The Importance of Context: A Pilot Case Study of A Woman Who Engaged in Intimate Partner Violence

Jessica L. Spraggins
THE IMPORTANCE OF CONTEXT:
A PILOT CASE STUDY OF A WOMAN WHO ENGAGED IN
INTIMATE PARTNER VIOLENCE

By

JESSICA L. SPRAGGINS

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The members of the Committee approve the thesis of Jessica L. Spraggins defended on July 3, 2008.

__________________________________
David Gussak
Professor Directing Thesis

__________________________________
Marcia Rosal
Committee Member

__________________________________
Penny Orr
Committee Member

Approved:

__________________________________
Marcia Rosal, Chair, Department of Art Education

__________________________________
Sally McRorie, Dean, College of Visual Arts, Theatre and Dance

The Office of Graduate Studies has verified and approved the above named committee members.
This thesis is dedicated to my family.

They taught me the meaning of love, wisdom and perseverance.
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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this case study was to explore the contextual experience of a woman who engaged in intimate partner violence. Past and current literature on women’s engagement in intimate relationships violence is largely influenced by three theoretical camps—feminist, social learning, and family systems—none of which adequately explain nor explore the nature of the issue (Perilla, Frndak, Lillard & East, 2003). This case study used a different, contextual-based approach to frame the research and data: the ecological nested model (ENM). The model situates violence within four layers of a person’s experience: (a) the individual system—childhood experience, family of origin, role models; (b) the microsystem—family relationships, friendships, colleagues; (c) the exosystem—social networks, socioeconomic status, occupation; and (d) the macrosystem—societal norms, culture, ethnicity (Bronfenbrenner, 1977, 1986; Dasgupta, 2002; Larance, 2006). With the guidance of a supervised, student art therapist researcher, a female inmate who engaged in intimate partner violence participated in six art therapy sessions. During the sessions the participant explored and explained her experiences with violence, and the effect of contextual-based influences on her engagement in intimate partner violence.
CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION

The social phenomenon of domestic violence has occurred throughout recorded history and continues today in households across the world (Kahn, 2000; Zahm, 1999). The belief that domestic violence is a social, political and gender issue, and not a private one, is a relatively recent development (Crawford & Unger, 2004). With the wave of feminism in the 1960s, American theorists and researchers sought awareness for the victimization of women (Crawford & Unger, 2004). While the percentages vary, reported data suggests that high rates of female adolescents and adults are abused by their male partners (Burcky, Reuterman, & Kopsky, 1988; Crawford & Unger, 2004; O’Keefe, Brockopp & Chew, 1986; Kahn 2000; White & Koss, 1991; World Health Organization, 2002). The American feminists argue that society and government are responsible for protecting women from the violence occurring in the privacy of the home (Crawford & Unger, 2004).

Many American feminists also argue that the nature of a patriarchal society and its consequential inequality of power between men and women produce high rates of women’s victimization (Bograd, 1984; Crawford & Unger, 2004; White & Kowalski, 1996). However, there are other theories that attempt to explain domestic violence. Family systems theorists contend that stressors on the family cause male partners to abuse their female counterparts (Gelles, 1985, 1993; Gelles & Straus, 1988; Perilla, Frndak, Lillard & East, 2003, Stets & Straus, 1990; Straus, 1993, 1997, 1999; Straus, Gelles & Steinmetz, 1980). Social learning theorists argue that children who observe violence occurring in their family, or are victims of familial violence, may later engage in violence in their adult romantic relationships because it is learned and reinforced as acceptable behavior (Bandura, 1977; Barnett, Miller-Perrin & Perrin, 2005; Etaugh & Bridges, 2006; Kalmuss, 1984; MacEwen, 1994; Swinford, DeMaris, Cernkovich, & Giordano, 2000; Wall & McKee, 2002).

A recent change in awareness of additional aspects of domestic violence suggest that the number of women arrested for and admitting to using physical violence with their heterosexual and lesbian partners may be on the rise (Dasgupta, 2002; House, 2001; Martin, 1997; Miller, 2001; Larance, 2006; Perilla et al., 2003). Some researchers argue
that women have been using violence against their partners for some time and society has only recently taken notice (Strauss, 1999; Carney, Buttell & Dutton, 2007). Others contend that because of societal shifts of power, women and girls are now using physical violence more often (Garbarino, 2006; Larance, 2006).

Women’s engagement in violence in their intimate relationships is a controversial topic. Feminists are concerned with the possible backlash of the phenomenon (Perilla et al., 2003). They argue that women who engage in intimate partner violence are usually doing so in self-defense, and that women rarely cause the degree of bodily harm that men can inflict (Crawford & Unger, 2004; Edelson, 1998; Hamberger, 1997; Hamberger & Potente, 1994; Larance, 2006; Saunders, 1986, 2002). With different perspective, family systems theorists believe that violence is a result of family stressors, not gender and power inequality (Perilla et al., 2003; Steinmetz, 1981; Stets & Straus, 1990; Straus & Gelles, 1986; Straus, Gelles, & Steinmetz, 1980). Lastly, social learning theorists argue that violence is transmitted through family generations, as an observed, learned and reinforced behavior within the family- daughters may learn it from their parents just as easily as sons (Bandura, 1977; Barnett, Miller-Perrin & Perrin, 2005; Etaugh & Bridges, 2006; Kalmuss, 1984; MacEwen, 1994; Swinford, DeMaris, Cernkovich, & Giordano, 2000; Wall & McKee, 2002).

One of the fundamental problems with these theories is that neither feminist, family systems nor social learning theories can entirely account for the phenomenon of violence perpetrated by heterosexual and lesbian women. Feminist theory does not account for the existence of lesbian women who use violence with their intimate partners (Perilla et al., 2003). If feminist theory were wholly accurate, violence between lesbian partners would not occur because there would not be an imbalance of gender equality in a lesbian relationship. What this underscores is the singular focus on patriarchal hierarchy, which falls short of explaining the many contextual factors that may influence women’s engagement in violence. Family systems and social learning theory do not account for the contextual factors- such as culture, ethnicity and socioeconomic status- that correlate with both men’s and women’s use of violence in relationships (Dasgupta, 2002; Perilla et al., 2003; Renzetti, 1999). Thus it is imperative that additional areas of study, such as
culture, ethnicity, sexual orientation and socioeconomic status, are considered when framing ideas about women who engage in violence in their intimate partnerships.

**Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this study is to explore the usefulness of a different theoretical model than commonly used in previous studies of intimate partner violence. The model used in this study is the Ecological Nested Model; it uses four layers of contextual factors to explain domestic violence (ENM; Bronfenbrenner, 1977, 1986; Dasgupta, 2002; Larance, 2006). In the past two decades, the model was used in several studies that explored the context and experiences of women who engage in violence in their relationships (Larance, 2006). The ENM is practical for research on women who engage in violence because it emphasizes the range of women’s experiences and how these experiences may influence their use of violence. Further, the theory proposed by the ENM— that a number of experiences affect and influence a decision to use violence— is consistent with quantitative data that shows a high correlation between women’s past victimization by fathers and previous partners and engagement in violence in intimate relationships (Feerick, Haugaard, & Hien, 2002; Johnson, 1995; Sullivan, Meese, Swan, Mazure, & Snow, 2005; Wesely, 2006). Therefore, the ENM is an appropriate model for this study.

**Justification**

Because of the women’s movement, a large number of researchers have studied domestic violence (Crawford & Unger, 2004). With the uncontestable high rates of women’s victimization by male partners, it is clear that such research is valid and important (Crawford & Unger, 2004). The problem however is that the research has been heavily influenced, and arguably biased, by the fact that many researchers studied only violence perpetrated by men.

To clarify the complex subtleties of violence in the home, it is important to explore all aspects of the issue, including women’s experiences with and engagement in violent behaviors (Larance, 2006; Worcester, 2002). There are currently few certain conclusions about women’s use of violence, so it is imperative that the issue be explored.
with a contextual- and participant-based structure (Larance, 2006; Wesely, 2006; Worcester, 2002). The ENM allows for a variety of violence-related issues to be explored, while still providing a consistent theoretical framework and method of analysis for the study. Therefore this research study will explore the nature and context of intimate partner violence perpetrated by women using the ENM.

**Research Questions**

The case study was framed by several research questions. These questions were derived from the literature review and the study’s theoretical model, ENM. While both provided a solid foundation for this research study, knowledge from the literature review and the ENM must be applied in more studies to better understand the literature and its support for the ENM. Thus, the comprehensive thesis question for this case study was: how do contextual factors affect women’s engagement in intimate partner violence?

The literature review reveals that women are engaging in intimate partner violence at increasingly higher rates, and that past research on intimate partner violence and rehabilitation for violent women is inadequate (Carney, Buttell & Dutton, 2006; Barnes, 1998; Davis & Taylor, 1999; Feder & Forde, 2000; Friess, 1997; Island & Letellier, 1991; Kernsmith, 2005; Larance, 2006; Luthra & Gidycz, 2006; Peterman & Dixon, 2003; Renzetti, 1992; Strauss, 1999; Straus, Gelles & Steinmetz, 1980; White, Donat, & Bondurant, 2007). While the ENM suggests contextual factors may account for women’s engagement in violence, not enough research has been performed to correlate the ENM’s effectiveness as a theoretical model for women’s violence with intimate partners (Larance, 2006). Consequently, within the thesis question were two research questions: (a) What are the contextual factors that affect women’s engagement in intimate partner violence? (b) How can the ENM be used to better understand the relationship between the contextual factors and women’s engagement in intimate partner violence? These questions guide the direction of the qualitative exploration in the case study.

**Paradigms and Assumptions**

The chosen paradigm for the study was transformative. The ontology was that the data will be constructed by a number of realities, and theoretically supported by the
multiple levels of social systems dissected in the Ecological Nested Model (ENM, Bronfenbrenner, 1977, 1986; Dasgupta, 2002; Larance, 2006; see figure 1). An interactive epistemology was stressed; data collection was a mutual learning process with the participant. She is called “Gloria” throughout the study to protect her identity. Data collection included Gloria’s experiences recorded verbatim during interviews and the art therapy sessions as well as the artwork created by Gloria. The art therapy sessions were directed by both her and the researcher’s needs and goals. The flexibility and mutual decision-making during the art therapy sessions fit within the qualitative method of data collection and allowed the research question to be examined in an exploratory manner.

During the last data-gathering session, Gloria and the researcher conducted a debriefing session. In this last session, all data gathered was discussed and processed. The participant was also ensured that she had adequate information for referral to additional psychological services on-site, if needed. It was also recommended that Gloria continue individual therapy with the psychologist at her correctional facility. Once gathered, the data was grounded within the theoretical proposition of the ENM and coded to create a logic model. The coded logic model exemplified the multi-layered perspective of the ENM, thus proving impetus for further research into the use of the ENM for domestic violence research inquiry.

**Definition of Terms**

The nature, history and context of intimate partner violence are complex. With more research on the issue, more layers are discovered, and more terms are used to describe the subtleties of intimate partner violence. For these reasons, it is important to clarify specific terms used in the study. Additionally, due to the controversial aspects of intimate partner violence, it is vital to use specific terminology that describes behaviors as they are used within the context of the situation, rather than as labels for people who exhibit specific behaviors.

*Intimate partnership* or *intimate relationship* is used interchangeably to define a heterosexual, lesbian or gay couple that may or may not be married. The term *cohabiting* is used to clarify that a couple is living together but not married. A *heterosexual*
relationship consists of a man and a woman, and a lesbian relationship consists of two women.

The word violence is often used as a broad umbrella term for a number of subcategories of different types of violence. In this study, violence encompasses the manifestation of emotion through physical, verbal, and/or indirect means. It is important to note the difference between the felt emotion and the separate enactment of the emotions through a variety of means. A meta-analysis of several international research studies suggest that men and women experience similar rates of anger, frustration and other strong emotions, but the emotions may be enacted with different types of behaviors and at different targets (Archer, 2004). For this reason, it is imperative to delineate the different types of violence and how these terms will be used to describe behaviors.

Physical violence involves the intent to perpetrate bodily harm on another person through any means, which may include but is not limited to slapping, kicking, biting, throwing an object, or hitting. Physical violence may also be inflicted on the self, and will be categorized as such with the term self-inflicted physical violence, self-injury or self-harm. Verbal violence is spoken from one person to another with the intent to hurt the targeted person. Both verbal and physical violence are directed towards the person who has angered, frustrated, or upset the procurer of the aggression (this does not imply that the partner deserves the violence but that the perpetrator has reacted towards her partner with aggression or violence). The term displaced violence defines violence displaced onto a different person or object than the intended target. An example might be that a parent who is angry at her partner is unable or afraid to express that anger towards her partner and yells or hits her child. Often times a person may not realize he or she is displacing violence onto someone or something else.

Within the narrower field of intimate partner violence are additional terms. Intimate or romantic partner violence is a term used to describe the expression of physical, verbal or emotional aggression between one or both partners in a heterosexual or homosexual relationship. The term use of force describes “physically, verbally, and emotionally detrimental behaviors” used by men and women toward his or her partner (Larance, 2006, p. 624). Battering is used to define the “systematic pattern of violence, threat of violence, and/or other coercive behaviors and/or tactics with the intention of
exerting power, inducing fear, and/or controlling another person” (Larance, 2006, p.624). Note the use of the term *power* in the definition of *battering*. The question of *power* versus *gender* as the root for violence in intimate partnerships has been addressed by several feminist theorists (Elliot, 1996; hooks, 2000).

In this study, the ENM allowed for exploration of the subtle, yet instrumental roles that power and gender play in a woman’s engagement in violence with an intimate partner. Power and gender are issues grounded within the macrosystem level of the theoretical model used in this study, the *ecological nested model* (ENM; Bronfenbrenner, 1977, 1986; Dasgupta, 2002; Larance, 2006). The *ENM* is defined by Lisa Young Larance (2006; see figure 1):

The four interrelated levels of the ENM are (a) the individual level that explores a woman’s perspective of her childhood experiences, including family of origin, socialization, and role models; (b) the micro-system level that encompasses a woman’s current family, situational, friendship, and workplace relationships; (c) the exosystem level that involves the formal and informal structures and institutions with which a woman comes into contact throughout her life such as social networks, socioeconomic status, and occupation; and (d) the macro-system level that addresses the societal norms that govern a woman’s life experiences, such as her culture and ethnicity. (p. 626)

The noun *man* can be interchanged with *woman* in the above definition of the ENM.

The study is focused on the context of intimate partner violence so it is important to clarify some terms used to explain the nature of *force*. Several studies have indicated a possible link between self-defense and women’s use of force (Follingstad et al., 1999). To further complicate understanding of aggression used in self-defense are the statistics that suggest women are less likely to kill their batterer after a physical fight than to do so with a level of premeditation, or seemingly at a random time, after years of severe abuse (Motz, 2001; Wykes, 1994). Women are also more likely to become physically violent in later relationships if they are survivors of intimate partner violence (Bookwala, Frieze, Smith, & Ryan, 1992; Luthra & Gidycz, 2006; O’Keefe, 1997).

In fact, most intimate partner violence is reciprocal (Archer, 2000, 2004; Sullivan, Meese, Swan, Mazure & Snow, 2005). Throughout the study, the phrases *engage in*
violence or engage in aggressive behaviors is used. The term engage purposely implies that responsibility for violence may lie with both partners. Responsibility is not related to blame, guilt or victimization, rather, this study’s theoretical perspective emphasizes that personal acknowledgement of one’s responsibility in their engagement in violent or aggressive behaviors is an important step towards understanding of the self and society and eventual healing.

The term self-defense implies immediate physical defense against an aggressor; it does not adequately define the residual build-up of anger and frustration that may lead to patterns of violence used by women against their partners after they have suffered violence from previous partners. The term residual defense is used to describe a woman’s use of violence against a partner after having experienced violence from a former or current partner. Additionally, research suggests that violence may also be used as a coping mechanism (Wesely, 2006). In this study, when violence is used by a partner to cope with his or her current, stressful situation, the violence may be labeled as a coping mechanism. When used in immediate response as a means of protecting one’s self or children, the violence is described as self-defense.

Raphael (2004) proposed that engagement in violence in a relationship is a structured choice. A structured choice is one made within the contextual experience of an individual; it is affected by the many levels of one’s life—social, cultural, socioeconomic and familial history (Raphael, 2004; Wesely, 2006). While engagement in violence is an active choice, it is structured by layers of marginalization, victimization and limitations (Wesely, 2006). These experiences are not excuses for the use of violence but a system to ground and frame a woman’s use of violence within her contextual experience. Furthermore, the ENM supports the theory that women who use violence are making structured choices.

Women’s engagement in intimate partner violence is colored by the subjective view of society. To dissect the vocabulary used to describe intimate partner violence and women’s role in it clarifies some of the subjectivity and allows qualitative research to be clearer and more objective in its exploration of the phenomenon. However, the depth and breadth of the terms defined in this paper illustrate the complexity of the issue and the
consequential difficulty in better understanding it. To be as clear as possible, the terms above will be used in this paper as defined.

**Summary**

Many research studies have explored domestic violence, hoping to better understand the reasons of its occurrence as well as create preventative education, programming and therapeutic treatment interventions. However, fewer studies have looked at the nature of women who engage in domestic violence with their intimate partners. Of these studies, few have found an adequate theoretical model to best understand and treat women who engage in intimate partner violence. The purpose of this study was to discover the contextual factors of a woman’s experience with violence and to see if and how these contextual factors fit the ones outlined in the Ecological Nested Model (ENM).

Utilizing the expressive qualities and rapport-building strengths inherent to art therapy, this study will present the data collected from art therapy sessions with a woman imprisoned with past charges of assault against her husband. Together, the researcher and participant, “Gloria” used artwork and oral interviews to explore her experiences with violence. Next, a logic model was coded from verbatim of the interviews’ transcripts and the artwork, the compared to the contextual factors of the ENM.

In chapter 2, a review of the literature is outlined in several subcategories relevant to women’s violence: an increase in awareness, contextual factors, men as victims, theories, and therapeutic interventions. Support for the ENM as a useful model for understanding women’s violence and creating effective programming for the issue is underscored throughout the literature review. The following chapter explains the methodology for the study, and chapters 4 and 5 present the results of the study and pertinent discussion. To conclude, chapter 6 summarizes the results as they relate to the ENM, art therapy and the original research questions.
CHAPTER 2
REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

The literature review explores several significant areas of research about intimate partner violence: increases in awareness of women’s violence, contextual factors of women’s engagement in violence, men as victims of intimate partner violence, theoretical perspectives on intimate partner violence and therapeutic interventions for intimate partner violence. Most previous and contemporary research into intimate partner violence fit into one of these five areas. Additionally, many of the studies within these categories support the need for additional research about intimate partner violence, particularly women’s engagement in violence and the necessity of more appropriate and effective treatment interventions for violent women.

Increase in Awareness of Women’s Violence

Domestic violence perpetrated by male heterosexual partners has been a controversial societal and feminist issue since the women’s movement increased its awareness and made a case for its prosecution and punishment by the public government (Crawford & Unger, 2004; Larance, 2006). Until the past decade, the focus of research was not on heterosexual or lesbian’s women’s use of violence with their intimate partners (Pearson, 1997; Peterman & Dixon, 2003; Wesely, 2006). Many feminist theorists argued that men abused their partners because of the power struggles inherent to heterosexual relationships within a patriarchal society (Crawford & Unger, 2004; Etaugh & Bridges, 2006; Perilla et al, 2003). Consequently, the possibility that heterosexual and lesbian women may be abusing their partners was not a belief included in early feminist thought. More recent feminist research has begun to expand their theories to include the subtle contextual nuances of a patriarchal society and how these may in fact contribute to women’s victimization and consequential use of violence with their partners (Wesely, 2006).

Despite the limited number of studies on women as perpetrators of domestic violence in comparison to those on men as perpetrators, several researchers have pursued the issue. A number of researchers have suggested that heterosexual and lesbian women are perpetrating physical violence against their partners at about the same rate as or
higher than men do their female partners (Carney, Buttell & Dutton, 2006; Barnes, 1998; Friess, 1997; Island & Letellier, 1991; Larance, 2006; Luthra & Gidycz, 2006; Peterman & Dixon, 2003; Renzetti, 1992; Straus, 1999; Straus, Gelles & Steinmetz, 1980; White, Donat, & Bondurant, 2007). Current research consistently suggests that some women use violence in their intimate partnerships, but the numbers vary from around 10% to over 50% of women surveyed in different studies (Carney, Buttell & Dutton, 2007; Pearson, 1997; White, 2007). Because of the emotional, political and controversial components of women’s violence and the consequential biases, researchers find it difficult to determine an approximate percentage of women using violence, as well as how biases may affect the outcome of the studies.

Some researchers believe that women and girls are using violence more often than in the past (Garbarino, 2006). Through extensive work with violent young boys and recent work with violent young girls, Garbarino (2006) theorized that more equality in societal power encourages young girls to behave more like boys. Garbino (2006) believed girls use violence as a tool to gain power and that media reflects and emphasizes increased use of physical violence by girls. A recent rise in arrest rates of women accused of domestic violence (Dasgupta, 2002; House, 2001; Larance, 2006; Martin, 1997; Miller, 2001) and sensationalized news stories about murderous women (Wesely, 2006; Worcester, 2002) creates an appearance of women exhibiting more violent behaviors than ever before. Pearson (1997), however, speculated that women have been using violence in their relationships for some time. She argued that because of the shame men and lesbians may feel as victims, or society’s disbelief that such an issue exists or is a problem, the topic has been suppressed (Pearson, 1997). Whether women are becoming more violent or the public is becoming more aware of it is likely unquantifiable. The critical issue here is that social science researchers are beginning to see the subtle layers and nuances that play a role in the contextual factors of domestic violence.

**Contextual Factors of Women’s Engagement in Violence**

There are several contextual factors that were consistently and repeatedly cited in research studies on women’s engagement in violence. Traumatic history, reciprocal aggression, avoidance coping, social limitations, and substance abuse and dependence are
all common themes in the lives of women who report engaging in violent behaviors. These contextual factors are explored from the perspective of many past and contemporary research studies on violent women.

**Traumatic History**

Even with the many variables and theories on women’s use of violence, there are several consistencies in the research. Several of the consistencies become clearer when the context of the violence and the history of the woman perpetrating the violence are investigated. First and most apparent, researchers have found a high statistical correlation between women who use violence in their intimate partnerships and a history of physical or sexual abuse by a father-figure or previous partner (Langhinrichsen-Rohling, Neidig, & Thorn, 1995; Luthra & Gidycz, 2006; Magdol et al., 1997; Sullivan et al., 2005). In a study on a birth cohort of 21 year olds, Magdol et al. (1997) found that victimized women were ten times more likely to use violence in their intimate relationships than nonvictimized women (Sullivan et al., 2005). Luthra and Gidycz (2006), in their survey of 200 college students, found that women who had violent fathers were “almost three times as likely to perpetrate violence against their dating partners” (p. 726). Feerick, Haugaard, and Hien (2002) found that sexual abuse in childhood was a predictor of women’s use of violence, while physical abuse was not. Using qualitative methods, Wesely (2006) found a theme of childhood and adolescent victimization (physical, sexual abuse and verbal abuse, and neglect) among all forty of the violent women she interviewed. The research on traumatic history and use of violence with an intimate partner clarifies a connection between female children experiencing trauma in their family of origin and later use of violence in adolescent and adult intimate partnerships.

**Reciprocal Aggression**

Some studies have also noted that violence perpetrated by women may be reciprocal (Jack, 1999; Luthra & Gidycz, 2006; Motz, 2001). Luthra & Gidcyz (2006), in their assessment of 200 college students using the 18-item Conflicts Tactics Scales (CTS; Straus, 1979), found that a quarter of the women surveyed admitted to using violence “with their current or most recent dating partner” and that “the single largest predictor of
female dating violence perpetration was a partner’s use of aggression” (p. 723). A meta-
alysis by Archer (2000) also found a significant correlation in partners’ use of reciprocal physical aggression (Sullivan et al., 2005).

The issue of reciprocal violence remains a heated debate among domestic violence researchers (Pearson, 1997; Worcester, 2002). They question whether reciprocal violence is self-defense, a result of pent-up rage against their current or past abuser, or relational in nature. Several feminist theorists argue that when women use violence with their partners, it is in retaliation (Dasgupta, 1999; Larance, 2006; Pearson, 1997; Saunders, 1986, 2002). This promulgation fits their theory that women’s victimization is a result of a patriarchal society. Some contemporary feminist theorists believe women’s violence is a result of their repressed anger against their current or past abuser; anger is repressed because of the social expectations and gender polarity of a patriarchal society (Foucault, 1979). The repressed anger is coupled with underdeveloped pro-social coping skills because of the victimization, sexual objectification and oppression of women in a patriarchal society (Bartkey, 1990; Bordo, 1993; Chapkis, 1986; Griffin, 1981; Martin, 1992). The combination of repressed anger and underdeveloped coping mechanisms can lead to an explosive, physically violent event (Jack, 1999; Wesely, 2006).

The idea of women’s violence as relational is a theoretical intersection between the ideas of retaliation and pent-up anger. Relational aggression, as defined by Jack (1999), is an aggression that arises “in certain situations in relationship that are accompanied by fear, anger or a need to defend oneself” (p. 43). Jack (1999) described relational aggression as “part of an ebb and flow of relatedness” traveling a spectrum of violent interactions from verbal to extreme physical violence as the relationship itself “cycles through times of transgression, distance and pain” (p. 43). The differences between these three types of reciprocal violence are so subtle and virtually unquantifiable that qualitative, investigatory research of violent women’s history and context is imperative to better understand why women use violence in their relationships.

Avoidance Coping

A study by Sullivan, Meese, Swan, Mazure and Snow (2005) looked at precursors of women’s violence- such as victimization, childhood abuse and avoidance
coping. Sullivan et al. (2005) defined avoidance coping as “trying to avoid thinking about or dealing with stressful life events…or a problem” (p. 293). Several studies have found a correlation between women being victimized and use of avoidance coping (Ferrer, 1998; Signon, Greene, Rohan, & Nichols, 1996). Sullivan et al. (2005) hypothesized that women who use violence also use avoidance coping because they are likely to have experienced victimization. Their results did not correspond with their hypothesis: From their surveys with 108 women who admitted to engaging in a violent act with a male partner within the past 6 months, Sullivan et al. (2005) found a high, significant correlation between women’s victimization and child abuse, and use of violence in relationship, but that avoidance coping was not correlated with women’s use of violence. This conclusion has special importance when considering therapy and programs for women who use violence in their relationships; avoidance coping may not need be addressed as part of a therapeutic intervention.

Social Limitations

Wesely (2006) conducted in-depth interviews with 20 current and former exotic dancers, and 20 women staying at homeless shelters, in order to learn more about the context of women’s violence. She found several overlapping themes in the women’s stories: “gendered victimizations, inequalities, social exclusions and disadvantages, and how the women related those to their later life choices and experiences, including the use of violence” (p.308). Most of the women had experienced extreme poverty from a young age and lacked the economic and social resources to understand how to change their situation (Wesely, 2006). For many, exotic dancing and prostitution was a way to survive, and improve their economic resources (Wesely, 2006). Wesely (2006) explained that the choices the women made to pursue sex work or to use violence were not directly influenced by “coercion or force” but were a part of a much wider “context of social injustices and marginalizations” (p. 314).

In her research on domestic violence and welfare, Kurz (1999) found that the group of women who experienced the highest rates of domestic violence were the poorest, and that the level of poverty was positively correlated with the severity of violence experienced (Worcester, 2002). As Kurz (1999) clarified in her research, it is
impossible, without any studies to date, to determine the reason for the relationship between poverty and experience of domestic violence, or to quantify how social limitations play such a pivotal role in domestic violence (Worcester, 2002). The relationship may be cyclical. Bible and Osthoff (1998) noted that women who are arrested for and convicted of domestic violence are consequentially limited in opportunities for employment; consequently they have decreased resources of financial support for themselves and their family.

**Substance Abuse & Addiction**

Another possible variable in women’s use of violence is substance abuse and addiction. Sommer, Barnes and Murray (1992), in a survey of 452 married or cohabitating women, found that 39% used violence with their male partners. A high score on the Eysenck Personality Questionnaire (EPQ) psychotic scale was a risk factor for using violence. There was also a weak but significant correlation with alcohol use, a high score on EPQ psychotic scale and intimate partner violence. White and Chen (2002) found that alcohol use increased the possibility that women would engage in violence. In a study of 91 adults in treatment for cocaine dependence, Dansky, Byrne and Brady (1999) found a high rate of intimate partner violence perpetrated by men and women, as well as high rates of PTSD by both. Men assaulted by their intimate partners reported higher levels of PTSD symptoms and addiction severity than men assaulted by others (Dansky et al., 1999). The studies show that there may be a connection between substance use and intimate partner violence. How the substance abuse plays a role in the violence is unclear.

The lack of research on a causal relationship between substance abuse and intimate partner violence makes it difficult to determine the nature of the correlations (Bennett, 1995). Additionally, Peterman and Dixon (2003) note that caution is critical when studying substance abuse and intimate partner violence. Walker (2000) and Peterman and Dixon (2003) argued that many people with substance abuse issues do not abuse partners, and that there is not enough data to suggest that substance abuse causes men and women to act violently towards their partners (Bennett, 1995; Dakis, 1995; Peterman & Dixon, 2003; Walker, 2000). Substance abuse and intimate partner violence
may both be methods of coping with childhood abuse, or current abuse by a partner. More research investigating contextual factors and causality of violence is needed to clarify their complex inter-relationship.

**Men as Victims of Intimate Partner Violence**

A large part of the taboo and controversy surrounding the topic of women who use violence with their partners is a direct result of the ideas and constructs American society has about gender roles (Gilbert, 2002; Pearson, 1997; White, 2007). Much of the western world sees gender through a rigid, patriarchal lens: women are supposed to be the kind and caring nurturers, while men are the breadwinners, the heads-of-household, and the aggressive sex (Campbell, 1993; Crawford & Unger, 2004; Gilbert, 2002; Wesely, 2006). It is also important to remember that early research of domestic violence was almost entirely framed with the perspective that women are victims and men are perpetrators (Campbell, 1993; Gilbert, 2002). Some feminist theorists and advocates for women’s rights believed that women would not use violence if they did not live in a patriarchal society and feel a need to fight back against aggressive or violent men (Dasgupta, 1999). The idea that women are violent and are victimized is difficult to accept, and the possibility that physically larger and stronger men are victimized by women is difficult for many men and women to comprehend (Pearson, 1997).

Several studies have investigated the rates of men’s victimization by their female romantic partners. What many have found is that there is a range of violent acts, and severity of violence within those acts, perpetrated by both men and women in violent relationships (Pearson, 1997). It appears that some men are victimized, but it is challenging to determine exact numbers, statistic or rates of domestic violence (Pearson, 1997). Through a survey, Straus, Gelles and Steinmatz, (1980) found that both “minor” and “severe abuse was committed equally by men and women” (Pearson, 1997, p.119). A later study of American military couples by Straus and Gelles (1995) found that about half “had bruised, battered and wounded each other to exactly the same degree” (Pearson, 1997, p. 121). A count of people admitted to a Detroit emergency room for domestic violence injuries showed that 38% were men (Pearson, 1997). A recent study by Felson and Cares (2005) found that men are more likely than women to suffer serious injury
from domestic violence, and less likely to use physical violence than women in a relationship (Carney, Buttell & Dutton, 2006).

The data suggests that men are in fact injured by domestic violence as often as women. Furthermore, not only are men being injured, but the fear of injury is just as terrorizing for victimized men as it is for victimized women (Carney, Buttel & Dutton, 2006; Hines, Brown & Dunning, 2003; Laroche, 2005). But with social stigma about gender roles, aggression and violence, it may be difficult for men to admit to being hurt by their female partners, and difficult for women to seek help for their use of violence. A disconcerting aspect of this is that male survivors of domestic abuse may not receive adequate empathy, support or mental health treatment (Pearson, 1997).

Domestic violence is a complex and embedded social phenomenon (Worcester, 2002). Like many of the other contextual factors that contribute to women’s use of violence with their partners, the topic of men being victimized has many correlating factors that may need to be investigated. For example, some researchers have argued that women use violence as self-defense or as a tool to end their own abuse and victimization (Dasgupta, 1999; Saunders, 1986), while others claim that some women are the initiators of violence of their partners (Pearson, 1997). In the middle of the spectrum are researchers that argue women use violence for a variety of reasons (Jack, 1999; Larance, 2006; Wesely, 2006). If both men and women are inflicting injury on their partners, who are the victims and who are the perpetrators? This type of question, which cannot easily be quantified by statistical research or data collection, necessitates further exploration through qualitative methods.

**Theories about Domestic Violence**

When studying domestic violence, perpetrated by either men or women, there are several theoretical frameworks more predominantly used in research; most commonly cited are feminist theory, family systems theory, social learning theory and the ecological nested model. The theories are explained and explored as models for research studies. The strengths and weaknesses of each are also delineated, emphasizing the reasoning for using the Ecological Nested Model (ENM) as a useful model for better understanding women’s engagement in violence.
Feminist Theory

The core of feminist theory is based on the argument that there is a power imbalance between genders because of the patriarchal structure of society in America (Etaugh & Bridges, 2006). When feminist theory is applied to domestic violence, feminist theorists argue that men abuse women to maintain their power and control in the relationship (Etaugh & Bridges, 2006; Walker, 2001). But how does this apply to women who use violence against men or other women? Some contemporary feminist theorists argue that when women use violence, it is still because of power disparity; however, the power differences are more subtle and influenced by a variety of factors (Wesely, 2006). Girls and women use violence in an attempt to regain power taken from them by a patriarchal society that allows and perpetuates the victimization of girls and women (Gaarder & Belknap, 2002; Miller & White, 2004; Wesely, 2006). This theory correlates with the statistical research that strongly suggests women who use violence have a history of being victimized, and that some of women’s violence is in self-defense or part of a reciprocal and relational cycle (Jack, 1999; Wesely, 2006).

The one-dimensional aspect of the feminist theory and how it relies solely on patriarchal power is an inadequate explanation of women’s violence. It does not include women who perpetrate violence against lesbian partners and gay men who engage in intimate partner violence. If two men or two women have similar levels of societal power, according to feminist theory, there is no theoretical reason for them to use violence in their relationship. In contrast, statistical research strongly suggests that gay and lesbian couples experience intimate partner violence at similar levels to heterosexual couples (Barnes, 1998; Friess, 1997; Island & Letellier, 1991; Kanuha, 1990, Margolies & Leeder, 1995; Perilla et al., 2006; Peterman & Dixon, 2003; Renzetti, 1992).

This argument is used because gender inequality does not necessitate violence between women in lesbian relationships. While this study does not involve a lesbian relationship, feminist theory is unipolar, and thus does not adequately explain the multiple contextual factors that play roles in women’s engagement in violence. Although feminist theory has value in constructing a framework for understanding intimate partner violence, perhaps there are other factors beyond inequality of power between genders that
contribute to the occurrence of intimate partner violence. To effectively theorize women’s violence, the multiple factors that contribute to it need to be included within the theoretical model.

**Family Systems**

Family systems theory is another framework that is often cited in research on domestic violence. Family systems theorists suggest that women and men perpetrate domestic violence at similar levels because domestic violence is a result of stress on the family rather than a result of a patriarchal society (Gelles, 1985, 1993; Gelles & Straus, 1988; Perilla et al., 2003; Stets & Straus, 1990; Straus, 1993, 1997, 1999; Straus et al., 1980). Power and sexism is acknowledged by family systems theorists, but with a different approach than by feminists. Family systems theorists argue that either a wife or husband can have power in the family, the person who asserts the power holds the power. Use of violence may be a way to control and maintain power (Kurz, 1989; Perilla et al., 2006). While family systems theorists recognize that women are victimized by men at high rates they have not provided a causal explanation (Kurz, 1989; Perilla et al., 2006). Additionally, Perilla et al. (2006) argued that most family systems discourse ignores contextual and social factors such as violence used in self-defense, ethnicity, culture, race and sexual orientation. These factors have considerable importance in the occurrence of intimate partner violence and should be included in future research (Jack, 1999; Wesely, 2006).

**Social Learning Theory**

Social learning theorists concentrate on behavior observation and reinforcement; children watch their parents, family, friends, and media, and then model their behavior on what they see (Bandura, 1973, 1977). When social learning theory is applied to intimate partner violence, theorists argue that the violence is learned from the family of origin and reinforcement (Bandura, 1977; Barnett, Miller-Perrin & Perrin, 2005; Etaugh & Bridges, 2006; Kalmuss, 1984; MacEwen, 1994; Swinford, DeMaris, Cernkovich, & Giordano, 2000; Wall & McKee, 2002). There are clear correlations between this theory and statistical research on the positive relationship between childhood abuse and use of
violence in adulthood (Sullivan et al., 2005). The problematic issues with the social learning theory are similar to those of family systems theory; neither account for contextual factors beyond the family, such as culture, ethnicity, race, or socio-economic status.

**Ecological Nested Model**

The ecological nested model (ENM) looks at human development from a contextual, interactive, and multilayered perspective (Bronfenbrenner, 1977; 1986; Larance, 2006). Bronfenbrenner (1977; 1986), one of the original ecological psychologists, argued that development must be studied within the context of an individual’s life. Bronfenbrenner (1977; 1986) and other ecological psychologists purported that when researchers isolate variables, they remove the interactive meaning between variables. For example, in the study of women’s violence, ecological psychologists argue that it is not factors alone, such as family history of violence and victimization, that contribute to a woman’s use of violence, but how factors interact with others, such as substance abuse, social norms about gender and socioeconomic status (Dasgupta, 2002; Larance, 2006). Research shows correlations between substance abuse and a history of childhood abuse (Dansky et al., 1999; Etaugh & Bridges, 2006; Foa, Cascardi, Zoellner, & Feeny, 2000; Kocot & Goodman, 2003) as well as a relationship between use of violence and such a history (Langhinrichsen-Rohling et al., 1995, Luthra & Gidycz, 2006; Magdol et al., 1997; Sullivan et al., 2005). The ENM accounts for the interactive processes occurring in people’s lives, and how these effect their development and decisions.

The ENM consists of four interrelated levels:

a) the *individual system* level, which includes childhood experience, family of origin and role models

b) the *microsystem* level, which includes current family relationships, friendships and colleagues

c) the *exosystem* level, which includes formal and informal social structures such as social networks, socioeconomic status and occupation, and

...
d) the macrosystem level which includes societal norms, culture and ethnicity (see Figure 1; Larance, 2006).

Because the ENM encompasses so many possible influences on a woman’s life, it also encompasses the other three theoretical frameworks for domestic violence: feminist, family systems, and social learning. The ENM is a wider and deeper frame, in which every aspect of woman’s life is examined.

Larance (2006) used the ENM to create the VISTA educational and support program for women who use violence; the program was named VISTA “to indicate the program’s ‘extended view’ of women’s use of force,” (p. 624). She found that the ENM allowed program workers to explore the client’s lives rather than punish them for their use of violence. This explorative perspective gave the women space to be open about their experiences with violence, have compassion for their history, face the personal consequences of their decisions, and learn how to use healthier coping methods (Larance, 2006).

**Therapeutic Interventions**

The Jersey Battered Women’s Services (JBWS) has been familiar with working with women who use force against partners for some time (Larance, 2006). Many of the female clients openly discussed their use of violence to defend themselves or their family. However, in the late 1990s, staff of the JBWS noticed a drastic increase in women arrested and involved in court proceedings for domestic violence related charges (Larance, 2002). As a pro-active measure, Larance (2006) began a VISTA program through the JBWS to provide assessment, education, support and advocacy for women in unsafe relationships. Larance (2006) used the ENM to frame the program. She found that the ENM accounted for the contextual reasons a woman may be using violence with her partner and thus opened the door for nonjudgmental counseling and advocacy.

The program consisted of psycho-educational support groups, 1.5 hours a week for 16 weeks. The groups’ goals were to educate the women on domestic violence, and increase safe living skills. As part of a study on the women who enrolled in the ENM-framed VISTA program, Larance (2006) found that five topics were important to the group participants: (a) shame, anger, guilt and related feelings, (b) responsibility for
behaviors, (c) learning the reasons for use of violence (i.e., used in family of origin, sense of powerlessness), (d) increasing nonviolent behaviors and, (e) advocacy in the community for additional counseling and awareness on the context of women’s violence. In Rumgay’s (1999) recommendations for knowledge-based intervention strategies for violent female offenders, she suggested similar areas of focus, particularly responsibility, anger and risk management. To further support the use of the ENM for research and intervention, Rumgay (1999) argues the importance of understanding contextual factors in women’s use of violence, and how these factors could be used to create more effective interventions.

In a recent review of literature on women who use violence in their relationships, Carney, Buttell and Dutton (2006) found that due to most states’ enactment of the Law Enforcement Protection legislation in the 1980s, women were arrested and placed in battering intervention programs more often than ever before (BIPs; Martin, 1997). The Law Enforcement Protection legislation allows police officers called on a domestic violence incident to arrest an abuser without a warrant (Carney, Buttell & Dutton, 2006). Carney, Buttell and Dutton (2006) also explained that there is insufficient evidence on the effectiveness of these programs, for men or women (Davis & Taylor, 1999; Davis, Taylor & Maxwell, 1998; Dunford, 2000; Feder & Forde, 2000). The programs that are framed by feminist theory assert that men’s use of violence is a result of the patriarchal displacement of power between genders. Whether the violence is in self-defense or self-initiated, such programs are not appropriate for female offenders. Planned behavior programs were also found by Kernsmith (2005) to be ineffective with female offenders as well. As recommended for future intervention methods, Carney, Buttell and Dutton, (2006) believe that identifying “the constructs that have relevance” (p. 113) to domestic violence offenders is an important part of effective treatment.

Rumgay (1999) believed that the choices women make about violence are influenced by the relational contexts that are a result of their gender, and recommends that further research be done in this area. Her logic supported Carney, Buttell and Dutton’s (2006); she argued that to create effective intervention programs for female offenders, researchers must investigate their “moral realities” (p. 107). Thus Rumgay (1999) suggested that “learned expectancies for violence, motivational accounts of
aggression, and strategies for offence commission” (p. 119) are three potential areas of counseling focus. In order to understand how these areas operate within the client’s life, Rumgay admitted that the historical, contextual social and economic factors of clients must been taken into account.

**Interventions with Women in Prison**

O’Keefe (1998) compared 50 women incarcerated for killing or seriously assaulting their partners compared to 26 women incarcerated for other offenses. She found that both groups had high rates of abuse by intimate partners, although the homicide/assault group had higher rates of severe violence. Both groups had similar scores on PTSD symptomology scales (O’Keefe, 1998). Risk factors for PTSD included childhood physical and sexual abuse (O’Keefe, 1998). O’Keefe’s (1998) results suggest that treatment of violent women in prison may need to include PTSD interventions.

Blitz (2006) surveyed 908 female inmates on educational and work histories, work skills, and their history of treatment for mental health counseling. Her results showed that an important aspect of rehabilitating female inmates is job and skills training. This is an imperative step to breaking the cycle of violence as well. Bible & Osthoff (1998) noted that women involved in intimate partner-related crimes may lose jobs because of court proceedings and convictions. Wesely (2006) in her exploratory study of 40 women who have used violence with partners, found that the women in homeless shelters or pursuing sex work had done so because they felt they had no means to support themselves. Situational variables, such as sex work and homelessness increase the risk for further violence (Wesely, 2006).

**Art Therapy Interventions**

The research on art and creative therapies with women who use violence in intimate relationships is limited. A handful of studies do investigate art therapy and contextual factors related to women’s use of violence. Some women who experience or use violence in relationships also experience homelessness and domestic violence at the hands of their partners (Archer, 2000; Jack, 1999; Luthra & Gidycz, 2006; Motz, 2001; Wesely, 2006). Stockrocki, Andrews and Saemondsdo (2004) applied an open art studio
approach in a homeless shelter. Through interviews with participants they found that the women felt the arts program helped them gain occupational skills with computers and art materials, increase social communication and bonding, increase self-respect and provide an avenue for expression of their need for protection (Stockrocki, Andrews, Saemondso, 2004). Teague, Hahna & McKinney (2006), in a study of seven women who had suffered from intimate partner violence, suggested that a combination of music and creative arts therapies may decrease depression and anxiety.

Women who use violence tend to have a high incident rate of childhood abuse (Langhinrichsen-Rohling, Neidig, & Thorn, 1995, Luthra & Gidycz, 2006; Magdol et al., 1997; Sullivan et al., 2005). Marcus-Mendoza and Wright (2004) argued that abuse issues should be considered an important part of treatment for female criminals. Merriam (1998) worked with incarcerated women who had suffered severe trauma. She found that art therapy increased appropriate expression of feelings and helped women reconnect with disowned thoughts and feelings in a safe way. Gantt and Tinnin (2007) created a short-term program using art therapy, hypnosis and video therapy to treat trauma. In their study of outcomes for the first 72 clients to complete her intensive trauma treatment program, they found that 48% met the conditions for recovery and 44% did improve (Gantt & Tinnin, 2007).

Smeijsters and Cleven (2005) investigated the use of creative therapies in forensics psychiatric populations in Europe and found that the creative therapies reduced the risk of recidivism, and that art therapy specifically helps violent clients gain insight to their emotions and cognitive thoughts. Haeyen (1994) suggested that through the use of art, clients may show polarities in emotion. Smeijsters and Cleven (2004) found that the polarities of aggression and compassion for the victim may be explored safely through art therapy.

**Summary**

Domestic violence is not a recent phenomenon, and neither is the study of it. What is recent is the increasing awareness of women engaging in violence with their intimate partners. Dual arrest rates for domestic violence incidents have noticeably risen in the past twenty years, and treatment programs for batterers are becoming increasingly
filled with women as well as men (Carney, Buttell & Dutton, 2006; Martin, 1997). Yet there is little research to support the effectiveness of such programs for women who engage in intimate partner violence (Davis & Taylor, 1999, Davis, Taylor & Maxwell, 1998; Dunford, 2000; Feder & Forde, 2000). Likewise, many of the theoretical perspectives- feminist, family systems, and social-learning theory- adopted to understand intimate partner violence and create therapeutic treatment and programming do not seem adequately explain the incidences of women engaging in intimate partner violence.

One theoretical model is unique because it has a multilayered, interactive, contextual perspective: the Ecological Nested Model (Bronfenbrenner, 1977; 1996; Larance, 2006). It has been used in several studies to understand women who engage in intimate partner violence and create more effective treatment programs for them (Larance, 2006). This model seems to account best for the many known contextual factors that play a role in women’s violence. The ENM is also flexible, allowing for interactive, overlapping connections between the contextual factors that occur throughout a woman’s life, contributing to her engagement in violence. This study will explore the contextual factors of women’s violence through art therapy, and unstructured and structured interviews. The methodology for the study is explained in the following chapter.
CHAPTER 3
METHODOLOGY

This case study explored the contextual experiences that may have affected a woman’s choice to engage in violence in her intimate relationships. The study was approved by the Florida State University Internal Review Board and the Florida Department of Corrections. The participant was one woman incarcerated at the time of the study with past charges of assault against her husband. The qualitative methods-structured and unstructured interviews, art therapy sessions and content analysis of the artwork and verbatim- was used over the span of six, one and a half hour sessions over six weeks. The qualitative methods of data collection were used to explore the woman’s experiences with violence in her past and present. The theoretical propositions were based on the Ecological Nested Model’s (ENM) standpoint that the four layers of social systems in women’s lives- (a) individual, (b) microsystem, (c) exosystem and (d) macrosystem- contribute to a structured choice to engage in violence with intimate partners. To further delineate the factors within the systems, the study emphasized the effects of witnessing or being the victim of physical and/or sexual abuse in the family of origin and past or current romantic relationships.

Research Questions

The case study was framed by several research questions. These questions were derived from the literature review and the study’s theoretical model, the Ecological Nested Model. While both provide a solid foundation for this research study, knowledge from the literature review and the ENM must be applied in more studies to better understand the literature and its support for the ENM. Thus, the comprehensive thesis question for this case study is: how do contextual factions affect violence in women? The thesis question encompasses two additional research questions: (a) What are the contextual factors that affect women’s engagement in intimate partner violence? (b) How can the ENM be used to better understand the relationship between the contextual factors and women’s engagement in intimate partner violence? These questions guided the direction of qualitative exploration in the case study.
Research Design and Procedures

The study was an embedded, single-case study, with one participant and multiple units of analysis. Because of the exploratory nature of the research question and the case-study design, the units of analysis were qualitative-structured and unstructured interviews, art therapy sessions and the participant’s artwork. The participant, called “Gloria”, and researcher met once a week for one and a half hours for a total of six sessions over a six-week period at a private correctional facility. The course of the six sessions is outlined in Table 1. The art therapy sessions were framed within a loose structure based on the needs of the researcher and participant to learn about the context of the participant’s experience with and engagement in violence.

At times, the researcher decided that the needs of the study and Gloria were not adequately met during the course of the art therapy sessions, so she was ethically bound to alter the art directives or discussion. However, the study remained structured and framed by the ENM, as outlined in Table 1. Gloria was explicitly informed that she could choose at any time to discontinue the course of art therapy, and she was given adequate information for referral to additional psychological services at the correctional facility. Gloria was also recommended for continued individual therapy with the psychologist at her correctional facility after the study ended. The researcher was supervised by Dr. Donna Kitch, licensed psychologist at Gadsden Correctional Facility, and Dr. David Gussak, PhD, ATR-BC, associate professor and this thesis’ committee chair at Florida State University, Department of Art Education.

Participant

The participant was a middle-aged, Caucasian woman, named “Gloria” (a pseudonym used to protect her identity), incarcerated at the time of the study with past charges for aggravated assault against her husband. She openly admitted to using force and engaging in violence with her husband and past romantic partners. Gloria was born and lived in the southern states of the United States for all of her life. She had a 10th grade education, although she completed a GED while incarcerated. She had served several sentences during her incarceration, including aggravated assault against her husband, and a violation of probation. Gloria was chosen by the chief psychologist, Dr.
Donna Kitch, at Gadsden Correctional Facility, in Quincy, Florida as a viable participant because she met the requirements and agreed to the terms of the study. She also had only a short period of time left to serve so she was able to address changes in behavior and ideas learned, after her release. Additionally, she was assessed by Dr. Kitch as not at high risk for self-harm or harming others.

**Environment**

The art therapy sessions were conducted in the prison in which Gloria was incarcerated. The prison facility is a private, adult women’s institution in north Florida, owned by the United States Corrections Corporation (Florida Department of Corrections, n.d.). It houses about 1500 inmates with community, minimum and medium custody grades. The facility has an array of programming for inmates, including GED and literacy classes, seven vocational programs ranging from personal computer support to horticultural landscaping, a 3-tier substance abuse program as well as several peer support groups like alcoholics and narcotics anonymous (Florida Department of Corrections, n.d.). There is also a dog-training program at the facility, with which inmates work to prepare dogs for adoption. The prison is faith-based, and supports a chaplaincy service for inmates called New Beginnings. Because the prison is privately owned and operated, inmates must request placement and be accepted into the facility. Once admitted, they may request positions in one or more of the available programs.

The facility has medical and psychological services available on-site for the inmates (Florida Department of Corrections, n.d.). The psychological department is housed within the medical building and includes one supervising psychologist, two masters-level therapists and two or three interns each collegiate semester. Part of the intern program for the last few years at the facility includes art therapy pre-masters’ interns, who run individual and group art therapy during the fall and spring collegiate semesters. During a typical work-day at the facility, the psychologist sees as many fifteen inmates for brief sessions, while the other therapists and interns may see five or six individuals or groups for longer sessions- 45-60 minutes. A psychiatrist also visits the prison one or two days a week to monitor psychotropic medications.
Measures

As the methods of data collection were qualitative, the researcher was the instrument in this study. The researcher is a second-year art therapy master’s student at the Florida State University in Tallahassee, Florida. She is Caucasian, in her twenties, and unmarried. She has not experienced abuse or violence in her family of origin or with an intimate partner. Her feminist values may have been a limitation because of her beliefs about the inequality of power between genders in a patriarchal society. To help reduce possible bias, several methods of data analysis were used.

Data Collection

Qualitative data was gathered from two sources to help to ensure construct validity—the participants’ spoken word and her artwork created in art therapy sessions. Qualitative methods were used because of the exploratory nature of the study; contextual factors framed by the ENM and the participant’s actual experiences were approached from a flexible, investigative lens. The qualitative methods in this study consisted of: structured and unstructured interviews, art therapy sessions, and content analysis of the artwork and verbatim of sessions. The correctional facility did not allow audio-taping, so the researcher recorded sessions with handwritten notes and compiled them in a verbatim format. The interviews included open-ended questions that explored the participants’ experience with violence in the past and present. The interview questions were developed by the researcher and were structured by the ENM (see appendix A). Art directives for the sessions were also developed by the researcher and were structured by literature on the use of art therapy with women and prison populations, and the ENM theoretical framework. Some of the art therapy directives and interview questions used during the course of the study varied slightly from the original plan due to time constraints, unforeseen obstacles, prison regulations and the participant’s safety.

Data from the interviews and art therapy sessions was collected within the art therapy and prison milieu. While the interviews were structured by the needs of the researcher to gather appropriate and pertinent information, the direction of the art therapy sessions was also determined by the needs and desires of the participant. An important aspect of exploratory, transformative research is that both the participant and researcher
are actively engaged in the creation, gathering and analysis of data (Mertens, 2005). In addition to her preparation for termination throughout the course of all six sessions, during the last data-gathering session, Gloria participated in a debriefing activity and discussion to reflect on her experience in the study. In this last session, all data gathered was discussed and processed by both participant and researcher. The researcher also ensured that Gloria had adequate information for referral to additional psychological services on-site, if needed.

**Data Analysis**

Three methods of analysis were used. The content of the interviews, art therapy sessions and artwork created by the participant were triangulated. The data was then analyzed through pattern-matching and the Ecological Nested Model (ENM) was used as the theoretical proposition. Thus, data from the interviews, sessions and artwork was expected to support the theory that contextual factors play fundamental roles in the participant’s engagement in violence.

Throughout chapters 1 and 2, the contemporary applicability of rival explanations- feminist, social learning and family systems theory- and why ENM is the best model for supporting the hypothesized data was debated. According to the literature review of both qualitative and quantitative studies, the data will support the ENM better than the rival explanations, thus supporting the hypothesis. After the data was collected, a coded logic model was created. To create the model, the researcher read through the recorded verbatim of the sessions and highlighted emerging themes. Then, the artwork and Gloria’s discussion about her artwork was analyzed for emerging themes. Five thematic topics repeatedly occurred more than others throughout Gloria’s discussions and artwork: (a) fear, (b) trust/distrust, (c) loss, (d) betrayal and (d) perception of others as her protectors. Also, each of the five themes emerged throughout Gloria’s relationships with her family and friends, and with her male romantic partners. The five thematic topics were coded with the letters (a) through (e) and are explained and discussed in Chapter 4: Family and Friends and Chapter 5: Romantic Relationships with Men. The coded logic model illustrated the way contextual factors, as hypothesized by the ENM, interacted and contributed to Gloria’s engagement in intimate partner violence.
Limitations

There were several possible proposed limitations to this study. First, stereotypes and shame about the occurrence of violence in the home and between partners could have limited the likelihood of finding a participant who would openly discuss her experiences with violence. Additionally, because the study was focused on a woman’s use of violence with her partner, a highly controversial and often suppressed social issue, many women might not have been willing to admit to using violence. The case study format was helpful in that the study only required one participant.

Second, the very nature of a case study may be a limitation. While case studies are common research strategies, especially in the social sciences, some researchers argue that case studies can not be generalized to larger populations or other research (Yin, 2003). While this is partly true, this case study is intended to be a pilot research project to serve as impetus for further research, as well as used for comparison studies.

Third, the lack of a prior pilot test could have been a limitation. Problems in administration of the interviews, art directives and data collection might have been present during the actual study. While the possibility of these problems cannot be predicted or eradicated, the researcher included any issues and problems that arose during the study in the final analysis and conclusions of the data. Furthermore, this study was structured to be the pilot test for possible future research, thus difficulties and obstacles encountered will prove helpful for prospective studies in similar areas.

Timeline

Although the data gathering took approximately six weeks to complete, the entire study encompassed 11 months. The timeline was flexible and was altered as deemed necessary by the researcher and her thesis chair. Additionally, environmental factors such as IRB approval, correctional facility approval, participant availability, prison facility events, and other external influences slightly altered the course of the study. The entire timeline was:

• August 2007: Prospectus was presented and approved.
• August - November 2007: FSU IRB approval and Department of Corrections approval was sought and obtained.
December 2007-February 2008: A participant was sought and approved.

March – April 2008: Data collection in prison facility (see Table 1).

April – June 2008: Data analyzed and integrated into Chapters 4-6 of thesis paper. Format approval sought and obtained through FSU Department of Graduate Studies.

July 2008: Thesis Defense

Presentation of Results

Results were gathered over a 6 week period from a single participant, “Gloria” at a women’s correctional facility in the Florida panhandle. Using interview questions derived from the proposed theoretical model, Ecological Nested Model (ENM), and Gloria’s input, data was gathered via oral interviews. Gloria was also directed to engage in themed art activities derived from the theoretical model and the participant’s preference.

Gloria reflected on many memories from her childhood during the first and second sessions. During the first session, she was asked about her family background, legal charges, and current family situation; she was also directed to create a scribble drawing (see Figure 2). The scribble directive was used because of its soothing qualities; following a long and arduous interview a scribble drawing helped calm Gloria’s anxiety. A scribble drawing is also reminiscent of the scribbles she might have made as a child, soothing her defenses. During the second session, Gloria was asked to create a timeline of her life (see Figure 3), as a reference point for discussions. Prior to this, she found it difficult to talk about her life in a linear fashion; her stories jumped throughout her lifetime with little logical connection. The lifeline clarified the major events in her life and helped her to compartmentalize and categorize the events in her life in a cognitive-oriented fashion. During the second session, Gloria also began to reminisce about her life, particularly her childhood and adolescent years, so she was asked to draw a picture of a happy childhood memory (see Figure 4). While her picture was happy, her memory also contained painful aspects. The art evoked emotion-laden memories, and it also was a grounding activity that helped Gloria focus on the present.
During the third and fourth sessions, Gloria was asked about family, friendships and occupations. She revealed close friendships with two women in another prison, whom she kept in contact with after they were released. She also continued to express her close relationship with her mother and deep fear of losing her while in prison. She explained her distrust of her younger sister and her betrayals. Gloria chose to use magazine images to create a collage about her family, shown in Figure 5; many of the images she chose showed two women, which she said depicted her and her mother.

During the fourth session, Gloria finished her timeline (see Figure 6) and created another magazine collage about desired occupations (see Figure 7). While making the collage she described her dream of being a florist and the losses she experienced that she felt prevented her from following this dreams.

During the last two sessions, Gloria was asked about gender roles in the United States and expressed her experience participating in the study. Her magazine collage about being a woman in the US, shown in Figure 8, illustrated her desire to have a car as it was symbol for freedom and independence for her. She revealed that many of the men she had dated as well as her husband, had taken possession of her car, symbolically and literally controlling her independence and seizing her freedom. She also described the losses she experienced through her romantic relationships. During the last session, she saw all of her artwork laid out on the table and admitted that it was strange to see all she had accomplished. She said that seeing the artwork reminded her of the losses she had experienced while in prison, and her fear and excitement for returning home. Mostly however, at the end of the last session, she seemed to have a sense of accomplishment.

Using the verbatim and artwork from the sessions, a series of categories was coded and organized into a logic model. What emerged from the coding process were two primary categories: (1) relationships with family and friends, and (2) romantic relationships with men. Both were coded as two separate categories. Several subcategories also emerged: (a) fear, (b) distrust, (c) loss, (d) betrayal, and (e) perception of others as protectors. Although all five of the subcategories emerged within the two primary categories, Gloria had different perceptions of these emotive responses within each primary category, thus each was coded as a subcategory. The following chapters are separated as Chapter 4: Results and Discussion: Family and Friends, and Chapter 5:
Results and Discussion: Romantic Relationships with Men. The chapters are organized this way to clearly identify the developmental pattern of Gloria’s relationships and their influence on her use of violence with a romantic partner. Chapter 6 will provide a summation of the study.
CHAPTER 4
RESULTS AND DISCUSSION: FAMILY AND FRIENDS

The following chapter presents the results and discussion of Gloria’s relationships with her family and friends throughout her lifetime. Her relationships with family were pivotal in her social development and understanding of relationships. Within this category, results and discussion are organized into the subcategories that emerged through the pattern-matching analysis: (a) fear, (b) distrust/trust, (c) loss, (d) betrayal, and (e) others as protectors. These subcategories were repeated themes in Gloria’s memories of her childhood and recounts of her relationships with family and friends, as well as foundational frameworks for Gloria’s patterns of social interactions as an adult, which will be explored in the next chapter.

Subcategory (a): Fear

One of Gloria’s first bouts with fear occurred at age six or seven when Gloria’s mother and father separated and Gloria’s mother remarried. Her memories of her step-father are few, but frightening. Gloria reported that her step-father sexually abused her older sister while she watched, until Gloria was ten years old. At that point, her step-father tried to sexually abuse her, and she “ran away” to her father’s house where she lived until she was around 13 or 14 years old. At 13 or 14 years old, Gloria tried to return to her grandmother’s house, but her step-father was there, and again tried to rape her. She says she “hurt him. Had to fight him off and get out of house.” She never related whether her mother knew of the abuse, nor reflected on anger or sadness at her mother for keeping the step-father in the house. Gloria also did not recall her older sister in any other memory or event than that of their step-father sexually abusing her.

When Gloria was also six or seven years old, her uncle committed suicide. Gloria was visiting her aunt and uncle for the weekend when her uncle killed himself and was quite close to them during the period of her parent’s separation and her mother’s second marriage to her stepfather. She related that she was “the apple of [her] uncle’s eye” and that because he and his wife did not have children, they cared for her as if she were their own child when she visited their farm. Gloria never related that she feared her uncle.
However, because Gloria was so close to her uncle and aunt, actually saw her uncle shoot himself, and was so young at the time, the suicide likely instilled a sense of fear in Gloria.

When Gloria was 22, she suddenly lost her youngest son. She is unsure of how he died, saying that “his brain stopped.” She witnessed his death, performing CPR for over half an hour while waiting for the paramedics to arrive. Like the traumatic loss of her uncle, Gloria did not express fear over her son’s tragic death, but the pattern of sudden unexpected loss of a close, loved one is repeated with her young son’s death, thus likely contributing to her fear of her family’s impermanence; they may die at any moment.

Many times in session, Gloria expressed fear of her mother dying while she was in prison. Gloria experienced many familial losses throughout her life, and she deeply feared that her mother would also die and she would not be able to care for her or see her before her death. In the first session, she said, “I worry about my mother. I’m so scared of losing my mother.” She repeated similar statements many times throughout each of the next five sessions. The cycle of repetitious loss of loved ones throughout Gloria’s life, starting with her uncle’s suicide, possibly contributed to her great fear of losing her mother while in prison.

Throughout Gloria’s childhood and adulthood, she experienced many instances of fear, most of which also related to sudden losses of loved ones. The pattern of sudden loss may have contributed to a sense of instability for Gloria. Also important to note is that many of the familial events that instilled fear in Gloria were violent and traumatic. Her step-father’s molestation of her older sister was traumatic and frightening for Gloria to see as a young child. Her uncle’s suicide was sudden, inexplicable to Gloria and incredibly violent, which again, she saw as a young child. While Gloria was an adult when her son died, the trauma of attempting CPR on her toddler son for half an hour, and not being able to save his life, and has affected many of the choices she has made. For example, Gloria said that after her son died, she experienced memory loss for several years. She remembers little about that period of time, but her mother told her she engaged in using and selling drugs with abusive men and attempted to dig up her dead son’s grave. During this time, she also lost her other children to social services, and has not seen or spoken with them since then.
With each case of fear, she seemed to have difficulty understanding and expressing the way the fearful events affected her, and how they contributed to her current dread of loss. All of the years of unexpressed terror and apprehension may have fueled her current panic about losing her mother, a fear so strong it disturbed Gloria’s sleep and prevented her from interacting with other inmates; fear permeated every session’s discussion.

**Subcategory (b): Trust/Distrust**

Gloria had a paradoxical relationship with her feelings of trust and distrust. She often expressed distrust of those trying to help her, such as fellow inmates or friends at home. This difficulty with trust of her friends was inexplicable because they tried to encourage her by sending magazines in the mail or help her with legal issues. However, throughout her life, she trusted those who did not warrant her trust. For example, when Gloria was a child, her parents did not protect her from a sexually abusive stepfather, and her father physically abused her while under the influence of alcohol. The pattern of illogical trust and distrust established with family members is explored in this section.

There are some cases where Gloria’s distrust was logically displaced. Gloria had an older and younger sister, and a younger brother. Although she had few memories of her older sister, she did recall her as the victim of her step-father’s sexual abuse. However, Gloria brought up memories of her younger sister on several occasions. She often expressed anger and distrust towards her sister as each memory had negative associations for her. Gloria recalled that one of her boyfriends, with whom she had a child and lived with at the age of 22, slept with her younger sister; “…one day I walked in on my sister sleeping with him. My sister and him on the couch, in my home…she was staying with us. And he slept with her.” She said she left her boyfriend and her sister in their shared home soon after the incident.

Gloria also noted in the third session that her sister took custody of her children after the participant’s youngest son died. Her sister claimed that Gloria was an unfit parent because she was depressed, abused drugs and alcohol, and engaged in risky and erratic behaviors after her son’s death. However, social services eventually removed the Gloria’s children from her sister’s home because of suspected drug use. Although Gloria
had 30 days to reclaim custody of her children, her sister did not inform her that they were removed by social services and that she needed to reclaim custody within that time limit. She recalls this memory with anger, yet finished her story with a touch of black humor:

…[social services] adopted them out. They split them up too. They split them up and adopted them out… I don’t trust my sister. I wouldn’t leave nothin with her. I leave my car with her and I’d come back and it wouldn’t have no wheels, be sittin on cinder blocks when I get back.

Gloria’s distrust of her sister is logical, as the memories of her sister are painful and illustrate Gloria’s perspective of her sister as irresponsible and sabotaging.

In some situations, Gloria’s trust was illogically assigned to those who did not earn it. When Gloria’s husband began physically abusing her, she said she kept it a secret from her family. However, after several particularly violent beatings, she decided to tell her mother. She said that at first her mother did not believe her, “not until [she] got it real bad.” There is a parallel between Gloria’s mother not leaving Gloria’s sexually abusive stepfather and not believing Gloria about her abusive husband. It is unknown if Gloria’s mother knew of the sexual abuse, but it is likely she had some knowledge of it because according to Gloria, the abuse continued for about 10 years in their home. Despite the fact that Gloria’s mother did not believe Gloria’s confessions of abuse, thus earning Gloria the right not to trust her, inexplicably Gloria always expressed deep trust and love for her mother.

Like Gloria’s unswerving trust in her mother, she also implicitly trusted her father. As a child she recalled an instance where he hit her, resulting in cuts and wounds on her back and legs. However, she said that was the only instance he “laid a hand on [her]” and excused his behavior by blaming it on his heavy drinking. Gloria lived with her father after leaving her mother’s house for fear of being sexually abused by her stepfather, and related many instances of her father drinking heavily and having her do “runs” over state borders with drugs. Yet, she never expressed distrust of him or his behavior, but rather saw him as her protector.
In the last session, Gloria made a comment about her distrust of a friend that was helping her with a lawyer while she was in prison. The comment might explain why she trusted her mother; “I have to be honest. I wonder why they’re helping me with it. I hate to say it, but I wonder. Why would they want to help me. Family has to. But why are they doing it?” For Gloria, family implies implicit trust, despite behavior that might appear otherwise. While the implicit trust did not play out for her sister, Gloria clearly trusted her mother and father.

Gloria’s early experiences with distrust of her close family members and sudden, tragic losses, may have contributed to her current overarching distrust of everyone around her. At the first session, she asked if I was going to “yell at her” suspecting my role as an authority figure. As the first session progressed, a theme of distrusting others emerged. Throughout all six sessions, Gloria repeatedly expressed such feelings: “It’s important to stick to your word. People count on that. You’re not gunna leave me are you? Everyone’s always left me.” Here, she expresses not only the importance of stability and honesty, but also her fear of me, another person trying to gain her trust, leaving her. Fear, distrust and loss are clearly interwoven themes in Gloria’s life.

**Subcategory (c): Loss**

Gloria related several significant childhood memories that involved loss. When Gloria was five or six, her parents divorced. She said that during the period of her parents’ divorce and for several years after, she spent the majority of her time at her uncle’s and aunt’s home. They were unable to have children, and the participant described herself as their surrogate child, and “the apple of [her] uncle’s eye.” She said they lived on an old-fashioned farm with bales of hay dotting their land, a large red barn, a farmhouse that did not have running water or electricity but did have an outhouse.

Shortly after talking about her uncle’s suicide, Gloria emphasized a story about her rescue of a white owl at the farm. She was so invested in its survival that she tore out pictures and articles from encyclopedias to find out how to care for it. She said she became upset when said her parents made her free the bird after he was healed. The story of the owl seemed to be a metaphor for the losses of her life and her own desires to be rescued.
When Gloria was six or seven years old, her uncle came to get her one day to stay
with him and her aunt for several days. She said that her mother was “suspicious” that
day and must have “called around” to check on her uncle. When Gloria arrived at her
uncle’s house with him, he told her aunt to call for him when dinner was ready and that
they (she and her uncle) were going to be in the barn. Gloria said that she watched as her
uncle shot himself. She felt bits of his head, brain matter and blood hit her face. She said
that she was “supposed to go with him,” and sometimes thinks that she should have “met
Jesus” with him. However her mother prevented her uncle from shooting her as well,
although Gloria cannot remember how. Gloria clearly remembered seeing her uncle die,
but she related that she had difficulty remembering other aspects of this event, such as
how and why her mother was suspicious, and why her uncle ended up not killing her as
well. Contrary to expectations, this memory did not evoke fear for the participant. Rather,
she questioned why it happened and why she did not die with him.

In a drawing originally intended to illustrate a happy memory, the client
spontaneously drew an image of her uncle’s farm. She began drawing a “house and
pond” while describing a drawing exercise from a dream book she read while at a prison
in another state. It was a happy memory because she recalled feeling close with these
friends and enjoyed doing the dream drawing exercise from the book with them.
However, as the drawing developed, she became quiet, then after looking at it for a
moment, said, “You know, my uncle and aunt lived on a farm like this.” Her demeanor
changed; she appeared to disassociate. Her eyes glazed over and were transfixed inward.
She began a lengthy monologue about her uncle’s suicide, while recalling specific
sensory details, such as the smell of blood and hay in the barn, and the taste in her mouth
that day. It was like she was alone in the room.

Gloria was oriented to reality by reminding her that she that she is alive today,
and that there were happy memories associated with the farm as well. The power of the
art was two-fold. It elicited a life-like memory and consequential disassociation that
neither the participant nor the researcher expected. It also paradoxically grounded her
back into reality and allowed her to project and contain her loss on the paper. Since the
session the participant did not use drawing media again, and instead used a more
distancing form of art-making- magazine picture collage.
Gloria also lost her youngest brother when she was an adult (he shot himself at home, where he lived with his mother). Whenever she discussed her younger brother, she always focused on his suicide. Gloria could not recall how old she was when the suicide occurred; she stated she thought it might have been in 2002 or 2003. She did remember that she was on her way to console her mother just after the suicide when a police officer pulled her over for speeding. She drove off before he gave her the ticket. When she talked about her brother’s suicide, she usually recalled how sad her mother became after it. She had a “nervous breakdown,” after which, Gloria had to take care of her. Throughout the six sessions she recalled no other memories of her brother.

When Gloria was 22, she had her fifth and last child. He was born premature at just under 2 lbs but survived despite the odds against him. However, when he was a toddler (Gloria cannot remember his exact age), he suddenly died. In the first session, Gloria verbally recounted the details of his death:

My little son. He died in my arms. I did CPR for 39 minutes and 12 seconds. We were at a birthday party or something. He died in my arms. His brain stopped. He was born too early, too little, and his brain just stopped. You know, like when it just stops? I did CPR for 39 minutes and 12 seconds until the ambulance came. I went with him to the hospital… I don’t remember anything after that. That’s where things went wrong. That’s where things changed, went downhill. I was using drugs. I was with the wrong men. The anniversary is coming up, you know? Everything went wrong after that.

She recalled this memory again in the second session. She was asked to create her timeline and to chart the significant events of her life on it. She spent several quiet minutes writing down this particular memory, and it was about four times the length of the other memory descriptions. After writing this event down, she asked to stop working on the timeline; it was eventually finished during session four.

Clearly, the loss of her youngest child was a difficult and tragic experience for Gloria. She had little or no memory for several months after her son’s death; however she
said that her mother told her she was doing drugs and drinking as well as engaging in high-risk behaviors with men, and erratic behavior such as trying to dig up her son’s grave. Soon after, she also lost her other children, when her younger sister took them into her custody because of Gloria’s depression and risky behaviors. Unfortunately, her younger sister lost Gloria’s children to social services when they suspected her of drug use and Gloria was not able to regain custody. She currently has no contact with her children, nor knows where they are. The losses Gloria suffered as a child were repeated as an adult when she lost her children and her brother. Sadly, Gloria also lost her father, who died while she was in prison. She recalled the death of her father with great regret and sadness as she was not able to see him before he died.

The theme of loss emerged early in Gloria’s life with her uncle’s suicide, and continued into adulthood when she lost her brother to suicide and her youngest son. All of these losses were unexpected and traumatic. Gloria witnessed her uncle’s violent suicide as a young child, and as an adult held her young son in her arms while trying to do CPR, both traumatic experiences. Gloria lost her father while in prison, and was prevented from seeing him. All of these losses seemed to dis-empower Gloria. She was unable to understand the reasons her uncle committed suicide, and felt that she was prevented from dying with him. She tried to save her son but was unable to do so. In all cases, external forces appeared to suddenly and inexplicably take away Gloria’s closest, loved and trusted family members, likely contributing to her sense that trust and love only reap violence and heartache.

**Subcategory (d): Betrayal**

Several of Gloria’s emerging themes from her childhood and family noted earlier could also be considered forms of betrayal. She questioned why she did not die with her uncle; “You know, I was supposed to go with him… Sometimes I wish I had. I wonder why I’m here and I wonder why he did that. What makes a person do that? Why didn’t I go with him?” Her uncle provided a safe haven from her parents’ divorce, and he and her aunt treated Gloria like their own child. Her uncle committing suicide when she was just a child, taking away her safe retreat at the farm, and not taking her with him, felt like a betrayal.
As noted earlier, Gloria was also betrayed by her younger sister. Gloria’s sister was visiting her and her boyfriend, staying in their home, when Gloria “walked in [on them]…on the couch.” Gloria said she soon left her boyfriend and sister to “get [her] own place.” However, Gloria’s younger sister re-entered Gloria’s life to betray her again. After Gloria’s youngest son died, she was not able to properly care for her children; she was depressed, unstable and engaged in destructive behavior. Gloria’s younger sister felt that she could better care for Gloria’s children and took them. Unfortunately, Gloria’s sister was unstable as well and the children were removed because of suspected drug use in the home. Gloria could have regained custody had her sister informed her that she needed to contact social services to reclaim her children. Gloria never regained custody. She said that the children were split up and adopted to other families. She has not been in contact with her children since then and expressed deep feelings of betrayal.

Gloria had believed that she could trust her family members, so her uncle’s and sister’s betrayal likely made a serious impact on Gloria’s ability to trust others. It is clear at this point that the emerging themes of fear, distrust, loss and betrayal are interwoven. Each plays pivotal roles in Gloria’s perception of life. While each of the themes are separated into subcategories, Gloria’s fear, distrust, loss and betrayal cannot be extricated from each other. Her early losses contribute to her fear and distrust, and her feelings of betrayal by close family members fuel her distrust of others. The complexity of the ways in which these themes interact in Gloria’s life cannot be explained; however, detailing the events that contributed to these emotive themes builds a foundational framework for how Gloria perceives the world and how that perception includes violence.

**Subcategory (e): Perception of Others as Protectors**

On many occasions, Gloria labeled her mother and father as her protectors, describing several incidents where her parents saved her from harm. Gloria believed her mother saved her from being shot by her uncle; “She protected me. She always takes care of me.” Gloria also noted a time when her mother tried to protect her from her father. Gloria lived with her mother from birth until age ten. Her father also had custody, and at some point in her childhood (she is unsure when), she was staying with her father when he physically abused her for “the first and last time.” She said that he was “an alcoholic”
and after a night of him drinking when they were driving home, he asked her for a pack of cigarettes from a carton in the car. She gave him a carton of cigarettes that had been torn up by one of his dogs and he mistakenly thought she had torn it up to prevent him from smoking. She said that he “beat [her] so bad,” she had cuts and bruises along her back and legs.

Gloria’s mother brought charges against her father and filed a restraining order so that he no longer had custody of her, nor was he able to see her. Gloria noted that her mother was protecting her by filing the restraining order. Gloria described several other incidences where her mother protected her. When Gloria was 18, she had two children and nowhere to live; her mother “helped…take care of the babies.” As an adolescent and adult, Gloria lived with her mother on several occasions, and she felt that she was most stable when she lived with her mother, “When I was with my momma, I was okay. I didn’t mess up or nothing.” And yet, it is also pertinent to again note that Gloria’s mother did not protect her from her abusive step-father, and initially did not believe Gloria about her abusive husband. Still, Gloria’s trust in her mother as her protector was unwavering.

Despite the incidence of physical abuse, Gloria also saw her father as her protector. This event did not elicit fear or distrust from Gloria, rather she blamed the physical abuse on her father’s drinking. Other memories of her father are humorous, warm, and regretful, and at times classify her father as her protector; “He was very protective of me. He drank too much but he was very protective of me.” From the age of ten until late adolescence, the participant lived with her father. She left her mother’s house on her own accord because she feared sexual abuse by her stepfather, and believed her father would protect her. While she was living with her father, Gloria remembered happy memories when spending time with him. She said that he used to fix up cars for her, and they would go camping and fishing, which she enjoyed as a self-proclaimed “tomboy.”

One memory of her father and her on a fishing trip was particularly humorous, despite its violent outcome. Gloria and her father were fishing at a lake and her father drank until her passed out against a tree. She also noted that her father was wearing a pair of denim cut-off shorts that were, “real short!” and he was wearing them during this trip
to the lake. She told the story in a dramatic, expressive fashion, gesticulating wildly with her arms and laughing loudly:

You know how they used to cut jeans into shorts? Well my daddy had always warned me of snakes and to watch where I went to the bathroom because the snakes could get ya. Well I had gone to check on my daddy, and he was passed out and I thought he had a snake coming out of his shorts! So I grabbed a rock and started yelling, “Snake! Snake!” and my daddy wakes up and before he realizes it I’m coming at him with the rock and he can’t figure out why. He’s all looking round for the snake. I sent him to the hospital that day. He hollered and yelled at me. I didn’t know. I never seen a man’s thing before! I thought it was a snake!

The story is humorous for both Gloria and her audience. One can imagine a young girl lunging at her father with a rock and his look of surprise and fear as he realized his approaching painful fate. However, dark symbols belie the humor of the story. As noted in the Bible, and throughout Christianity, the snake is a symbol of deceit and sin (O’Connell & Airey, 2007). Jung (2007) believed that the snake stood for unconscious instincts (O’Connell & Airy). Furthermore, Gloria violently attacked her father’s manhood, a symbol of power. This story, despite its humorous presentation, seems to symbolically express Gloria’s anger and distrust of men and their power, and her desire to innocently fight against it with all her strength.

The participant’s memories of her father often include instances of his alcohol use. She relates going on “runs” over state borders. When asked what she and her father were transporting, she could not remember. What she seemed to recall most was that he spent time with her however he could, and would protect her. She did not verbally express distrust of her father, even when he drank heavily, nor did she relate his drinking as problematic. She seemed to glorify her father. For example, she said during the last session when she discussed her difficulty with the court system and her sentence; “If my dad were alive, he’d be doing something about it. He’d be calling the court everyday.”
She also recalled several memories of her father “rescuing” her. This is especially clear in her memories of her father when she was an adult. She said he “protected” her, “rescuing” her from a “psychotic” boyfriend. She misses him often, and spoke several times of her regret that she was in prison when he died.

Regardless of the dark underlying symbols in some of her stories about her father, she delivers her stories lightly, with humor, and Gloria never explicitly stated she views her father as anything other than her protector. This juxtaposition between Gloria attacking her father and viewing him as her protector parallels her unwavering trust in him despite a lifetime of heavy drinking that put her in harm’s way. Gloria’s implicit trust in him was glorified to the point of his becoming, in her eyes, her heroic savior, further disempowering her from protecting herself.

**Summary**

In Chapter 4, Gloria’s relationships with her family were delineated and categorized into five emerging themes, (a) fear, (b) distrust/trust, (c) loss, (d) betrayal, and (e) others as protectors. Many of these themes were interwoven amid Gloria’s memories of her childhood and early adulthood, and some memories contained more than one theme, such as both fear and loss. The patterns of fear, trust/distrust, loss, betrayal and seeing others as her protectors continued into Gloria’s adulthood. Her romantic relationships with men repeated the patterns established in her childhood. In chapter 5, discussion about the study is once more divided into the same five categories as in the previous chapter. However in chapter 5, the emotive themes were repeated with Gloria’s romantic relationships with men.
CHAPTER 5

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION: ROMANTIC RELATIONSHIPS WITH MEN

Chapter 5 features the results and discussion of Gloria’s romantic relationships with men. She began having romantic relationships around the age of 15 or 16, and they continued through the time of this study, over twenty years later. Gloria spent a significant amount of session-time discussing her romantic relationships. These relationships were significant during her development as an adolescent and adult, and echoed the patterns of relationships established with her family when she was a child. Like chapter 4, chapter 5 is divided into five subcategories, (a) fear, (b) distrust/trust, (c) loss, (d), betrayal, and (e) perception of others as protectors. Gloria’s adult relationships with men maintained similar emotive patterns and dynamics as her relationships with family.

Subcategory (a): Fear

Gloria remembered first feeling afraid of men was when she was 16. She gave various details about this memory, but she consistently relayed that she was given a ride with a group of men (she was unclear how she knew these men) and during the car-ride she was raped the group of men. She wrote about the event in her life timeline during the second session; “I was raped by 3 different men taking turns when they got done they rolled me out of the van on a backroad and left me there. Got pregnant. Had baby at age of 16.” Not only was this a frightening event, but Gloria also feared her town’s response to her having the baby. She did not believe in abortion saying, “The baby didn’t do nothing wrong,” but she said she felt judged by people in her town that disagreed with her decision.

Only two of the men were caught and sentenced to prison terms, which continued to frighten Gloria. The third man, someone she remembered clearly, lived in the same town, and she recalled seeing him at a convenience store on one occasion. She said he looked at her, and she thought he did not remember her. Yet she understandably feared his presence.
Gloria dated several men throughout her life. One of her boyfriends was especially terrifying; she called him “…a crazy man.” According to Gloria his behavior was erratic, abusive and she was afraid of him. She described trying to leave him:

He locked me up in our trailer, with a padlock. God he was crazy. He’d cut up my panties. I shouldn’t have to deal with it. It’s not right. I was trying to get away one time. I drove the car. I was driving so fast to get away, I drove the car into one of those big ditches, what’s it called? A ravine. Police found me in the wreck. Somebody had to find me and called the police. I should have died. But they found me. That’s when my family found out he was crazy… He tried to keep me away from them. Didn’t want them coming to the hospital. But I told my family while I was there what he was doing to me.

She then recalled that after she was released from the hospital, she was with her family at a barbeque when she went alone to the front yard; her ex-boyfriend was waiting for her. “That man grabbed me, and stuffed me in the trunk of his car.” Her father went after them and rescued her from the ex-boyfriend. “My dad went to the trailer and told the man he’d kill him if he took me again.” Gloria lived in fear of this boyfriend and what he might do to her until she was able to leave him.

Gloria also had a strong and persistent fear of her husband. While she had dated several men and had children with them throughout her adolescent and adult life, she married once, her most recent relationship. Gloria and her husband were separated at the time of the study but were not legally divorced. At the beginning of the first session, Gloria asked me, “You aren’t going to yell at me are you?” After reassuring her that I would not yell at her, she explained:

I’ve had enough people yell at me. My husband yelled at me. You know, he’s the reason I’m in prison…he used to beat me, and I’d scratch and slap at him. But one time he had to get three stitches and he put me in prison. We had
got in to some big, knock down drag out and he pushed me into a wall.

Throughout the six sessions, Gloria described repeated physical, emotional and psychological abuse by her husband. She said that initially she lied to family and friends to “protect” him. However after the violent incident which sent her to prison, she says her family believed her recounts of his physical violence towards her and understood her fear of him.

The incident which sent Gloria to prison for assault occurred several years before the study. She was not still serving the assault sentence at the time of the study; however she was serving a sentence for a violating her probation. The assault followed several episodes of physical abuse by her husband; “He used to beat me, and I’d scratch and slap at him.” However during the incident that sent her to prison, he ended up in the hospital with three stitches in his stomach. She recounted the incident during the first session of the study:

We had got in some big, knock-down drag out and he pushed me into the wall. Well I used to collect swords, now I don’t have nothing. But I used to collect swords and I had some swords on the wall he pushed me into. Well I went over to clean up a spilled drink and pick up the swords, and I had my back to the wall, like this. I’m like this cleaning up, and I got to pick up a sword and I turn around like this and I don’t realize he’s standing right behind me. And I spin around real quick and the tip slices his stomach. I took him to the hospital. I didn’t mean to hurt him. If I had meant to hurt him, I’d a killed him. Well after that fight I left him to stay with at Momma’s cuz I’d had enough. He beat me real bad that time.

Several days after this incident, Gloria and her husband reconciled. However, a couple of days after her return home with him, the police came to the house and arrested her on assault charges, brought on by her husband. She said she was afraid of her husband’s
power in the town when she met with the judge in his “chambers.” She was sentenced to several years in prison.

Even while in prison Gloria felt afraid of her husband. He seemed to hold an omnipotent sense of power over her. She said that he wrote her letters while she was in prison; some of them were “undying love letters;” others were cruel, proclaiming threats against her when she is released, and some were accusatory, saying he knew she was cheating on him. Gloria said she wrote him back on occasion, warning him, “I told him he better stay outta my face.” However, she could not seem to escape her fear of him and confided that despite her angry responses to him in letters, she was frightened of what he might do to her when she is released. “I’m afraid he’s going to find me. He knows my biggest fear. My biggest fear is being buried alive. I’m afraid they’re gonna find my body buried.” Gloria felt that she was unable to defend herself; when she did fight back, she was charged with assault and when she did not, she was badly beaten by him.

Gloria’s fear of men and their power over her, particularly her husband, spilled over into her relationships with others. She said, “It’s hard for me being let down. People got to stick to their word. I been let down so many times. I have this fear of being lied to. You know that? Trust, it’s not worth it.” Just as her family-related fears were connected with multiples losses and betrayals in her life, her fear of men affected her ability to trust others, creating a fear in her that if she did trust someone, they would hurt her. The patterns of fear, loss and betrayal as a child repeated in her romantic relationships with men as an adult.

Subcategory (b): Trust/Distrust

Because of Gloria’s early experience of being raped by 3 men at the age of sixteen, it might have been difficult for her to trust men and their intentions with her. She lived with several men throughout her life before marrying her husband. She recalled that two of the men she lived with “treated [her] right,” but many were abusive. One of her boyfriends slept with her sister; another kidnapped her from her father’s home and locked her in a trailer. She would often describe her difficulty trusting men, and in the last session, after describing how she felt tired of all of the abuse, she said, “I can’t trust no one.”
One of Gloria’s most significant relationships was with her husband. Like her other male romantic partners, Gloria also struggled with trusting her husband. As noted throughout this chapter, his abusive behavior, betrayal and infidelity played fundamental roles in her distrust. In the first session, she stated that, “he’s the reason I’m in prison.” As described earlier, Gloria claimed that during a physical altercation between her and her husband, he had pushed her into a wall and she knocked one of her collectable swords off the wall. She bent over to pick up the sword when he came over to her; she swung around with it and cut his stomach, sending him to the hospital for 3 stitches. She went to her mother’s house after taking him to the hospital because, “He beat me bad that time.”

Several days after the altercation she and her husband had reconciled. While at home with him after their reconciliation, she was arrested on assault charges. After being charged by her husband, who had repeatedly beat her, she felt she could no longer trust him. Her dread of him seemed to instill a pervasive fear of those who held power over her.

Many of Gloria’s romantic relationships were marked by infidelity. One partner, as noted earlier, cheated on her with her younger sister. Gloria also did not trust her husband’s commitment to their relationship. Her distrust of her husband is interwoven with her fear of him. She believed that he began physically abusing her because he had met another woman and wanted Gloria “out of the way.” She also believed that he charged her with assault and had the judge, a family friend, send her sent to prison so he could pursue a new relationship with a different woman.

Gloria’s distrust of men extended beyond her romantic relationships and to other friendships with men. She had a godfather who had called her during the course of the study to tell her he had paid for a lawyer to investigate her claim that she was sentenced incorrectly by the court. In the last session, she expressed difficulty understanding why he was helping her:

I have to be honest. I wonder why they’re helping me. I hate to say it, but I wonder. Why would they want to help me? Family has to. But why are they doing it? Sometimes I think they just tell me good things to get me off their back. A voice is telling me, “Don’t trust these people.” A little
devil on my shoulder making me questions why they’re helping me. I can take a hard fall. I only have faith in myself now. People are playing with me.

Gloria’s feelings of hurt, loss and betrayal by the men in her life seemed to have led her to question and distrust everyone she encountered, even those trying to help her. As noted repeatedly throughout chapters 4 and 5, she often made statements like, “You gotta keep your word. You can’t be telling people something that ain’t true,” and “People will play on your heart. People shouldn’t do that.” Her sense that people should not be lying or betraying others, and that she should be able to trust emerged often in session, and yet she struggled with being able to trust others. The patterns of fear, distrust and betrayal of her childhood set the foundation for relationships in her adulthood with the same recurrent themes.

**Subcategory (c): Loss**

Gloria experienced several losses during her romantic relationships with men; she recounted several situations in which men suddenly left her. She also seemed to have feelings of loss for her youth and the possibility of caring, romantic relationships, rather than the destructive, controlling relationships she often engaged in with partners. Gloria also related regret over leaving one positive relationship, and feeling that she could never experience that type of love again. Because of the negative relationships Gloria had with men, she felt she also lost many possessions and her sense of independence. She recalls several occasions on which men took her cars and destroyed her possessions to control her. Lastly, Gloria felt that when her husband sent her to prison, she lost everything— independence, freedom, possessions, and her father.

One of the first memories of loss with men was her loss of her innocence when she was raped. She was 16 at the time and became pregnant; soon after her boyfriend left her. She had to drop out of high school, and from then on lived with various men or her mother, always trying to find a way to support herself. During the session in which she discussed past occupations and her dream job, she related that she wanted to be a florist and was talented with growing plants. As she worked on the collage she said that she was never able to work as a florist, instead working many odd jobs at gas stations,
convenience stores, or dealing drugs for her boyfriend. After she was raped and had the child, her life appeared controlled by her relationships with men; she lost her independence.

Gloria recounted times when her romantic partners took away her cars and destroyed her possessions. A car is not only a symbol for freedom and independence (O’Connell & Airey, 2007), but also a literal form of having control over one’s leaving someone or a situation. During the fifth session, Gloria was asked to create a piece of art about what it feels like to be a woman in the United States. She chose to use magazine pictures to create a collage. After she saw an image of a car she said, “Gotta have a car. Gotta have a car to be free. That’s the first thing they take from you. Men do. They take your car and they take your freedom.” She said that her dad would “fix up” cars for her, and she enjoyed being able to go for drives on country dirt roads. However, she said that when in a relationship with the “crazy guy” and her husband, they took the keys to her car so that she would have to get rides from them or her parents, limiting her independence.

Gloria also recounted several occasions where partners destroyed her possessions. She said that the “crazy guy” and her husband cut up her clothing when they were angry with her or thought she was unfaithful. Since being sent to prison, Gloria also lost many of possessions. She tried to have her mother retrieve some of her treasured items such as family jewelry and photographs of her children from her husband’s home but her mother was unable to do so. In the last session she described her fear of returning home because of her history with destructive men and the losses she had experienced:

I’m scared to go home. I’m a little paranoid. I’m scared. I just wanna go home and hide out. I wanna get on my own two feet for awhile. I’ve always had a man to have things. I wanna have my own things. I don’t wanna come home and get my teeth knocked out. I don’t want my vehicle taken or my things destroyed. I wind up with nothing. I had so many nice things and they wound up destroyed. Men will just destroy your stuff.
Gloria also expressed deep regret of her perceived loss of possible romance and a loving, caring relationship. She was aware that the majority of her relationships with men were unhealthy and destructive, and expressed both desire and hopelessness about feeling truly loved by a man. After dating the “crazy guy”, Gloria lived with a man in Ohio whom she said helped her escape from the “crazy guy.” She said that this man, “Bob” (a pseudonym) was “a good man.” However she eventually left him.

In a timeline about her adult relationships, she described this positive romantic relationship, “I did finally get to be with one real guy in my life… I took on being a mother for his 2 daughters…Bob did teach me the true meaning of love and of No second chances! You only live life one time so do it right while you can.” Gloria said that she did not “treat him right” and she left him; he tried to rekindle their relationship but she said she “was free” at the time, working and living with her grandparents, and “didn’t want to leave that.” She expressed regret over leaving the relationship and felt that she was “too old” to ever experience caring love and romance again.

A significant loss of Gloria’s was being sent to prison by her husband. She felt responsible for her behavior but also felt it unfair that she was put in prison for defending herself against her husband’s physical abuse. She described being sent to prison as the marker of many significant losses in her adulthood. “I hate myself for [being sent to prison], depriving myself of this time. I lost everything. I lose my children, I lost my dad. I lost everything.” For Gloria, her husband sending her to prison signified his control over her independence. To further explicate the nature of Gloria’s losses, she literally lost everything when she went to prison; freedom to make everyday choices, material possessions, occupation, connections with friends and family were all sacrifices Gloria was forced to make.

**Subcategory (d): Betrayal**

Gloria struggled with trusting her husband. Her distrust of him emerged after several betrayals. One of the most pivotal deceptive events involving Gloria’s husband was when he sent her to prison for defending herself against his physical abuse. In the first session, she described how he charged her with physical assault:
Well he comes crying back to me and I felt so bad so I took him back and I went home with him for the weekend. And we spent the weekend together and we fooled around, you know. Well after a couple days, I wake up and he’s down stairs so I curl up next to him on the couch and he doesn’t respond. And I think something’s wrong so I asked him, “David, (a pseudonym) what’s wrong? Tell me what’s wrong,” and he just stares at the T.V. screen. And I hear doors slam outside and the police bust in, and they arrest me. I thought I married I good guy. He came from a good family, but he knew everyone in that town. His family had connections, knew the judge, and the police, and he had them get me… There wasn’t no court or nothing. I saw the judge in the judge’s chambers. That’s not right.

Gloria felt betrayed by her husband when he charged her with assault. She believed that because he was well-known and powerful in their town, he would protect and care for her; instead he used his power to betray her. His betrayal not only sent her to prison, but also marked losses for Gloria- her freedom, her possessions and her father.

Because Gloria believed her husband was a “good guy” when they were first married, she also felt betrayed when he cheated on her. , Gloria believed her husband began cheating on her around the same time her also started abusing her, “He was from a fine upstanding family… For awhile he was good to me…then he started to hit on me… [It started] when he met that new woman. He wanted me out of the way.” Like Gloria’s familial betrayals, her husband’s betrayal was intertwined with her fear and distrust of him and her consequential losses. Gloria’s relationship with men, especially her husband, echoed the pattern of fear, distrust, loss and betrayal established in her childhood. For her, violence was a way to fight back and attempt to break the cycle. Instead though, her engagement in violence sent her to prison, spurring the pattern of fear, distrust, loss and betrayal again.
Subcategory (e): Perception of Others as Protectors

Just as Gloria saw family members, particularly her parents, as protectors, she also viewed several of her male partners as protectors. She lived with all of her boyfriends, saying that she used to use men to “get her things,” including houses. She seemed to begin relationships believing that they would protect and take care of her, and yet almost all would end up abusing her and destroying the relationship. During the first session, she described the relationship with her husband; “I thought I married a good guy. He came from a good family and he knew everyone in that town. His family had connections, knew the judge, and the police, and he had them get me.” What began as a protector-relationship transformed into a dominating relationship. Gloria relinquished her independence, believing that her male partner would care for her, but they abused their power and used it to control and dominate her.

Gloria mentioned two men she had relationships with that were not destructive. The first was with a man, Bob (a pseudonym), she dated after the “crazy guy”. She felt that Bob “helped [her] get away from the crazy guy,” rescuing her from the frightening relationship. Yet, she did not stay with Bob for long, saying that she “treated him real bad.” It seemed that for her, power is dominance rather than equality. When her power was not taken by Bob, she abused it, disrespecting and eventually leaving him. Gloria also briefly mentioned in the last two sessions her recent relationship with a man on the outside. She said she had met him while at another prison, and that he made her feel “like a teenager again.” She felt that he might protect her from a longer sentence because he told her he was calling the court and advocating on her behalf. It is impossible to know how this relationship may develop in the future. The significant aspect to her relationships with men is her belief that others must protect her because she is incapable of doing so for herself.

As a child, Gloria believed her parents protected her, despite some behaviors that might mean otherwise. Even though her father drank heavily, physically abused her, and used her to transport drugs, she believed that he was responsible for her protection from the world. In the same manner, she believed that as an adult, her romantic relationships with men meant they would protect her. Instead many of the men she engaged in relationships with used their power to control and dominate her; they destroyed her
possessions, played roles in her losses, and manipulated her fear. Her belief that others must protect her seemed to begin in childhood when she felt that she could not control others- they left her suddenly, tragically and unexpectedly- and she had no power in her losses. As an adult, she continued to engage in relationships that echoed the patterns established in her childhood- they had power over her and her losses.

Yet a fundamental part of Gloria knew that she deserved respect, freedom and independence. During the fifth session, Gloria describes her inner struggle:

People should not have to go through what I went through. Shouldn’t have to be put in prison for fighting back. Shouldn’t have to go through being hit, not knowing when or where. Shouldn’t have to be hit for going out. Shouldn’t have to have fingers stuck up you and sniffed to make sure you ain’t been with some other guy. Shouldn’t have to have my things destroyed, my clothes cut up, my panties with the crotch cut out. No one should have to go through that. I need some hope. I need something to give me hope…I worry though. I worry about getting out… I’m just so tired. I feel worthless. I ain’t worth nothing.

Gloria illustrated her core belief that the way men have treated her is not respectful or fair, but that she also did not deem herself strong enough to protect herself from them. Her experience in the world supports her disbelief in herself as strong and capable. When she tried to use violence, a form of control used by her male partners, she was imprisoned, further disempowering her. She struggled with the desire to protect herself, and the belief that she was not capable. She therefore continued to use others to protect her.

**Summary**

In chapter 5 Gloria’s relationships with men were explained in terms of five themes, (a) fear, (b)distrust/trust, (c) loss, (d) betrayal, and (e) others as protectors. These themes first emerged in Gloria’s childhood with her relationships with family members, and were repeated in her romantic relationships with men as an adolescent and adult.
Also, like chapter 4, the themes described in chapter 5 were connected and intertwined throughout Gloria’s recounts of her relationships with men. Several of her stories about fear also included feelings of distrust and betrayal. Further, Gloria’s paradoxical relationship with trust and distrust with family members and friends continued with her romantic relationships; despite her initial view of men as her protectors she often felt feelings of loss and betrayal during and after the relationship.

In chapter 6, the five themes from chapters 4 and 5 are reviewed and established as patterns of interpersonal interactions that contributed Gloria’s engagement in violence with her husband. The themes are also connected with the Ecological Nested Model (ENM) proposed in chapters 1-3, explicating how this research study supports use of the logic model when researching interpersonal violence and creating effective therapeutic programming. Additionally, in the conclusion Gloria’s art work is used to further support the ENM as well as art therapy in prisons and with populations that have experienced trauma and engaged in violence. Lastly, the original research questions from chapters 1 through 3 will be explained and answered.
CHAPTER 6
CONCLUSION

In the conclusion section of this paper, Gloria’s patterns of interactions within her familial and romantic relationships are compared to the contextual factors noted within the Ecological Nested Model (ENM). The data collected from the results of this study parallel the ENM, supporting its use in framing and understanding women’s engagement in intimate partner violence. Also explored in the conclusion is the pertinence of art therapy to this study as well as other research and therapeutic work with violent women. Next, the original research questions are revisited, answered, and corroborated by the discussion and artwork Gloria created during the study. Lastly, limitations of the study and implications for future research are examined and clarified.

Patterns of Relationships and the Ecological Nested Model

Throughout all six sessions, the majority of Gloria’s discussions and artwork concerned her relationships with family, friends and male partners. From her memories, five significant themes emerged: (a) fear, (b) distrust/trust, (c) loss, (d) betrayal, and (e) perception of others as her protectors. These themes were established during her childhood, particularly with her family members, mother, father, siblings and uncle, and were solidified in her intimate relationships with male partners. These themes were powerful motivators for Gloria; they had deep roots and contributed to the way in which she related to others as an adult. Because fear, loss, betrayal and distrust were such strong motivators for Gloria’s behavior, she reacted towards her husband’s physical abuse in a physically aggressive manner. During a particularly violent altercation, she scratched, slapped and eventually stabbed him, feeling that she had to protect herself from his violent beatings. She had been the victim of violence for most of her life and to her, violence was a defense against the losses and betrayals she had endured throughout her life. And yet, it was an instance of violence against her husband, in self-defense, that contributed to her prison sentence and losing everything.

Gloria’s range of child- and adult-hood experiences with violence, loss, and betrayal echo the argument the Ecological Nested Model (ENM) proposes (Larance, 2006). The ENM is a multi-layered theoretical model that explores human development
from a contextual and interactive perspective (see Figure 1; Bronfenbrenner, 1977, 1986; Dasgupta, 2002; Larance 2006). The model has four inter-related layers: (a) the individual system level- childhood experience, family of origin, and role models; (b) the microsystem level- adult family relationships, friendships and colleagues; (c) the exosystem level- formal and informal social structures such as social networks, socioeconomic status and occupation; (d) the macrosystem level- societal norms, culture and ethnicity (Larance, 2006). Gloria’s recollections from many of these layers include trauma, violence, loss and betrayal, thus establishing a pattern of illogical distrust and trust, and a view of others as her protectors.

Larance (2006) used the ENM to create a therapeutic program for women who engaged in domestic violence with their partners. She found that the women identified with the contextual factors, and thus the ENM was an appropriate theoretical model for creating programs for women who have engaged in violence (Larance, 2006). The ENM’s four layers of contextual factors also correlate with research literature that suggests women who engage in intimate partner violence also have traumatic histories, particularly physical and sexual abuse by family members and romantic partners (Langhinrichsen-Rohling, Neidig, & Thorn, 1995; Luthra & Gidcyz, 2006; Magdol et al., 1997; Sullivan et al., 2005). Much like the arguments advocated by the research literature and the ENM, Gloria’s patterns of interpersonal relationships with family, friends and relationships within her social structures and American culture seemed to contribute to her understanding of violence as a means of power, control and self-defense (Hamberger & Guse, 2002).

The four layers of the ENM connect closely with the themes developed and explained in chapters 4 and 5. On the individual system level, Gloria recalled memories of trauma, physical and sexual abuse, loss, betrayal and distrust with family members in her childhood. Many of the memories from her childhood included violent interactions-viewing her uncle’s violent death, and experiencing her father’s physical abuse. On the microsystem level of the ENM, Gloria’s patterns of interpersonal relationships continued with physical abuse perpetrated by her male intimate partners. She also lost her children with her sister’s betrayal and her youngest son’s sudden death. She stated she also had difficulty trusting friends and other inmates despite their intentions to help her.
On the exosystem level of the ENM, Gloria related a couple of positive relationships with female friends she made in prison several years before the study. However, Gloria also felt loss about not being able to pursue her desired occupations. Her occupations and socioeconomic status before being sentenced to prison were largely determined by her male partners. She often worked as an assistant with her husband or boyfriends in their businesses. When she was not working with her male partners, she worked in gas stations, convenience stores, and other limited-skilled jobs because at the time she did not have a high school diploma. She gave up her freedom to make occupational choices when she lived with controlling men as an adult, and becoming pregnant at 16 prevented her from pursuing her education beyond the 10th grade.

On the macrosystem level, Gloria utilized the art to explain her desire to be free, and how her romantic partners would take her freedom by controlling her use of her car. She explained that she felt that women in American society have to be “liberated” and that for her, her car was a symbol of her freedom. Gloria also related that while in prison she became racist. She said that while in prison it seemed that black inmates received favoritism; “if you ain’t black, you ain’t nothing.” Her anger at losing her white status in prison seemed to contribute to her sense of distrust of others, already established by her relationships with family and men.

Also on the macrosystem level is the factor of societal norms. Gloria was betrayed many times by the societal norms in the American judicial system. As a child, she was physically abused and watched her sister being sexually abused; yet neither social services nor the court system intervened to prevent further abuse. The court system was aware of the physical abuse after Gloria’s mother had a restraining order assigned against Gloria’s father, but they did not further investigated Gloria’s home life. Additionally, after Gloria ran away as a young adolescent, to prevent her stepfather from sexually abusing her, she was arrested by the police and forced back into the home in her mother and stepfather’s care.

As an adult, Gloria was twice again betrayed by the judicial system when social services took her children from Gloria’s sister’s care and did not provide adequate information for Gloria to regain custody or even contact with her children. At the time of the study, she had not spoken with her children in over a decade. Lastly, after an incident
of reciprocal aggression against her abusive partner, Gloria was charged with assault by her husband but never received a trial; she was sentenced in the judge’s chambers. At the macrosystem level of the ENM, society influences the way in which a person develops and perceives the world; for Gloria, society time and again failed her. She learned from a young age that as a poor white woman, society would not protect her, and she could not trust authority.

The four layers of the ENM are useful in explaining the development of Gloria’s patterns of social relationships. She learned fear, distrust, loss, betrayal and that others should protect her as a child through her interactions with family, fitting the individual system of the ENM. As an adolescent and adult, she repeated these themes in her relationships with men as well as fellow inmates, prison guards, therapists, and lawyers, correlating with the microsystem, exosystem and macrosystem levels of the ENM. Thus the ENM, as previously supported by other studies and literature, is supported by the data collected in this study.

The ENM is not only helpful as a framework for understanding women’s engagement in intimate partner violence, but may also help create effective, therapeutic programming for women. As argued earlier in this paper, more women and men are reporting women’s engagement in intimate partner violence than ever before, and the arrest rates for women committing assault against partners have risen dramatically in the past decade (Barnes, 1998; Carney, Buttell & Dutton, 2006; Dasgupta, 2002; Friess, 1997; House, 2001; Larance, 2006; Luthra & Gidycz, 2006; Martin, 1997; Miller, 2001; Renzetti, 1992; Strauss, 1999; White, Donat & Bondurant, 2007). Thus it is imperative to not only understand the nature of women’s engagement in domestic violence, but also to create effective therapy programs for these women.

Those who subscribed to the feminist perspective established in the 1970s, 80s and 90s believed that domestic violence perpetrated by men was a societal issue, one for the public sphere; however, women’s engagement in violence must now also be seen as a societal issue as well (Crawford & Unger, 2004). It is not a private problem, but one that affects families, partners, and ultimately the American societal framework (Larance, 2006). Effective therapeutic interventions and educational prevention are imperative to address the increasingly pertinent issue of women’s violence (Hamberger & Guse, 2002).
Based on the supportive results of this study, as well as past research in the area, the ENM should be explored further as an applicable and useful framework for creating treatment programs for women who engage in violence through the art therapy process (Dasgupta, 2002; Larance, 2006).

**Art Therapy**

For Gloria, art therapy allowed her to explore and express feelings that were frightening and traumatic. However, the art also helped her to relax, stay grounded, and build trust. Also, Gloria stated during the sixth session that participating in the study and completing all of the art pieces encouraged her to comprehend her participation as contributory, helpful and worthwhile. Art therapy is a useful and effective modality with violent populations, however it is not cited often in research about women who have engaged in intimate partner violence. This single case study may provide groundwork for further research into the use of art therapy in treatment and program for women who engage in intimate partner violence.

During the second session, Gloria was drawing when she began to recall how the developing sketch looked like her uncle’s farm. She then recounted the event of her uncle’s suicide with clarity and sensory details. It was a disturbing and frightening memory for Gloria; she was a young child when she witnessed her beloved uncle’s suicide. Although it was a traumatic loss for Gloria, the artwork helped her to stay grounded.

Gantt (2007) found that art therapy is a useful tool with clients who have experienced trauma. She argued that art therapy is more helpful for treating trauma than traditional talk therapy because the client is able to use the artwork to gain reflective distance from the trauma and better able to then process it without feeling re-traumatized (Gantt & Tinnin, 2007). Gloria’s experience with the artwork followed this pattern, keeping her grounded in reality while she processed an early traumatic event. Because Gloria learned early on in the study that the artwork was a safe place to explore her memories, especially those that were traumatic and emotional, she began to build trust and rapport in the process.
At the end of the study, Gloria expressed that she was sad about ending the
sessions. She seemed to have connected well with me, and she had given a lot of effort
and energy to the artwork and discussions. During the last session, all of Gloria’s artwork
was laid out in front of her, and she was asked what it was like to see all of the artwork
together. She said it was “strange” and that she “never thought [she’d] do something like
this.” Seeing the artwork seemed to be a physical reminder of what she was capable of
accomplishing. She then discussed her fear of returning home, how she felt worthless and
then she circled back to how proud she was of helping with the study. The art was a
symbol of what she had accomplished, what she had lost throughout her life, and how she
was still capable of helping others.

The ENM was a useful model for clarifying the contextual factors that contribute
to a woman’s engagement in violence and how they are multi-layered and nested within
each other. In all past studies the ENM was used only to understand the verbal content of
therapy and programs with women who engaged in intimate partner violence. However,
this study used art therapy to also explore the participant’s experiences with violence
throughout her life. Gloria’s artwork unveiled the interconnectivity of her experiences
with violence throughout her life graphically illustrated in the nested nature of the ENM.

Gloria’s memories of her childhood and adulthood are nested within each other,
much the same way the ENM illustrates with its nested, multi-layered structure. These
memories were expressed in a nested, overlapping, interactive manner in her artwork. For
example, in the last session, Gloria created a collage that reflected on her experience in
the study (see figure 6). In it, she glued large eyes in the middle of the page, which she
said represented her feeling that she is always being watched. Around the large, watchful
eyes, are soft, feminine flowers and hearts, symbols of her hope to love and be loved,
which she discussed during session as well. What she did not discuss, but what is
displayed in her artwork is how these paradoxical feelings of paranoia and hope and love
are connected in her unconscious mind. She is unaware of how paranoia and love play
roles in her relationships. The artwork showed the interconnectedness of Gloria’s
experiences while the ENM frames and illustrates how they are interconnected.

Gloria’s artwork was an imperative aspect of this study; it supported her verbal
discussion, clarified her confusion on the timeline of events in her life, and aided in
building trust with Gloria, allowed her to be more open. Creating artwork also helped Gloria relieve anxiety, explore painful memories and attain a sense of accomplishment. Additionally, because the ENM is a multi-layered model, graphically illustrated with nested categories, it lends itself well to better understanding the contextual factors represented in the participants’ artwork and verbal discussions. The artwork not only supports the contextual factors of the ENM, illustrating connections Gloria was not aware of, but was pivotal to exploring her relationships with others. More research into the use of art therapy with violent populations, particularly those who have engaged in intimate partner violence is sorely needed. The studies that have been conducted with art therapy and violent populations, including this one, maintain the importance of continued research in the area (Gussak, 2004; Merriam, 1998; Williams & Taylor, 2004).

**Revisiting the Research Questions**

This case study was structured by several research questions. The questions were attained through exploration of pertinent literature and the study’s theoretical model, the ENM. The primary research question of this study was, how do contextual factors affect women’s engagement in intimate partner violence? The study’s use of the theoretical model, the ENM, encompassed two additional, secondary research questions: (a) What are the contextual factors that affect women’s engagement in intimate partner violence? and (b) How can the ENM be used to better understand the relationship between the contextual factors and women’s engagement in intimate partner violence?

The data collected during the course of this study consisted of the client’s spoken word and her artwork. In order to best answer the research questions, the data was organized through the use of a coded logical model derived from the five emergent themes in the data: (a) fear, (b) distrust/trust, (c) loss, (d) betrayal, (e) perception of others as protectors. The five emergent themes were couched within two encompassing subject areas: chapter 4, relationships with family and friends and chapter 5, romantic relationships with men.

The two encompassing subject areas of the coded logical model, relationships with family and friends, and romantic partners, parallel the contextual factors delineated in the first two layers of the ENM. The third and fourth layers of the ENM emerged in the
data within the first two layers. For example, in session five Gloria discussed how her freedom was taken when her husband attained control of her car. Gloria’s experience of being a white, American woman (the macrosystem level of the ENM) was expressed through her intimate relationship (the microsystem level). Because the ENM is a nested model, no one layer is wholly separated from the others (see Figure 1). Thus the data from Gloria’s discussions and artwork supports not only the contextual factors labeled in the ENM, but the data exemplified the usefulness of the ENM in understanding the interactive nature of the contextual factors in Gloria’s life.

First the implicated research questions are answered, and then the answers are used to explain and support the primary research question. The first secondary question is (a) What are the contextual factors that affects women’s engagement in intimate partner violence? Gloria cited a number of contextual factors, all of which match with the contextual factors named in the ENM. The most frequently cited factors for Gloria were: childhood experience, family of origin, adult family relationships (including romantic relationships), socioeconomic status, occupation, societal norms, and ethnicity.

The secondary research question is (b) How can the ENM be used to better understand the relationship between the contextual factors and women’s engagement in intimate partner violence? The relational patterns that emerged for Gloria were established in childhood, at the individual system level, and then repeated at the microsystem level, with her intimate relationships with men. Then, the exosystem, notably Gloria’s occupation, socioeconomic status, were affected by the experiences in her individual and microsystem level. For example, her occupations were largely determined by the men she dated.

Lastly, the macrosystem of the ENM seemed to condone and support her experiences as a child and an adult: Gloria was not protected by social services despite clear evidence of abuse as a child; she was not given adequate custody or contact information for her children after they were taken by social services and when Gloria attempted to fight back against her abusive husband, she was sentenced to prison. Gloria’s status as a poor white woman (the exosystem and macrosystem level) seemed to contribute to her maltreatment by the American judicial system. She was truly abused at every level outlined in the ENM. She was failed as a child, an adolescent and an adult,
time and again, by family, men and a social system originally developed to protect its children and citizens.

Dasgupta, (2002) noted that in the last twenty years, law enforcement in the US has begun to arrest women at similar rates to men for domestic disputes. She argued that despite differences in the nature and use of women’s and men’s violence in domestic disputes, contemporary societal norms may condemn women for retaliatory violence against male partners. Gloria’s experience supports Dasgupta’s (2002) argument, and the ENM shows how the macrosystem level condones Gloria’s experiences with violence in the other three layers of the model, which contributed to her use of violence in defense against her husband.

In reference to the primary research question of this research study—how do contextual factors affect women’s engagement in intimate partner violence?—it seemed the results of the study demonstrated that the patterns of relationships Gloria established as a child with her family members were repeated in her intimate relationships with men as an adolescent and adult. The contextual factors of the individual system of the ENM (childhood experiences and family of origin) laid the foundation for the relationships she established in the microsystem level (family and romantic relationships, colleagues). Then, the relationships she established as an adult limited her ability to pursue desired occupations because Gloria’s choices were largely controlled by her male partners.

As a child, Gloria needed others to be her protectors and providers, but they did not often follow through on their responsibilities. So Gloria repeated these patterns as an adult, expecting her male partners to protect and provide for her. Yet just as Gloria’s familial childhood protectors did not follow through with expected responsibilities to care for and protect her, her adult male partners did not as well.

This study not only supports the use of the ENM in better understanding the contextual factors that contribute to women’s use of violence, it also illustrates the interactive, overlapping nature of the contextual factors in a women’s experiences with violence. Hopefully, more research into this area will support the findings of this and other studies, and continue to help women and men affected by intimate partner violence.
Limitations

There were two significant limitations discovered during the course of this study. Both involved the researcher as instrument for the study: (a) secondary trauma, (b) therapist as researcher. The qualitative methods were imperative to the success of this study because the participant was able to explore and express many memories, feelings and experiences because of the unstructured nature of the art therapy directives and discussions. However, the difficulties and biases inherent in qualitative methods created some struggles for myself, the researcher. I strived to remain as removed and emotionally uninvolved as possible, to help prevent problematic biases. However, the traumatic content of Gloria’s discussions about her experiences with violence, as well as my own training as a therapist created unexpected challenges.

During the second session with Gloria, when she had graphically described her uncle’s suicide, I felt physically ill and nauseous at the thought of a young girl experiencing a violent death of a loved one. After the session, I began having flashbacks of her describing the suicide; vivid images of her face and clear descriptions of the death played in my mind unexpectedly. I was horrified by that session, and realized I was experiencing secondary post-traumatic stress disorder. I sought supervision from my thesis committee chair and debriefed through verbal discussion, personal journaling and art creation, easing my emotional attachment to Gloria’s trauma, and relieving the burden. While I have worked with clients with difficult backgrounds before, Gloria’s was the most traumatic and her storytelling skills the most expressive. Furthermore, I think that I felt guilt at not being able to therapeutically treat her because my primary goal was for research, not to provide treatment. Researchers that notice symptoms of PTSD, guilt or strong emotional reactions to participants should seek supervision, or therapy, if needed, to help prevent their emotional responses from problematically affecting the course of their study.

The difficulty with not being able to give Gloria therapy was a struggle throughout the study. My therapeutic inclination would try to over-ride my goals to gain information during sessions, and I felt myself repressing many comments, questions and art therapy directives. This is a limitation that could have affected the quality of data, as well as possibly changed the direction of the study. Therapists who do research must be
aware of their goals and reactions to participants; I often found myself asking, Am I doing this for therapy or for the study? I think that the underlying guilt associated with researching Gloria rather than giving her art therapy also made termination very difficult. I felt helpless until she reminded me how proud she felt that she was able to help with the study, and hopefully help other practitioners and women affected by violence.

Implications for Future Research

As emphasized throughout this thesis, intimate partner violence affects many women and men. Many theoretical models have attempted to explain intimate partner violence but the numerous contextual factors of violence complicate the implications of these theories. One model though, the Ecological Nested Model (ENM), allows for the roles of contextual factors in the interactive nature of human experience and development. The ENM uses several layers of factors, nested within each other, to illustrate how the contextual factors of interpersonal relationships occur throughout women’s lives and contribute to their engagement in intimate partner violence. This study was able to gather data from artwork and discussions during six art therapy sessions to support the use of the ENM to better understand women’s violence. More research is needed to further support use of the ENM. While the results of this study and several others suggest the ENM is useful, it is a single participant case study. More studies using the ENM with women who have engaged in intimate partner violence are necessary to bolster the applicability of the model to understanding women’s violence.

Additionally, while a theoretical model is useful in and of itself, there are also practical implications to having a model that clearly and effectively explains women’s violence. The ENM may be an appropriate model for creating more successful educational programs, preventive measures, and therapeutic treatment for those who engage in and are affected by intimate partner violence. The economical burden alone of female inmates imprisoned for assault charges could be reduced through effective preventative measures. Thus research into the practical implications of the ENM is imperative to creating more effective therapeutic and preventive interventions for those affected by intimate partner violence.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Session # and Length</th>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Materials</th>
<th>Discussion</th>
<th>Outcomes &amp; Objectives</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. 90 min</td>
<td>• Explanation of art therapy and research study</td>
<td>Intake Questions, Consent Forms (Appendices B, C, and D), white paper, large-tipped scented markers, fine-tipped unscented markers, cray-pas, tape</td>
<td>Intake-related issues, ie background information, psychiatric disorder. Art therapy and research study. Scribble drawing directive and processing</td>
<td>Researcher learns about participant, her concerns, history, etc, and participant begins learning about art therapy and building rapport with researcher.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Intake Interview</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Scribble Drawing</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. 90 min</td>
<td>• Lifeline</td>
<td>White paper, large-tipped scented markers, fine-tipped unscented markers, cray-pas, tape, glue stick, black pen, pencil.</td>
<td>Lifeline, childhood experiences</td>
<td>Researcher learns about childhood and client able to clearly communicate events in life.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Interview about childhood experiences</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Drawing of a Happy Memory</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. 90</td>
<td>• Draw a Picture/Collage of your Family when you were a child, Interview about family of origin and role models</td>
<td>White paper, large-tipped scented markers, fine-tipped unscented markers, cray-pas, tape, glue stick, black pen, pencil, pre-cut magazine images, glue, scissors.</td>
<td>Family of origin, Adult relationships</td>
<td>Researcher learns about client’s family. Participant uses art and words to express experience with family of origin</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Finish Adult half of Timeline</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. 90 min</td>
<td>• Occupational Collage or Drawing</td>
<td>Same as above.</td>
<td>Occupational dreams, wishes, and realities</td>
<td>Researcher learns about occupational dreams and realities. Participant expresses her dreams.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Interview about past occupations, desired career and future goals.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Table 1 continued

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Session # and Length</th>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Materials</th>
<th>Discussion</th>
<th>Outcomes &amp; Objectives</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| 5. 60 min (due to prison-related time constraints) | • Art piece expressing how it feels to be a woman in America.  
• Interview about believed societal norms. | White paper, large-tipped scented markers, fine-tipped unscented markers, cray-pas, tape, glue stick, black pen, pencil, pre-cut magazine images, glue, scissors. | Societal and gender roles. Perceptions about gender. | Researcher learns about participant’s perception of gender and roles based on ethnicity, race and culture. Client expresses how it feels to be a woman; she may express how society believes a woman should be. |
| 6. 90 min | • Review of art and interview material.  
• Interview on connections participant sees in art pieces.  
• Art piece as reflection on experience in study. | Same as above, and art pieces from past sessions. | Review of artwork, interview. Discussion on connections between art pieces, as well as past and present relationships. Process and debrief experience in study and final art piece. | Client’s accomplishments in study emphasized. Client may gain insight about behavior, relationships and violence. Insight and closure with study for participant and researcher; also discuss referral information for on-site psychological services. |
Figure 1. Ecological Nested Model (Larance, 2006, p. 627, Figure 1)
Figure 2. Scribble Drawing
Figure 3. Life Timeline Part I (Identifying information has been blacked out.)
Figure 4. Drawing of a Happy Memory
Figure 5. Collage about Family
I did finally get to be with one real guy in my life. His name was [redacted]. We took on being a mother for 4 daughters and [redacted]. This was after the [redacted] incident. It did teach me the true meaning of love and of no second chances! You only live life one time so chose right while you can. I do still write and send him a good B Day and Christmas cards but get no reply. I met my husband [redacted] shortly after [redacted] left the phone. My little girl had left some things in his care and I called to get them. He had the sweetest Southern drawl phone voice that I ever heard. We talked on the phone for about 10 months and then he finally gave in and went out with him. We had such good times in the beginning. He was a gentleman and so good to me. And then...
Figure 7. Collage about Occupational Dreams.
Figure 8. Collage about Being a Woman in the United States.
Figure 9. Collage as a Reflection on Gloria’s Experience in the Study
APPENDIX A

Example Interview Questions.

(Minor changes in wording, grammar, or syntax may be made to meet participant’s and researcher’s needs.)

Individual System Level
1. Tell me about your childhood.
2. What memories do you have about your childhood?
3. Tell me about your family growing up. What do you remember?
4. How did your family resolve conflict?
5. How did your family relate to one another?
6. Who were your role models growing up?

Microsystem Level:
1. Tell me about your family now.
2. What is your family life like now?
3. Tell me about your friends.
4. How do you feel about your friendships?
5. Tell me about your colleagues.
6. How is your relationship with your friends and colleagues?

Exosystem Level:
1. What is your social network like?
2. What would you describe your socioeconomic status as?
3. What is your occupation?

Macrosystem Level:
1. What is your culture?
2. How do you feel about your culture and your role as a woman?
3. How do you feel about your role as a woman within American society?
4. What roles do you have in society?
5. What is your ethnicity?
6. How is to be your ethnicity in America?
APPENDIX B

INFORMED CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH PROJECT

I freely and voluntarily and without force or intimidation, consent to be a participant in the research project entitled “The Importance of Context: A Pilot Study on Women Who Engage in Violence with their Intimate Partners.”

This research is being conducted by Jessie Spraggins, B.A., a student in a master’s level art therapy program at Florida State University, and chaired by David Gussak, Ph.D., ATR-BC, a professor of Art Therapy/Art Education at Florida State University. I understand the purpose of her research project is to explore the aspects of women’s violence with romantic partners.

I understand that I will be asked to take part in individual art therapy sessions and interviews with Jessie Spraggins.

I understand my participation is totally voluntary and I may stop my participation at anytime without any penalty. All of my personal information, responses, and answers to any interview questions will be kept confidential to the extent allowed by law. Information pertaining to a past, current or future legal case may be obtained by the authorities, to the extent allowed by the law. My name will not appear on any of the results and I will be identified only by a false name.

I understand there is a possibility of a small level of risk if I agree to participate in this study. I might experience anxiety or emotional discomfort during the interviews, or while creating artwork. Jessie Spraggins and Dr. Donna Kitch, licensed psychologist, will be available to talk with me about any discomfort I may experience while participating. I can contact Dr. Donna Kitch at the Gadsden Correctional Facility during or after the study. I am also able to stop my participation at any time I wish, without penalty.

I understand there may be therapeutic benefits for participating in this project, and that, through the artwork, I will have the opportunity to express myself more fully. I understand that all data collected for this study will be kept by Jessie Spraggins, offsite of the Gadsden Correctional Facility, and will be kept locked in a file cabinet or a password-protected computer. I also understand that no information that could identify me will be kept with the data.

I understand that this consent may be withdrawn at any time without prejudice, penalty or loss of benefits to which I am otherwise entitled. I have been given the right to ask about the study and my questions, if any, have been answered to my satisfaction.

I understand that I may contact Dr. David Gussak, Florida State University, Department of Art Education, (850) 645-5663, or Dr. Donna Kitch, Gadsden Correctional Facility, (850) 875-9701 and that they will be available periodically, for answers to questions about this research or my rights. I understand that I may also contact the researcher, Jessie Spraggins at (850) 644-2003. If I have further questions, I can contact the Florida State University, Human Subjects Committee at (850) 644-7900.

I have read and I understand this consent form.

_________________________________________  __________________________
participant date

APPENDIX C

CONTRACT FOR USING RESEARCH PARTICIPANT ARTWORK

This is a contract between _________________________ and _________________________.

Art Therapist Intern, Principal Researcher     Participant

I, __________________________, agree to allow __________________________
Participant      Art Therapist Intern, Principal Researcher
to use and/or display and/or photograph my artwork for the following purpose(s):

- X  Publication in professional journals
- X  Presentation at professional conferences
- X  Consultation with other mental health professionals (includes supervision)
- X  Educational purposes
-   Exhibition

Other Conditions:____________________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________

CONFIDENTIALITY WILL BE MAINTAINED

I, __________________________, agree to the following conditions in connection with my
Art Therapist Intern, Principal Researcher
use of artwork by ______________________________:
Participant

I agree to keep your artwork safe, to the best of my ability, and to notify you immediately of any loss or
damage while your artwork is in my possession.
I agree to provide an approximate format for presentation if I exhibit your artwork, and to bear other costs
related to the exhibition.
I agree to return your artwork immediately if you decide to withdraw your consent. You may contact me,
Jessie Spraggins, at (850) 644-2003, to withdraw your consent.
I agree to keep your confidentiality. I will not label any of your artwork with information that could
identify you. If a name is used in connect with your artwork, it will be a false name.

Consent revoked: ___________________________________________ Date: _________
Signed:____________________________________________________Date: _________
Participant

Signed: ___________________________________________________ Date: _________
Art Therapist Intern, Principal Researcher

APPENDIX D

INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD APPROVAL MEMORANDUM

Office of the Vice President For Research
Human Subjects Committee
Tallahassee, Florida 32306-2742
(850) 644-8673 . FAX (850) 644-4392

APPROVAL MEMORANDUM

Date: 11/27/2007

To: Jessica Spraggins

Address: 4001 Chipola St., Tallahassee, FL 32303
Dept.: ART EDUCATION

From: Thomas L. Jacobson, Chair

Re: Use of Human Subjects in Research
The Importance of Context: A Pilot Study on Women who Engage in Violence with their Intimate Partners

The application that you submitted to this office in regard to the use of human subjects in the research proposal referenced above has been reviewed by the Human Subjects Committee at its meeting on 10/10/2007 2:00:00 PM. Your project was approved by the Committee.

The Human Subjects Committee has not evaluated your proposal for scientific merit, except to weigh the risk to the human participants and the aspects of the proposal related to potential risk and benefit. This approval does not replace any departmental or other approvals, which may be required.

If you submitted a proposed consent form with your application, the approved stamped consent form is attached to this approval notice. Only the stamped version of the consent form may be used in recruiting research subjects.

If the project has not been completed by 10/8/2008 you must request a renewal of approval for continuation of the project. As a courtesy, a renewal notice will be sent to you prior to your expiration date; however, it is your responsibility as the Principal Investigator to timely request renewal of your approval from the Committee.

You are advised that any change in protocol for this project must be reviewed and approved by the Committee prior to implementation of the proposed change in the protocol. A protocol change/amendment form is required to be submitted for approval by the Committee. In addition, federal regulations require that the Principal Investigator promptly report, in writing any unanticipated problems or adverse events involving risks to research subjects or others.

By copy of this memorandum, the Chair of your department and/or your major professor is reminded that he/she is responsible for being informed concerning research projects involving human subjects in the department, and should review protocols as often as needed to insure that the project is being conducted in compliance with our institution and with DHHS regulations.

This institution has an Assurance on file with the Office for Human Research Protection. The Assurance Number is IRB00000446.

Cc: David Gussak, Advisor, HSC No. 2007.739
REFERENCES


House, E. (2001). When women use force: An advocacy guide to understanding this issue and conducting an assessment with individuals who have used force to determine their eligibility for services from a domestic violence agency. Reprinted by the National Clearinghouse for the Defense of Battered Women, Philadelphia, PA.


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BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

JESSICA L. SPRAGGINS

EDUCATION

Florida State University, Tallahassee, FL  
Master of Science in Art Therapy  August 2008

University of Tulsa, Tulsa, OK  
Bachelor of Art in Psychology, Cum Laude  May 2006  
Honors Program, Certificate in Women’s Studies, Minor in Studio Art

Reading University, Reading, UK  
Study Abroad, Psychology and Women’s Studies  Spring 2005

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

ART THERAPY EXPERIENCE

Art Therapy Practicum Intern  
Florida State University Counseling Center, Tallahassee, FL  08/07-04/08

- Responsible for individual art therapy to approximately 12 clients a week, gaining experience with a variety of developmental, adjustment-related and mental health concerns
- Participated in weekly staff meetings, group and individual supervision, and training seminars
- Assisted staff with outreach presentations, workshops and art therapy in-service

Art Therapy Practicum Intern  
Ability 1st & HOPE Community, Tallahassee, FL  01/07-04/07

- Provided individual and group art therapy to approximately 2 adult clients, 2 children’s groups, and 2 adult groups a week, gaining experience with clients experiencing homelessness, mental health issues, physical disabilities and developmental disabilities
- Interacted with staff in weekly staff meetings and group supervision
- Designed and presented art therapy in-service to staff

ADDITIONAL WORK EXPERIENCE

Grocery Bagger  
Schinnen Army Base Commissary, Schinnen, Netherlands  2005, 2006

- Collaborated with team members to create schedules, rules and regulations
- Lead team as “Head Bagger” on weekly basis, collecting union fees from team members
Applied communication and interpersonal skills with customers and team members

**Arts & Entertainment Columnist**  
**University of Tulsa**, Tulsa, OK  
11/05-05/06  
- Interviewed local musicians and artists  
- Wrote weekly article for university newspaper

**Sales Associate, Floor Merchandiser**  
**Gap, Inc**, Tulsa, OK  
08/05-04/06  
- Used communication and interpersonal skills with customers, colleagues and managers  
- Created window and floor marketing displays for optimal product movement

**New Student Orientation Leader**  
**University of Tulsa**, Tulsa, OK  
07/05-12/05  
- Participated in weeklong leadership training workshop  
- Led group of 15 freshman students through orientation week, including a camping trip, and outdoor and team-building activities  
- Provided resources and support to freshman students throughout their first semester

**Tutor in Psychology**  
**University of Tulsa**, Tulsa, OK  
01/05-04/05  
- Tutored student athlete weekly

**ACTIVITIES**

**Florida State University**- Art Therapy Association (President), Ceramics Club, American Art Therapy Association, Florida Art Therapy Association

**University of Tulsa**- Women’s Studies Program (Student Chair), Amnesty International (President, V.P., Secretary), Chi Omega- Epsilon Gamma Chapter (V.P., Scholarship Chair, Career and Professional Development Chair), Study Abroad to Reading University, UK (05)

**HONORS**

**Florida State University**- Dean’s List, Graduate Student Leadership Award Nomination, COGS Dialogues Research Grant Nomination and Conference Presentation

**University of Tulsa**- Psi Chi (Mentor and Member Development Chair), Omicron Delta Kappa, Epsilon Gamma Chapter of Chi Omega Scholarship Award, “Elite Eight” Senior in Psychology