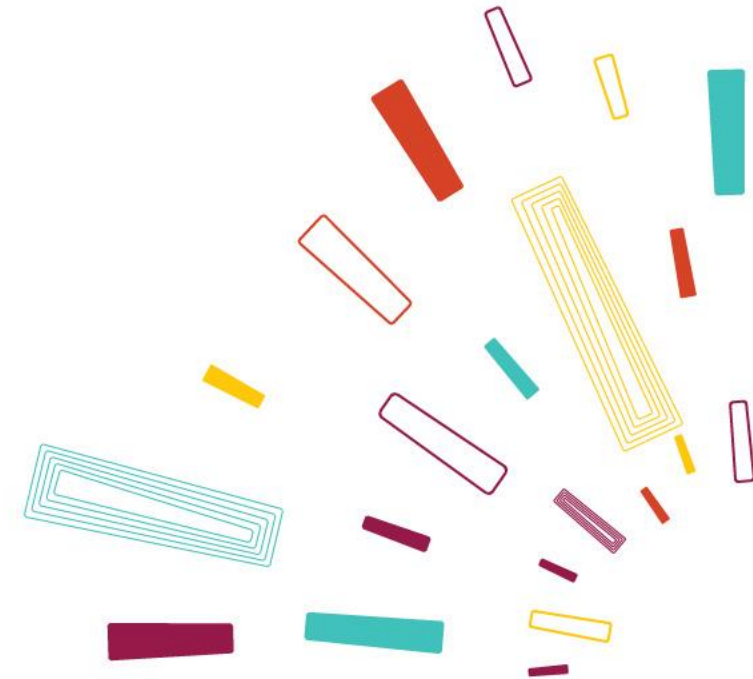
In early 2020, thousands of women across scores of cities Mexico came out to protest gender-based violence, shouting "Ya Basta" (enough is enough). One rally, on March 8th in **México City**, and a women's strike which took place on the following day, occurred in the same week that the first quarantine measures because of COVID 19 were announced.





# Goals: ....I want to share

- I. VAW in the Global Context and Latin America
- II. The VAW in Mexico
- III. VAW and Religion in Global Context
- IV. VAW and Mission/Challenges



# Advances in the Global Context

- Studies on VAW began in the 1970s in the US and Europe. In Mexico, they appeared in the early 1990s.
- In the academic literature, it can be found as "gender violence" and "violence against women". (the second term is used more by the UN and has the virtue of recognizing that **gender inequality** is the root of violence).
- In the context of the United Nations, **women's rights** have been fought for, seeking to eliminate discrimination against them and, in recent decades, concentrating on eliminating all types of violence against women.

# Advances in the Global Context

- In 1979 the General Assembly of the UN adopted the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women. *The member states undertook eliminating discrimination in the political, educational, health, economic, social, and the legislative sphere* (UN Human Rights, 1979, art 3).
- In Latin America (1981), in Bogotá, Colombia, almost two hundred feminists from 19 countries met to have the first Feminist Meeting of Latin America and the Caribbean. *At this meeting, it was agreed to declare November 25 as the International Day of Non-violence against women in honor of the Miraval sisters murdered under the dictatorship of Trujillo from Dominican Republic.*

# Advances in the Global Context

- In 1993, the UN General Assembly approved the Declaration on the Elimination of Violence Against Women.

The term violence against women is defined 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, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or in private life. (United Nations, 1993, Art 1).*



# Advances in the Global Context

- The Organization of American States - OAS (1994) celebrated the Convention “to prevent, punish, and eradicate violence against women”, known as the Convention of Belem do Para (Brazil). *This Convention became a **binding legal instrument** to put pressure on the OAS member states.*
- The General Assembly of the UN declared November 25 as the International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women to make this challenge visible (United Nations, 1999).

# Advances in the Global Context


- The World Health Organization (WHO, 2021) has recognized that VAW is a global public health and human rights problem, especially concerning intimate partner violence and sexual violence.
- Based on a study conducted by the WHO of population surveys in 161 countries between 2000 and 2018, it was estimated that

*"1 in 3 (33%) of women worldwide have been subjected to either physical and/or sexual intimate partner violence or non-partner sexual violence in their lifetime"*  
(WHO, 2021).



# I VAW in Latin America

The VAW phenomenon has been studied from the sphere of **public health** and also as a **human rights** problem



# First reports of the Pan American Health Organization

The quantitative study showed that the percentage of women who had suffered physical or sexual violence at some time in their lives by their husband or partner were

- 53 % in Bolivia,
- 38.6 % in Colombia,
- 31% in Ecuador
- 28.9 % in Sao Pablo (Brazil) a
- 51.2 % in Lima, Peru, (Bott et al., 2012).

*It is observed that there are significant regional differences, some countries coincide with the WHO global figures, but others show a much more pessimistic scenario.*

# Quantitative study in six universities in Spain

- The participants were asked if they knew of any VAW situation and the affirmative response was only 13%
- But when asking the people who said “no,” if they could identify cases of "physical aggression; psychological violence; sexual aggression; pressure to have sexual-emotional relationships; kisses and caresses received without consent...." 52% answered “yes”.
- This was, 65% of the students who knew or had suffered some of the experiences known as VAW (Duque et al., 2013).

# Quantitative study in six universities in Spain

"gender violence in Spanish universities is a twofold issue, involving the existence of violence against women itself as well as the **silence that envelops it**" (Duque et al., 2013, p. 277).

They pointed out that the **challenge is to make VAW visible.**

One of the main difficulties in eliminating gender violence is that it is not recognized or detected.

**This seems to be one of the first challenges.**

# Several types of VAW in Latin America

Wilson (2014) identifies and addressed

- Domestic violence (IPV, FDV)
- Femicide,
- Structural violence

as some of the primary expressions.



# Femicide

In the federal penal code of Mexico, in its Chapter V focuses on Femicide and provides its definition:

*Whoever deprives a woman of life for gender reasons commits the crime of Femicide.*

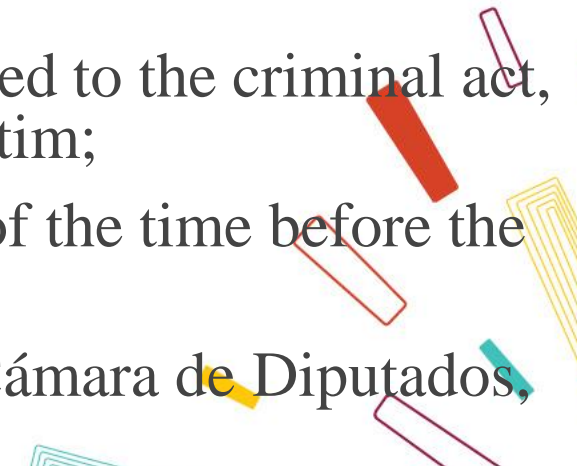
It is considered that there are gender reasons when any of the following circumstances occur:







# Femicide

- I. The victim shows signs of sexual violence of any kind;
  - II. Infamous or degrading injuries or mutilations have been inflicted on the victim before or after the deprivation of life or acts of necrophilia;
  - III. There is a history or data of any violence in the family, work, or school environment of the active subject against the victim;
  - IV. There has been a sentimental, affective, or trust relationship between the asset and the victim;
  - V. There are data that establish that there were threats related to the criminal act, harassment, or injuries of the active subject against the victim;
  - VI. The victim has been held incommunicado, regardless of the time before the deprivation of life;
  - VII. The victim's body is exposed or exhibited publicly. (Cámara de Diputados, 2021, art 325).
- 



# Femicide

The extreme form of violence based on gender inequality, is present in Argentina, Guatemala, El Salvador, and Peru, although it has not been studied in depth.

For example, in Costa Rica, the most common crime against women are domestic violence and rape.

One of the most emblematic cases is the femicides in Ciudad Juárez, where it is estimated that 300 women between 1993 and 2003 were brutally murdered.



# Structural violence

..that can be ideological, social, and economical.

Structural or symbolic violence is based on patriarchal systems, a macho culture, and religious reasons where **women are subordinated and VAW is legitimized.**

VAW prevails in a system that **legitimizes gender inequality** and accepts violence against women. A belief system is generated and transmitted by the family and religion, where women are educated to maintain the **rule of silence**, and their **identity is built around submission, forgiveness, and obedience to the partner; they embrace their selfless role of wife and mother.**



## II. VAW in Mexico

A. Feminism in Mexico and VAW Awareness

B. **Changes in the law** and new national bodies,

C. The emergence of VAW research, surveys, and monitoring.



## A. Feminism in Mexico and VAW Awareness

- In the social context, the awareness of VAW in Mexican society begins in the nineties. From 1993 to 1999, the murder of women in Ciudad Juarez occurred systematically; it was a problem that lasted most of the decade...
- The feminist movement managed **to make violence against women visible as an issue that concerns the State,** taking it out of the shadows of the private sphere.
- It would be a mistake to think that the feminist movement is something homogeneous and unified; it is a broad set of organizations with different modes of action.

## A. Feminism in Mexico and VAW Awareness


- I address the issue of feminism in Mexico since they are the ones who have had the initial leadership in this awareness in Mexican society; also, because they have **provide the theoretical support to generate changes in the legal field.**
- But it also helps us understand **Mexican society's resistance,** mainly in the religious field. The Catholic Church, which is the majority in Mexico, has viewed the feminist movement with suspicion.
- In part because the feminist movement also supports the issues of divorce, abortion, and sexual freedom. Social transformations are seen and perceived as a loss of traditional values.

## B. Changes in the law and new national bodies,

- In 2001, the National Institute for Women was formed in Mexico, whose objective was to seek gender equality and combat discrimination and violence against women
- In 2007, **the General Law on Women's Access to a Life Free of Violence (LGAMVLV)** was enacted.
- In 2009, the National Commission to Prevent and Eradicate Violence against Women was formed, and the first studies began to appear.

## B. Changes in the law and new national bodies,

It was not until 2012 that femicide was classified as a crime and was introduced into the penal code in article 325. Then in 2012, in Mexico, **six categories of crimes against women were recognized**, those...

- ❖ against their life and physical integrity (femicide, homicide, and assault);
  - ❖ against their freedom (kidnapping and trafficking of minors);
  - ❖ against their assets (extortion);
  - ❖ against society (corruption of minors and human trafficking);
  - ❖ against the family (domestic violence and gender-based violence),
  - ❖ and sexual freedom and security (rape).
- 



## C. Research, Surveys, and Monitoring

The National Survey on the Dynamics of Household Relationships was carried out 2003, 2006, 2011, 2018, 2021. This study sought to measure physical, sexual, psychological, economic, and patrimonial violence among women over 15.

\* **70.1%** women have suffered psychological, physical, sexual, and economic violence throughout **their lives**. It occurred mainly in the community environment 45.6%, in the couple 39.9%, and in school life 32.3%.

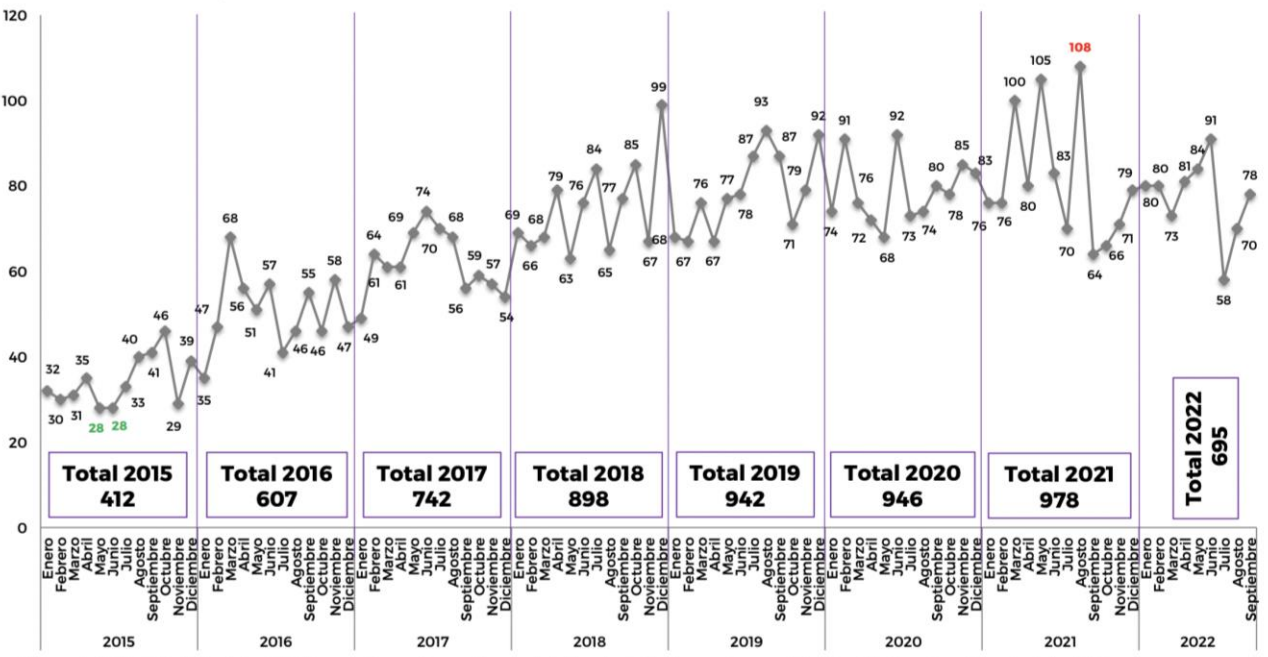
\* **42.8%** women have suffered psychological, physical, sexual, and economic violence in the last **12 months**. This violence occurred in the workplace 20.8% of the time, in the couple 20.7%, in the community 20.4%, and in the school 20.2%.

# C. Research, Surveys, and Monitoring



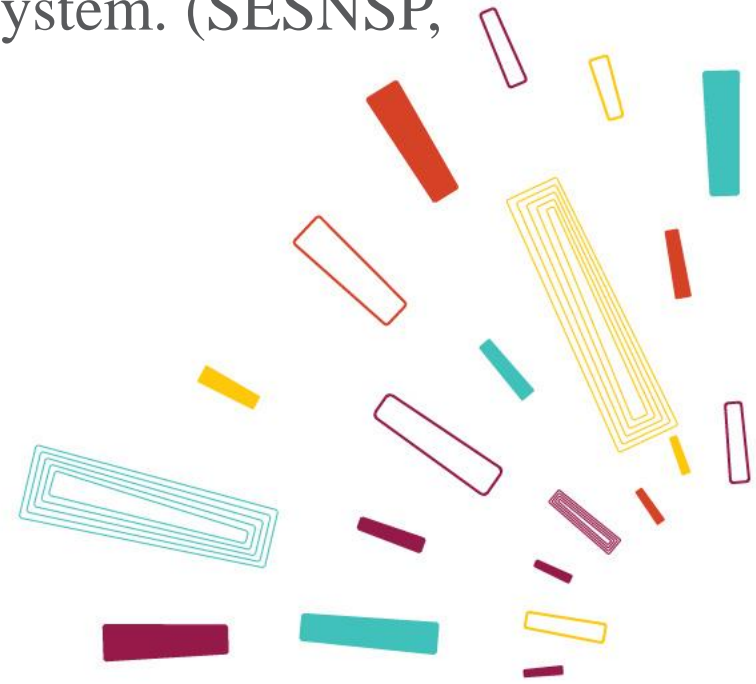
## PRESUNTOS DELITOS DE FEMINICIDIO\*: TENDENCIA NACIONAL

Enero 2015 – septiembre 2022



\* La contabilidad del delito de femicidio se realiza conforme al manual de llenado del Instrumento para el Registro, Clasificación y Reporte de los Delitos y las Víctimas CNSP/38/15 publicado en: <https://drive.google.com/file/d/1ZGUcrisaDhHuEk38sXZDUeBk3gxQFD2t/view> y conforme a los lineamientos para el registro y clasificación de los presuntos delitos de femicidio para fines estadísticos publicados en: [https://www.gob.mx/cms/uploads/attachment/file/310369/Lineamientos\\_registro\\_femicidio\\_CNPJ\\_aprobada\\_5MZO2018.pdf](https://www.gob.mx/cms/uploads/attachment/file/310369/Lineamientos_registro_femicidio_CNPJ_aprobada_5MZO2018.pdf)  
Fuente: SESNSP-CNI con información reportada por las Procuradurías o Fiscalías de las 32 entidades federativas.

Since 2015, the government has issued a monthly report of the six crimes against women through the Executive Secretariat of the National Public Security System. (SESNSP, 2022).



## C. Research, Surveys, and Monitoring

- In January 2015, there were 32 femicides; in September 2021, it reached 106
- Family violence crimes increased from 7,721 in 2015 to 23,144 in Sep 2022.
- Alleged rape crimes increased from 935 in January 2015 to 1,870 in Sep 2022.

*In crimes of family violence and rape, the statistics include men and women, although it is globally recognized that women suffer the most from this violence (Ringel & Park, 2008)..*

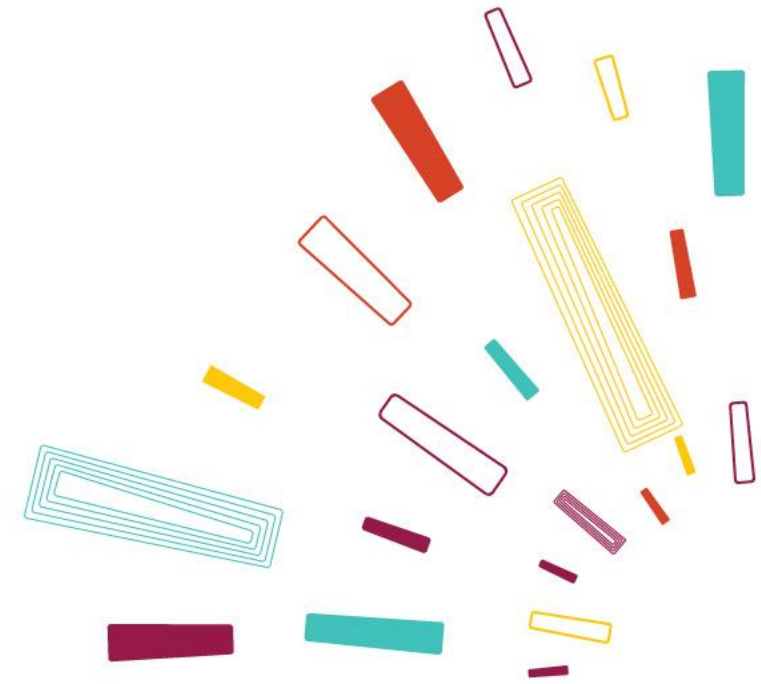
# Reflection

Observing the statistics, one perceives that VAW in Mexico has not diminished; several feminists, academics, and social activists think these **legal changes are not enough**; cultural and social change is essential (Kaufman, 1999).

In this context, the participation of churches and religious leaders is critical to generate social and cultural change, and it is necessary to investigate the **relationship between VAW and religion**.



# MARIELA



# III. VAW & Religion in Global Context

- Violence Against Women (VAW) is a social phenomenon that affects all spheres of society, including family, work, law, the university, and religion.
- Faith communities and their religious leaders play a central role in understanding and eliminating VAW
- I share several studies from different parts of the world in the last two decades.



## Dana L. Robert

Director of Center for Global Christianity & Mission of Boston University

- "the majority of Christians in the emerging churches of the world are women...women constituted a two-thirds majority of practicing Christians in the growing world church in the late twentieth and twenty-first centuries".
- Christianity is a women's religion, which is why Robert challenged scholars to put women at the center of new research in religious studies.
- Women are being converted by finding support, healing, and creating new conditions for women to exercise leadership. At the same time, that some doctrines strengthen patriarchal systems.
- The double influence of religion is recognized, women in the Christian church improve their living conditions, primarily when the husband converts, although, at the same time, some patriarchal systems persist.



# Study -2008 in USA

- Analyzed the religious and cultural values that impact intimate partner violence (IPV)..
- After interviewing eight pastors and 11 clinicians, they discovered that the **value of submission affects IPV** and does not help women to ask for help; in addition, it generates gender inequality.
- The emphasis on forgiveness is another value that distorts and does not allow women to seek help.
- **IPV remained a taboo topic**, as the authors noted that six pastors refused to be interviewed.



# Study -2018 in England

The City of Cambria conducted a study to understand the church's response to domestic abuse.

- + **42%** of the participants had experienced abusive behavior in their current or previous relationships. 90% of domestic abuse were cases of men as perpetrators.
- + **71%** of church members know domestic abuse is a community problem.
- + Still, only **37.6%** believed this problem was present in the church.

# Study -2018 in England

- + 66 % of the participants identified with "my church needs to do more to raise awareness of domestic abuse".
- + The participants expressed that the church should be a place to discuss the issue and raise awareness openly.
- + The researchers undoubtedly argued that this "gives church leaders a strong mandate to address this issue more proactively" (Aune & Barnes, 2018, p. 58).

# Study in Guatemala

- Menjivar (2011) focus was not so much the violence as individual actions carried out by the perpetrator, but the hidden, **structural and systemic violence** caused by the devaluation and inequality in which women live in the society.
- Some activities and messages of the church contribute to strengthening the structures of inequity that have consequences in women's lives. The advice that women receive is to **have patience, endure and pray with great faith.** Pastors also often recommend that women keep silent and avoid gossip.
- In addition, leaders and the community pass the responsibility to the woman; she must pray with faith to end her problem.

# Study in Guatemala

- In short, the central message for the women of the Altiplano was "resignation, tolerance, and the importance of women's sacrifice for the good of their families!" **Suffering was normalized and accepted in women's lives.**
- But... Women spend a critical time in the church's life and relationships and usually find comfort, support, and solidarity in them. Menjivar discovered in the testimonies she collected that "in both Catholic and evangelical churches in San Alejo women generally found support from coreligionists as well from the leaders".

# Study in Africa (2014)

- le Roux conducted a qualitative study to understand the African church's response to sexual violence against women (SVAW) in the Democratic Republic of Congo, Rwanda, and Liberia.
- Findings showed that **gender inequality was part of the culture**, which promoted a patriarchal system where most leaders were men, and attempts were made to keep the SVAW taboo or silent.
- Also, another contributing factor, was the lack of confidence in the justice system to punish SVAW abusers.

# Study in Africa (2014)

- The study showed that the church's intervention focused on the short term, counseling, economic support, food, and clothing, **but did not focus on the causes and roots.** Although the church promoted a patriarchal culture, at the same time, it was seen by the participants as an essential actor in helping.
- For le Roux "**structural change can only be achieved if the mind-sets of those in power – men – are transformed so that they allow change to occur.** Therefore, it is recommended that prevention efforts focus on (male) church leaders" (p. 213). This research puts the patriarchal system at the center of the problem...
- The double role of the church was still present in the reflections, but now the religious leader was identified as the key person to achieving transformation.

# Study in Australia 2022

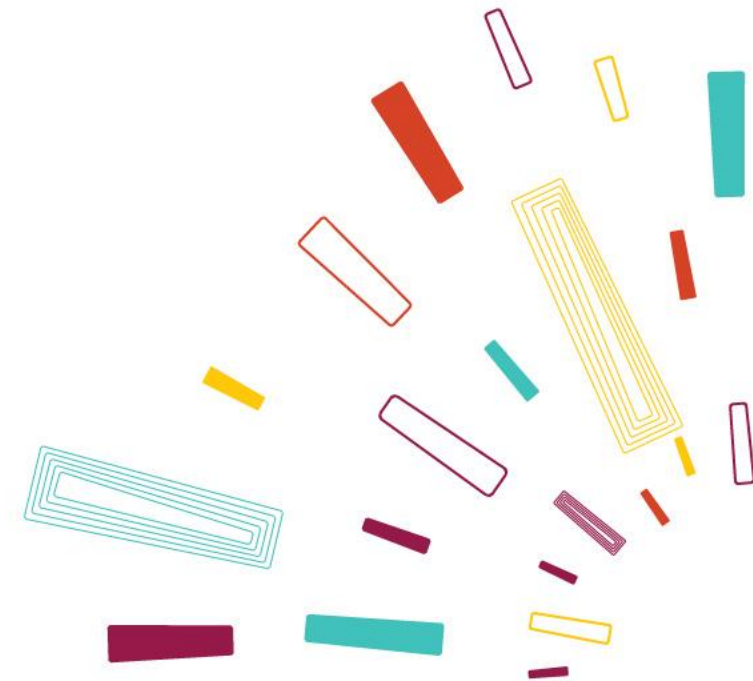
Truong et al. (2022) conducted a qualitative study to understanding the attitudes and beliefs of family and domestic violence (FDV) in the Christian, Jewish, and Islamic faith communities. Among the discoveries, it was found that

- + Religion did not condemn violence.
- + FDV remained taboo in faith communities.
- + Patience, forgiveness, and perseverance were prioritized over safety.
- + The religious structures and the gender roles that emerged from the teachings impacted the understanding and response to the FDV.

A decorative graphic in the top-left corner consisting of several small, colorful rectangles in shades of yellow, teal, purple, and red, arranged in a scattered pattern.

## IV. VAW & Mission

1. Gender Inequality
2. Teaching of Sacred Texts
3. The Culture of Silence and Denial
4. Counseling
5. Training





# 1. VAW, Gender Inequality & Mission

VAW has its roots in gender inequalities: *how this gender inequality operates, authors recognized at least four factors where the VAW happened; this was:*

- condoning of violence against women,
- men's control of **decision making** and limits to women's independence,
- stereotyped constructions of masculinity and femininity,
- disrespect towards women and male peer relations that emphasize aggression.

There has **not been a clear and decisive voice** from the religious community and its leaders that have **condemned** the VAW; instead, certain attitudes, beliefs, and actions have emerged that condone the VAW.

# 1. VAW, Gender Inequality & Mission

- Studies have identified the positive contribution of religion in women's lives.
- The findings argued that religious leaders are unaware of the link between gender inequality and VAW.
- Studies have indicated that it is essential to work with religious leaders since they play a key role in preventing and helping victims
- Authors concluded that there had been a failure to approach religious leaders, perceiving it only as part of the problem.

## Interview pastors in Mexico- Javier

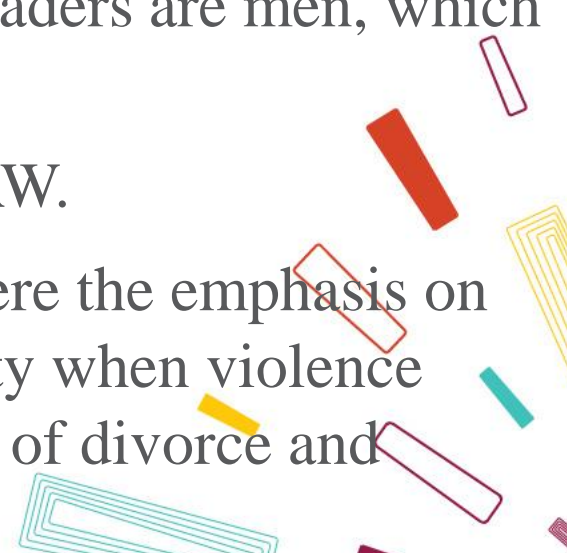
Javier said the young women from church had told him, "Pastor, we have to say something out there; we have to do something there" we cannot remain silent. For this new generation, the church must band together to "defend our girls, teenagers, migrant women, older women, all women in this country."

Javier also added...

"the girls, the young women, the students, if they do not see that our churches are inclusive where **we respect their voice**, presence, and person, they will simply leave."



## 2. Teaching of Sacred Texts

- In the academic world, it was argued that "particular interpretations of sacred texts and teachings can be used to by faith leaders to condone violence against women".
  - It has been observed that the vast majority of religious leaders are men, which has generated a biased interpretation of the texts.
  - The teachings have created a context that perpetuates VAW.
  - Some of the teachings and beliefs that were identified were the emphasis on the **submission of women**, prioritizing forgiveness over safety when violence appears, the conviction of sacred marriage, and the rejection of divorce and separation.
- 

# Interview pastors in Mexico- Pastor Juana

- Mentioned that "there are texts, for example, where Paul talks about the gender relationship, and then **we use the texts** to justify behaviors and attitudes of our own culture".
- She continued, "from that point of view, the same woman believes that she has to be subjected to abuse because they are pleasing God by being subjected."
- The belief or the message that women receive is that "if you are not submissive, if you do not endure, it is a lack of faith because God has all the power to change an abusive man."

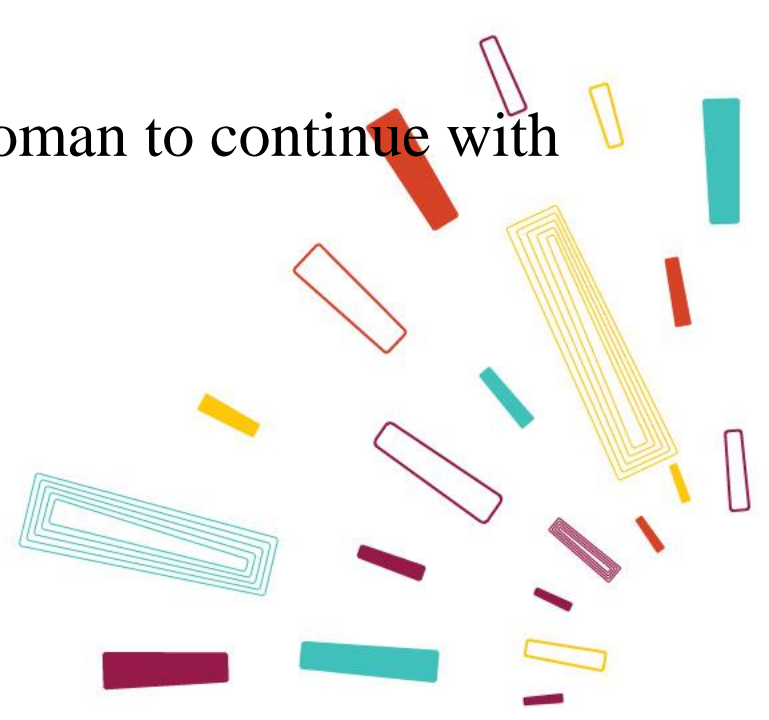
### 3. The Culture of Silence and Denial

- In a mapping carried out by le Roux and Bower-Du Toit (2017) in which they interviewed 20 experts around the world, they found that religious leaders do not believe in statistics and continue to deny that this problem was also present in their faith communities. This is not exclusive to religious leaders...
- Some studies have shown that this culture of silence could be linked to the belief that violence in the family sphere has been a matter of private life rather than a public space.
- Others have perceived it as a problem of ignorance and a narrow definition of VAW
- At the same time, it would be incorrect to think that leaders do not want to help combat VAW. Leaders, since they have become aware that it was a problem in their communities, have been willing to help, as several studies have shown.



## 4. Counseling

When reviewing various studies, it was observed that the response varies, sometimes

- + women felt heard, (really helpful)
  - + other times they were revictimized, and
  - + other studies showed that counseling failed to allow the woman to continue with her partner, putting her at risk.
- 

# Interview pastors in Mexico - Pastor María

Pastor María mentioned that of the counseling cases that she attends, "it is consistent that in therapy in the entire field of psychotherapy, 80% if not 90% of counseling is very marked by men over women in the different categories that are handled". The bad thing is that the man is not aware of his abuse.

- The first challenge is the need for new framework for counseling.
- The second challenge is to review our prejudices as pastors.
- The third challenge is about recognizing limitations.
- The fourth challenge goes beyond the traditional role.
- The fifth challenge has to do with the pain.



## 5. Training

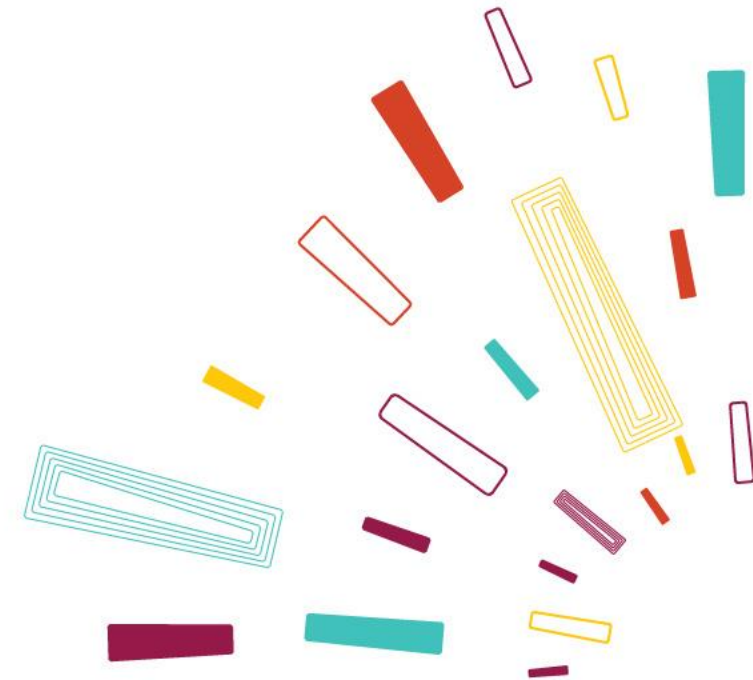
- Some authors suggested that the issue of VAW should not be conceptualized as a women's problem.
- In the global south, it should be assumed as a matter of men and women. Researchers argued it is necessary to do so from a gender partnership, male and women.
- Religious leaders or men, have been the gatekeepers of faith communities...
- Studies have indicated the leaders have little training in this area, and their desire and need for more training was clear.

# Interview pastors in Mexico - Pastor Enrique

- Enrique pointed out, "it is a challenge because one, as a pastor, does not have psychological tools...."
- He added, "I must know if I can give them counseling or if I have to refer a psychologist. This has to do with integrity."




# SHEYLA





# Reflection

How can we transform these realities of gender inequality, some approach to the scripture, counseling, culture of silence, and training with the power of the gospel?

- + Suffering was normalized and accepted in women's lives.
  - + Religion did not condemn violence.
  - + FDV remained taboo in faith communities.
  - + Patience, forgiveness, and perseverance were prioritized over safety.
  - + The religious structures and the gender roles that emerged from the teachings impacted the understanding and response to the FDV.
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