VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN AND FEMICIDE IN MEXICO: THE CASE OF CIUDAD JUÁREZ

By

NATALIE PANTHER

Bachelor of Arts in psychology

Oklahoma State University

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VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN AND FEMICIDE IN MEXICO: THE CASE OF CIUDAD JUÁREZ

Thesis Approved:

Dr. Michael Smith

Dr. Richard Rohrs

Dr. Laura Belmonte

A. Gordon Emslie

Dean of the Graduate College

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF TABLES

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Since 1993, approximately five hundred women have been murdered in Ciudad Juárez, Mexico. Although criminal investigations have resulted in some arrests, the majority of these crimes remain unsolved. The local Ciudad Juárez police, Mexican federal investigators, the United States Federal Bureau of Investigation, international human rights groups, families of the victims, and criminologists and sociologists in Mexico and the United States have offered many different theories for the murders. The various explanations include drug trafficking; local police involvement; the high percentage of *maquiladoras*, or foreign-owned factories, that only hire women; increased independence of female maquiladora workers; and the pervasive and perpetual violence against women that goes unchecked in Mexico. The corruption and incompetence of the Mexican police are integral components of the phenomenon and are one of the main reasons the murders continue. Another explanation for the murders could be the labor practices of the United States-owned factories. The maquiladora managers hire females because of their docility and compliance and their willingness to work for low wages. Although the corruption of the Mexican police and the unethical labor practices of maquiladoras contribute to the persistence of murders, they are not, by themselves, the

causes of the phenomenon. The females apparently have been murdered in an attempt to maintain the patriarchal system and to ensure the continuation of the subjugation of women in Mexico.

Many scholars have applied the term "femicide" to define what is happening in Ciudad Juárez. The word "femicide" was coined in 1820,[1] but was rarely used until women's rights activist Diana E. H. Russel defined femicide as the misogynist killing of women by men. She first used the term femicide "when testifying about misogynist murder before the 1976 International Tribunal on Crimes against Women."[2] She emphasized misogyny as the main contributor to woman killing. After her testimony, she began using the term in her classes and public lectures at Mills College. Professor of Criminology and Women's Studies, Jill Radford, also began using the term in her classes during the eighties at the University of Teeside. She also defines femicide as the misogynous killing of women by men and claims it is a form of sexual violence.[3] Unfortunately, today, misogyny is rarely considered as a factor in many of the cases of murdered women.

Femicide also entails the killing of women to maintain male supremacy in a society. Mexican sociologist Julia Monárrez Fragoso defines femicide as the misogynistic murder of women because they are women. The act of femicide is a result of a patriarchal system in which emotional and physical abuse, torture, rape, prostitution, sexual harassment, infanticide of girls, genital mutilation, domestic violence, forced

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[1] *Random House Unabridged Dictionary*, 2nd ed. (New York: Random House, 2001).

[2] Diana E. H. Russell, *Femicide: The Politics of Woman Killing* (New York: Twayne Publishers, 1992), xiv.

[3] Jill Radford, "Introduction," *Femicide: The Politics of Woman Killing,* 3.

maternity, pornography are tolerated and minimized by state and religious institutions.[4] For example, in China, a patriarchal society, traditional biases against women, combined with a strict policy that limits family size to one child, have resulted in parents regularly aborting female fetuses.[5]

Another example of femicide occurred at the University of Montreal 6 December 1989. On that day, Marc Lépine, a combat magazine collector, stormed into the School of Engineering, separated the women from the men, and opened fire on all the women, shouting "You're all fucking feminists."[6] He killed fourteen women, injured nine others, and then killed himself. Many Canadian writers and scholars agreed that the murders were hate crimes targeting victims based on their gender. Activists Jane Caputi and Diana E. H. Russell define these murders as femicide because Lépine killed the women because they were women.[7]

Although "femicide" is a relatively new term used to describe misogynist killing of women, "the phenomenon it describes is as old as patriarchy."[8] The witch-craze in sixteenth- and seventeenth- century Europe and England was an attempt by men to ensure the continuation of male dominance in society. Why were over 90 percent of those accused of witchcraft women? Professor of Gender and Violence at the University of Bristol, Marianne Hester, explains that European society was changing rapidly at the time—religiously, economically, and politically—enabling some women to gain

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[4] Julia Monárrez Fragoso, "La Cultura del Feminicidio en Ciudad Juárez, 1993-1999," *Frontera Norte,* 12 (2000): 87.

[5] Stephanie Coontz, *Marriage, A History: From Obedience to Intimacy or How Love Conquered Marriage* (New York: Viking, 2005), 3-4.

[6] Jane Caputi and Diana E. H. Russell, "Femicide: Sexist Terrorism against Women," *Femicide: The Politics of Woman Killing,* 13.

[7] Ibid., 14-15.

[8] Jane Caputi and Diana E. H. Russell, "Introduction," *Femicide: The Politics of Woman Killing,* 25.

economic independence by working in the textile industry. Moreover, by the mid-sixteenth century, women were noticeably encroaching on "male" domains in society. For example, female monarchs began ruling during this time, which many men considered unnatural and undesirable. Hester believes the threat to males' status quo led to the execution of approximately one thousand women in England from 1542 to 1736. She characterizes the murders as femicide because the use of violence against the victims involved the social control of women.[9]

In Mexico, *machismo*, or an exaggerated sense of masculinity based on the domination of women, coupled with police authorities' tolerance of violence against women has led to increased incidence of femicide. It is important to remember that femicide is not merely individuals killing individuals; rather, it is members of one group killing members of another group. In other words, femicide is a man killing a woman simply because she is a woman.[10]

Sociologist Julia Monárrez Fragoso describes four different categories of femicide occurring in Juárez: 1) sexual femicide; 2) sexist femicide; 3) femicide for narcotic trafficking; and 4) femicide because of drug addiction. Sexual femicide occurs when the perpetrator rapes, strangles, or mutilates his victims. This phenomenon is a "logical consequence of the patriarchal system that maintains male supremacy through" the rape and killing of women.[11] Moreover, sexual femicide is the result of the cultural dominance of one sex over another and is a form of terrorism. Monárrez Fragoso compares these crimes against women to the lynching of blacks in the southern United

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[9] Marianne Hester, "The Witch-craze in Sixteenth- and Seventeenth-Century England as Social Control of Women," *Femicide: The Politics of Woman Killing,* 27-36.

[10] Monárrez Fragoso, "La Cultura del Feminicidio," 88.

[11] Julia Monárrez Fragoso, "Serial Sexual Femicide in Ciudad Juárez: 1993-2001," *Debate Feminista,* 25 (April 2002): 280.

States and the Holocaust, which were based on ethnic supremacy. All of these crimes are forms of patriarchal terrorism.[12]

Sexist femicide occurs when the aggressor perceives a need to maintain domination and control over the victim. In the instance of sexist femicide, the perpetrator murders his victim for one or more of the following reasons: victim refused to lend aggressor her car; perpetrator was jealous; aggressor wanted to marry the victim and she refused; or the victim ended a relationship with the perpetrator. For sexual or sexist femicide, the attacker may be a father, a lover, a husband, a friend, an acquaintance, or a fiancé. They are all violent men who believe that they have the right to kill women. In other words, they are all sexual terrorists.[13]

Police and government officials, as well as scholars, have concluded that a small percentage of the murders have been the result of serial femicide.[14] Criminal theory offers the following features of serial sexual femicide. First, the attacker is male. Second, he has a hatred of women and lusts to see them suffer sexually. Third, rape and murder provide an intense orgasmic release for the aggressor. Fourth, this release is followed by a refractory calm. Fifth, the calm subsidies and the lust resumes, abated only by another murder or rape. Sixth, the perpetrator acts alone. Finally, although his act requires calculation, his motives are impassioned.[15] Although some of the murders have been incidents of serial femicide, the majority have not. However, both serial and non-serial femicide indicate a desire for the complete subjugation of women.

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[12] Monárrez Fragoso, "La Cultura del Feminicidio," 90.
[13] Ibid., 88.
[14] Ibid., 95-96; Debbie Nathan, "Work, Sex, and Danger in Ciudad Juárez," *NACLA Report on the Americas,* 33 (November 1999): 25; Victor Ronquillo, *Las muertas de Juárez: Crónica de una larga pesadilla* (México, D.F.: Planeta Mexicana, 1999): 23.
[15] Nathan, "Work, Sex, and Danger," 25.

The murder of women on a large scale has occurred in other areas of Mexico and is no longer confined to the border city of Ciudad Juárez. Chapter 2 includes a discussion of violence against women throughout Mexico, focusing on Mexico as a patriarchal society in which men dominate women. Typically, in patriarchal societies violence against women has been the cultural standard and tolerated practice for centuries. The established practice of violence against women could be one reason for the incidence of femicide. Femicide is a problem not only in Ciudad Juárez, but also in the southern state of Chiapas, where over six hundred women have been murdered since 1994.[16] In the state of Oaxaca, approximately 120 women have been murdered since 1999.[17] Femicide has occurred in Mexico City and the states of Guerrero and Morelos as well.

Chapter 3 includes a brief history of Ciudad Juárez, from its beginnings in 1659 as a Spanish mission for indigenous peoples to the present as a city of maquiladoras. Because police corruption and impunity have been integral components of the phenomenon of femicide in Ciudad Juárez, this chapter also contains a discussion of the police in Ciudad Juárez. There are many theories regarding the cause of the murders, some of which attribute these crimes to the consequences of drug trafficking, gang activity, overpopulation, and poverty. This chapter also discusses these and other social problems in Ciudad Juárez.

Whereas Chapter 2 contains a general examination of violence against women in Mexico, Chapter 4 focuses specifically on the murders in Ciudad Juárez. This chapter

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[16] Networking Human Rights Defenders, "El Feminicidio en México y Guatemala," http://www.fidh.org/article.php3?id_article=3262 (accessed 5 January 2004).

[17] Liga Mexicana por la Defensa de los Derechos Humanos, "La Comicón Especial para Conocer y Dar Seguimiento a las Investigaciones Relacionadas con los Feminicidios en la República Mexicana del Congreso Federal Visitará Oaxaca a Petición de las Organizaciones Civiles del Colectivo Huaxyacac," http://users.telenet.be/limeddh/noticias/feminicidios.htm (accessed 5 January 2005).

narrates the history of the murders, beginning with case of the first victim, Alma Chavira Farel, in 1993. Because the murders are unsolved and the problem is ongoing, this chapter begins in 1993 and continues to the present. Initially, authorities believed one serial killer was responsible for all of the murders. As the years progressed and the murders continued, this theory lost credibility, and suggestions that a larger cultural or social problem has caused the continuing violence gained credence. This chapter also includes a discussion of the various levels of government involvement in attempting to solve the crimes, as well as the activities of foreign governments and international human rights groups.

Chapters 5 and 6 contain the historiography and concluding remarks. The purpose of the historiographical chapter is to present the various theories and most plausible interpretations regarding the causes of the murders in Ciudad Juárez. Mexican writer and social commentator Luis Humberto Crosthwaite believes the murders are the result of the changing sex-roles in Mexican society. He avers that in only a few years the maquiladoras have reversed sex roles and women have become providers. The maquiladoras, he says, "created the new Mexican woman . . . but this same process did not create a new man."[18] North American journalist Debbie Nathan views the murders as an exaggerated form of violence against women in Mexico. She sees a connection between the increased level of domestic violence in Ciudad Juárez and the murders. She also believes that at the root of the problem lie transnational factories using gender differences to exploit labor. She claims that transnational factories have introduced

[18] Sam Quiñones, "The Dead Women of Juárez," *Puro Border: Dispatches, Snapshots & Graffiti,* eds., Luis Humberto Crosthwaite, John William Byrd and Bobby Byrd (El Paso: Cinco Puntos Press, 2003), 146.

gender competition into patriarchal cultures.[19] Mexican psychologist Jorge Ostos attributes the murders to the rise of drug abuse and gang activity in Ciudad Juárez. He avers that there are "as many potential killers as drug addicts."[20] Chapter 5 examines these and other theories regarding femicide in Ciudad Juárez.

When examining the phenomenon in Ciudad Juárez, it becomes apparent that the murders are femicidal in nature. For hundreds of years, Mexico has been a patriarchal culture in which men ruled society and fathers ruled households. A necessary component of patriarchy is the subordination of women to maintain the predominance of men. Beginning in 1965, maquiladoras began the practice of hiring women rather than men, creating an anomaly in Ciudad Juárez society. When women began earning their own money, they quickly replaced men as the "breadwinners" of the household. As a result, the men resent the maquiladoras and the women who work for them.[21] Because at least half of the women who have been killed in Ciudad Juárez were either employed or seeking employment at a maquiladora, it seems likely that these women in particular were murdered because their economic independence threatened the elevated status of men. According to the definition above, killing women to maintain male dominant status is a form of femicide. Furthermore, at least 40 percent of the victims were also raped.[22] Rape accompanied by murder is characteristic of sexual femicide. Therefore, the phenomenon that has been occurring in Ciudad Juárez since 1993 can be considered femicidal for the purpose of maintaining the patriarchal system and the subjugation of women.

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[19] Nathan, "Work, Sex, and Danger," 30.

[20] Quiñones, "Dead Women of Juárez," 151.

[21] Jessica Livingston, "Murder in Juárez: Gender Sexual Violence, and the Global Assembly Line," *Frontiers—A Journal of Women's Studies,* 25 (January 2004): 64.

[22] Monárrez Fragoso, "La Culture del Feminicidio," 94-95.

CHAPTER II

VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN IN MEXICO

When the Spanish settled Central and South America during the sixteenth century, they brought with them and recreated all aspects of Spanish society, including how they viewed women. Like most imperial nations during the time of the Conquest, Spain was a patriarchal society, one in which men systematically dominated women. In such a society, men viewed women as one or all of the following: functioning as producers of children; carrying family honor in their sexuality; maintaining tasks expected of housewives; adhering to the expected characteristics (passive, compliant, sensitive, emotional, soft, and gentle); and remaining economically dependent.[23] Male domination of women has endured for centuries in Latin America, and Mexico is no exception.

One definition of patriarchy is a form of social organization in which the father is the supreme authority in the family, clan, or tribe.[24] Professor of Women's History at Temple University, Gerda Lerner, provides a more useful definition. She defines patriarchy as the "manifestation and institutionalization of male dominance over women and children in the family and the extension of male dominance over women in society in

[23] David Abalos, *The Latino Male: A Radical Redefinition* (Boulder: Lynne Rienner Publishers, Inc., 2002), 53.

[24] *Random House Webster's Unabridged Dictionary,* 2nd ed. (New York: Random House, 1998).

general."[25] Implicit in this definition is the concept that men possess power in all important institutions of society and that women are denied access to that power.[26]

Patriarchal supremacy exists within political organizations. The male domination of politics affects the rights of women by limiting their freedom and autonomy. The social and political institutions are in the hands of the patriarchs. In a patriarchal society, politics and society are masculine—the government, religious institutions, clubs, and mafias. When women are denied access to political power, they are denied basic human rights. It is in this sense that political organizations in a patriarchal society contribute to violence against women. The societal belief that women are inferior promotes violence against women just because they are women. Some men use this patriarchal right to invade the bodies of women to commit femicide.[27] The practice of exterminating women has the purpose of controlling women and dominating them to maintain the patriarchal system.[28]

In Mexico, there is an established tolerance of violence against women. Such behavior begins within the family. Most Mexican girls from poor families become mothers and housewives. Although they are exposed to some education, the majority of the family budget for education goes for males. Parents believe that males need schooling because they will become the members of society who work. Parents also expect girls to clean up after their brothers. In some families, brothers beat their sisters when they do not complete their chores correctly. Many girls in this situation marry men similar to their brothers and fathers. Typically, Mexican men adhere to a *macho* attitude,

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[25] Gerda Lerner, *The Creation of Patriarchy* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986), 239.
[26] Ibid.
[27] Julia Monárrez Fragoso, "La Cultura del Feminicidio en Ciudad Juárez, 1993-1999," *Frontera Norte,* 12 (2000): 90.
[28] Ibid., 88.

believing that women should not get an education or work outside the home, but rather they should stay home to cook and clean.[29]

Feminist scholars Heather Fowler Salamini and Mary Kay Vaughan have examined the reasons to explain women's subordination in households and society in Mexico. They have found that the patriarchal values "persist despite capitalist development."[30] The emergence of capitalism in Mexico has led to the exploitation of female laborers who are willing to work for low wages. According to Salamini and Vaughan, these women have become increasingly engaged in income-producing activities to ensure the survival of their peasant families.[31]

Machismo is a strong or exaggerated sense of manliness or a strong or exaggerated sense of power and the right to dominate. *Machismo* has been the norm for centuries in Mexico. For some Mexican men, to be macho means to be an honorable man. For others, the word macho connotes a man who provides for his family. Although there are many "mixed and changing sentiments regarding the terms macho and machismo," these terms still invoke a pejorative connotation, typically associated with sexism and male dominance. Today, it is becoming more common for a young married man in Mexico to define himself as non-macho, because he helps his wife around the house and does not beat her.[32]

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[29] Patrick Oster, *The Mexicans: A Personal Portrait of a People* (St. Louis, Harper and Row Publishers, 1989), 259-262.

[30] Heather Fowler-Salamani and Mary Kay Vaughan, eds. *Women of the Mexican Countryside, 1850-1990* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1994), xiii.

[31] Ibid., xiv.

[32] Matthew C. Gutmann, *The Meanings of Macho: Being a Man in Mexico City* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1996), 221-223.

Although wife beating remains a pervasive problem throughout Mexico, "violent attacks on male children are inflicted with even greater regularity."[33] It is typical for abused male children to become abusive when they get older, thus perpetuating a cycle of domestic violence. Mexico City's Centro de Atención a la Violencia Intrafamiliar (CAVI) is an extension of the municipal police and designed to investigate and aid in cases of domestic violence. Husbands accused of beating their wives are encouraged to see a psychologist one night a week for five months. The husband is not forced to attend the meetings, but does so by his own volition. Mexican writer Matthew Gutmann attended these meetings as part of his research for his book *The Meanings of Macho: Being a Man in Mexico City.* He reveals that the men who attended were ashamed of the abuse they inflicted on their partners. Many of the men, after attending several sessions, reportedly espoused alternative means of dealing with their anger toward their wife. Nevertheless, Gutmann believes that domestic violence in Mexico increased during the 1990s. He attributes this increase to the fact that many men find it difficult to deal with women's nascent independence, and some men blame *machismo* for their violence and do not take responsibility for their actions.[34]

Machismo has been the norm for centuries in Mexico. For example, most police officers are men. When women file complaints that their husbands have beaten or raped them, male police officers often tell the victims that the matter is between a husband and wife and refuse to get involved. This was the experience for Rosa María Castillo, a woman in Mexico City who went to the police after her husband abused her. After the police refused to assist her, she sought assistance from the Women's Program for

[33] Ibid., 200.
[34] Ibid., 202.

Service, Development, and Peace. This organization teaches women their legal rights and has helped combat the discriminatory attitude of the police. The organization offers paralegal training so that women can know and demand their legal rights in cases of domestic physical abuse.[35] Rosa María received paralegal training and not only improved her own situation, but has also helped and informed other abused Mexican women.[36]

Although women's rights organization such as the Women's Program for Service, Development, and Peace have made some progress, Mexico remains a country with ingrained negative attitudes toward women. For example, sexual harassment in the workplace is common. Women's rights groups have found that 95 percent of women in Mexico City have experienced sexual harassment at work. Moreover, according to journalist Patrick Oster, although women have had the right to vote since 1953, most did not exercise that right during the 1980s because they were unaware that it existed. Furthermore, even though adultery is against the law for both men and women, complaints by wives against a husband who cheats are not taken seriously by police. Police, however, take husbands' complaints very seriously.[37]

Political institutions in Mexico are patriarchal and continue to suppress women's rights. This oppression is evident in legislation pertaining to violence against women. A woman in Mexico cannot file domestic abuse charges if her injuries take less than fifteen days to heal. The courts rarely interfere in domestic violence cases.[38] Mexican law punishes rape with sentences of three to twelve years in prison and a fine of fifty to one

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[35] Oster, *The Mexicans*, 263.
[36] Ibid., 264.
[37] Ibid., 264-265.
[38] Jessica Livingston, "Murder in Juárez: Gender, Sexual Violence, and the Global Assembly Line," *Frontiers—A Journal of Women's Studies,* 25 (January 2004): 65.

hundred times the attacker's annual salary. If the victim is twelve years of age or older and a proven prostitute there is no legal sanction against the perpetrator because authorities consider the victim an "active participant." In August 2002, a caveat was added to legislation pertaining to rape that decreased the sentence for rape to one to six years if the victim led the attacker on and then refused to have sex. Mexican authorities do not consider the act as rape if penetration occurs with anything other than a penis.[39]

According to Amnesty International, a national survey on the dynamic of relations in the home found that in 2003, 49 percent of women over fifteen years of age living with a partner or spouse experienced some type of emotional, economic, physical, or sexual violence. Another study conducted in 2003, the National Survey of Violence against Women, showed that one in five women using medical services in Mexico suffered from domestic violence. These numbers continue to escalate, despite government projects and initiatives to stop the violence.[40]

Legislation is not the only indication of the suppression of women's rights in Mexico. Impunity, or the exemption from punishment, for "all forms of violence against women remains widespread in many parts of Mexico."[41] A number of factors contribute to impunity. The Mexican Constitution states that the state governments are responsible for preventing and punishing violence against women. However, most of the state governments fail to punish the majority of cases involving crimes against women. Although the federal government occasionally recognizes this breakdown, officials claim

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[39] Alicia Gaspar de Alba, "The Maquiladora Murders, or, Who Is Killing the Women of Juárez, Mexico?" *Latino Policy & Issues Brief,* (August 2003): 2.

[40] Amnesty International, "Mexico: Briefing to the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women," 1 June 2006, http://web.amnesty.org/library/Index/ENGAMR410312006?open&of=ENG-MEX (accessed 13 January 2007).

[41] Ibid.

their powers are limited, even though the Supreme Court ruled in 1999 that the federal government may enforce international human rights codes at the state level. Therefore, the federal government's assertion that its powers are limited is untrue.[42]

Another factor contributing to impunity is the federal government's refusal to review state laws and ensure their application. Legislation protecting women from discrimination, abuse, and sexual violence is limited in many states and the Federal District. The federal government does not review state legislation pertaining to human rights. In the instances where legislation does protect women, it does not ensure the law's application. For example, in 2005, the Supreme Court overturned a 1994 decision that marital rape was an undue exercise of marital rights, but not a criminal offense. In 2005, marital rape became a criminal offense, but the federal government does not ensure that state and local officials enforce this law. The number of cases involving crimes against women that lead to prosecution and, eventually, conviction is extremely small.[43]

The tolerance of violence against women by government officials and police is a likely contributor to the growing incidence of femicide in Mexico. In the 1990s, the murder of women in Ciudad Juárez attracted international attention. Throughout the rest of the country, however, murders of women and girls have increased over the last few years. Because many of the murders also included torture, mutilation, cruelty, or sexual violence, human rights organizations have defined the murders as femicide. Thus, femicide occurs in other areas of Mexico and is not limited to Ciudad Juárez and border areas. Lack of data and incomplete record keeping make it difficult to determine accurately the number of cases of femicide that have occurred in Mexico. Authorities fail

[42] Ibid.
[43] Ibid.

to record consistently the date of murder, the victim's relationship to her perpetrator, the specific cause of death, any domestic violence in the victims' personal history, or the perpetrators' possible motives. Therefore, human rights groups' and scholars' investigations rely on the press for information, which likely under-report the prevalence of violence against women.[44] The following table estimates of the rate of femicide in Mexico, based on newspaper articles and reports of human rights organizations.

[44] United Nations Population Fund, 16 Days of Activism against Violence against Women, November 25-December 10, 2006, "Advancing Human Rights and Eliminating Violence against Women: Femicide," http://www.unfpa.org/16days/documents/feminicidio.pdf (accessed 17 January 2007).

Table 2.1 Murder Rates in Selected Areas in Mexico[45]

City	**Population (2000)**	**Number of Women Murdered**	**Percentage**
Ciudad Juárez	1,142,354	500 (1993 -2006)	.04%
Mexico City	17,000,000	743 (1999-2005)	.004%
Tijuana	1,210,820	191 (2000-2004)	.02%
State	**Population (2000)**	**Number of Women Murdered**	
Chiapas	3,920,892	600 (1994-2005)	.02%
Chihuahua	3,037,366	600 (1993-2006)	.02%
Guerrero	3,079,649	863 (2001-2005)	.03%
Mexico	13,096,686	500 (2004)	.003%
Morelos	1,555,296	125 (2000-2004)	.008%
Oaxaca	3,438,765	289 (1999-2006)	.008%
Veracruz	6,908,975	1,494 (2000-2005)	.02%

The Diagnostic Investigation on Femicide Violence [*Investigación Diagnóstica sobre Violencia Feminicidio*], a legislative commission of the Mexican Chamber of Deputies, found that more than six thousand girls and women were murdered in Mexico between

[45] Population statistics from Estados Unidos México, XII Censo General de Población y Vivienda 2000; Murder Rate for Tijuana accessed from *Los Angeles Times,* 27 October 2005; Murder Rate for Nuevo Laredo accessed from *USA Today,* 17 May 2006; Murder Rate for Ciudad Juárez from Sam Quinones, "The Dead Women of Juárez," 2003; Rate of Murdered Women for Mexico City and Ciudad Juárez accessed from "Chihuahua: Second Highest Female Murder Rate in Mexico," *Frontera NorteSur* (http://www.nmsu.edu/~frontera/aug03/today.html); number of women who have been murdered in Mexico and Chiapas from Networking Human Rights Defenders, "El Feminicidio en México y Guatemala," http://www.fidh.org/article.php3?id_article=3262 (accesed 5 January 2007); number of women who have been murdered in Oaxaca from *El Imparcial: El Mejor Diario de Oaxaca,* "Feminicidio en Oaxaca," 5 March 2006; number of murdered women for Guerrero, Morelos, and Veracruz from *La Jornada,* "En 10 Estados, Asesinadas Más de 6 Mil Mujeres en Seis Años," 19 May 2006.

1999 and 2005. The majority of them occured in the states of Chiapas, Chihuahua, Guerrero, México, Morelos, and Veracruz (see Table 2.1).[46]

The indigenous population is dense, about 50 to 80 percent, in the states of Oaxaca and Chiapas. There is historical evidence of domestic abuse among indigenous people dating back to the Early Formative Period, from 1550-800 B.C. Archaeologist Richard G. Lesure analyzed figurines found in the Mazatán region of Chiapas to understand social categories and inequality among early sedentary societies there. He found that elder men controlled the production and reproduction of young females, signifying that the culture was male-dominated.[47] Furthermore, according to feminist scholars Fowler-Salamini and Vaughan, during the Colonial Period, there was a high prevalence of domestic abuse among indigenous cultures in central and southern Mexico.[48] The fact that men have controlled women in these indigenous cultures for thousands of years could account for the prevalence of violence against women in southern states such as Chiapas, Guerrero, and Oaxaca.

The Diagnostic Investigation on Femicide Violence has characterized the murders in Mexico as femicide, basing their conclusion on the demographics of the victims and perpetrators and the manner in which the females were killed. Although the girls and women were of all different ages and social classes, the majority were young and poor. The perpetrators were probably one of the following: a stranger, a spouse, an ex-spouse, a relative, a friend, a fiancé, or an ex-fiancé, among others. Authorities have discovered

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[46] *La Jornada,* "En 10 Estados, Asesinadas Más de 6 Mil Mujeres en Seis Aňos," 19 May 2006; Ana Maria Hernández, *El Imparcial: El Mejor Diario de Oaxaca,* "¿Quiénes Eran Ellas?" 29 May 2006.

[47] Richard G. Lesure, "Figurines and Social Identities in Early Sedentary Societies of Coastal Chiapas, Mexico, 1550-800 B.C.," *Women in Prehistory,* Rosemary A. Joyce and Cheryl Claasen, eds. (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1997), 227-248.

[48] Fowler-Salamani and Vaughan, eds., *Women of the Mexican Countryside, 1850-1990,* xvii.

bodies in a variety of places, including streets, uncultivated land, ravines, stores, construction areas, cars, caves, highways, rivers, and in deserts. All of the bodies showed evidence of torture. The victims had been raped, strangled, beheaded, hung, stabbed, carved up, burned, or otherwise tortured. [49]

The Secretary of Health of the State of Oaxaca reported that in 2001, that state ranked third in the number of women murdered nationally. Between 1999 and 2006, 289 women were the victims of murder in Oaxaca. According to local newspapers, whose reporters conducted an investigation of femicide in that state, the majority of the victims were farmers, students, housewives, or waitresses.[50] The Commission on Femicide of the State Congress reported that many of the women were murdered by family members, either uncles, brothers, fathers, or cousins.[51] These murders are indicative of more generalized violence against women in Mexico, especially domestic/family violence. The Mexican League for the Defense of Human Rights in Oaxaca claims that the exact number of victims is unclear because local police authorities fail to systematize or corroborate data. Furthermore, police have downplayed the seriousness of the problem, claiming that the number of women murdered is not that great.[52]

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[49] Ana Maria Hernández, *El Imparcial: El Mejor Diario de Oaxaca,* "¿Quiénes Eran Ellas?" 29 May 2006; Comisión Especial para Conocer y Dar Seguimiento a las Investigaciones y Acciones Relacionadas con Feminicidios en la República Mexicana, y a la Procuración de Justicia Vinculada, "Necesario Conocer
El Fondo de los Asesinatos en Juarez," http://www.cimacnoticias.com/especiales/comision/bp001.doc, 27 April 2005 (accessed 20 January 2007).

[50] Jarquin Edgar, *El Imparcial: El Mejor Diario de Oaxaca,* "Feminicidio en Oaxaca," 5 March 2006.

[51] Samuel Gómez, *El Imparcial: El Mejor Diario de Oaxaca,* "Ocupa Oaxaca el Segundo Lugar en Feminicidios: SCR," 20 August 2006.

[52] Lega Mexicana por la Defensa de los Derechos Humanos. "La Comición Especial para Conocer y Dar Seguimiento a la Investigaciones Relacionadas con las Feminicidios en la República Mexicana del Congreso Federal Visitará Oaxaca a Petición de la Organizaciones Civiles del Colectivo Huaxyacac," http://users.telenet.be/limeddh/noticias/feminicidios.htm (accessed 5 January 2007).

There is a serious gap between Oaxaca's laws designed to protect women and their application. For example, in 2003 Heriberto Vásquez Espinosa murdered his wife, María Luisa Agustín López, but he was released from prison in 2006 because the case was considered "homicide by honor." He argued that the murder was justified because his wife had been unfaithful. The judge apparently agreed because Vásquez Espinosa was sentenced to three years and seven months in prison and fined 99,800 pesos.[53]

Amnesty International reported that women encounter several obstacles to justice in Oaxaca and Chiapas. First, officials have failed to apply legislation criminalizing domestic violence. Second, the state public prosecutors' offices regularly refuse to accept complaints about domestic abuse unless a specially-appointed forensic doctor rules that the victim's injuries took longer than fifteen days to heal. According to Mexican law, any injury inflicted that takes less than fifteen days to heal is not considered abuse. Third, women who accuse their spouses of abuse must present two witnesses to the alleged domestic violence before police will begin an investigation. Finally, the lack of trained police and forensic experts seriously hinders the fight against domestic violence in these areas.[54]

Mexican journalist Sara Lovera writes that violence against women in Oaxaca is a serious social problem that requires immediate attention. She believes the federal and state governments have facilitated violence against women. In Oaxaca, violence against women has led to femicide, which has been ignored by the political institutions. For example, the Instituto de Estadistica, Geografía e Informática, an organization funded by the federal government, conducted a three-year survey (2002-2005) to determine the

[53] Jarquín Edgar, *El Imparcial: El Mejor Diario de Oaxaca,* "Indigna Liberación de Feminicida Oaxaqueño," 2 February 2006.

[54] Amnesty International, "Elimination of Discrimination against Women."

extent of violence in Oaxaca. The survey, however, did not distinguish between accidental death and homicide and also did not differentiate between homicide and other kinds of crimes. Nor did the report address femicide or violence against women. It appears that the federal government has ignored the problem.[55] Amnesty International also addressed the government's failure to report what is happening to women in these areas. Government reports do not indicate the scale and complexity of the problem. Furthermore, official reports do not give any indication that police, prosecutors, or courts have modified the manner in which they treat these cases.[56] According to Lovera, the government's aim is to maintain women in a disadvantaged position. She believes the government has denied women access to resources and opportunities in an effort to perpetuate patriarchal domination.[57]

The International Federation for Human Rights reported that between 1994 and 2005, over six hundred women were murdered in the southern state of Chiapas. In 2005, Chiapas Governor Pablo Salazar Mendiguchia and the President of the State Chamber of Deputies' Special Commission on Femicide signed a collaborative agreement to determine the prevalence of femicide in the state. The investigators reviewed information provided by authorities, non-governmental organizations, civil associations, and other sources. Although the commission investigated femicide in the states of Chiapas, Chihuahua, Guerrero, México, Morelos, and Oaxaca, Chiapas was the first state to sign an agreement with the Commission. Governor Salazar Mendiguchia commented

[55] Sara Lovera, *El Imparcial: El Mejor Diario de Oaxaca,* "La Violencia contra Mujeresy Las Cortinas de Humo," 12 January 2005.

[56] Amnesty International, "Elimination of Discrimination against Women."

[57] Lovera, "La Violencia contra Mujeresy Las Cortinas de Humo," 12 January 2005.

that he signed the agreement because he believes the murders will not be solved by propaganda alone.[58]

The International Federation for Human Rights also reported that five hundred women were murdered in the State of Mexico in 2004.[59] In Mexico City, conditions exist that have perpetuated femicide. The Chamber of Deputies' Special Commission for Knowledge and the Pursuit of Investigations relating to Femicide in the Republic of México [Comisión Especial para Conocer y Dar Seguimiento a las Investigaciones Relacionadas con los Feminicidios en la República Mexicana] conducted an investigation to determine the prevalence of femicide in the Federal District. The investigation revealed that violence against women, including femicide, and impunity for those who inflict it is pervasive throughout the Federal District. According to the Commission's report, 40 percent of the murders have been solved, usually by apprehending and questioning suspects. Of this 40 percent, 19.30 percent murdered a woman during a robbery, 7.02 percent for revenge, 6.14 percent during or after the perpetrator raped the victim, 2.63 percent during a fight with the victim, and 31.93 percent murdered a woman for problems of a diverse nature. These were the most frequent reasons given for the solved murders. Many of the murders were accompanied by asphyxia, blows to the body with objects or the attacker's hands, or burns. Twenty-nine percent of the murders were committed in the victim's home. Many of the perpetrators were the victim's spouse.

[58] Candlemas Rodriguez, *Cimacnoticias: Periodismo con perspecitva de género,* "Chiapas Coadyuva en la Investigación de Asesinatos de Mujeres," 25 April 2005.

[59] The International Federation for Human Rights, "El Feminicidio en México y Guatemala," http://www.fidh.org/article.php3?id_article=3262 (accessed 5 January 2007).

Homicide by a spouse receives a lighter punishment because the perpetrator usually claims "homicide by honor."[60]

The Center of Attention to Domestic Violence [Centro de Atención a la Violencia Intrafamiliar] (CAVI) stated that in the Federal District alone, there were 104,519 reported victims of domestic violence in 2001. Amando Domínguez Adame, director of CAVI, believes that the conditions in Mexico City allow violence against women and femicide to continue. Violent men either do not express how they feel, do not control their impulses, are jealous, or are fearful of abandonment. CAVI has treated 10,655 victims of domestic violence and has provided shelter for 16,430, the majority of whom have been women.[61]

It might be noted that Mexico is not the only Latin American country to have experienced femicide. In El Salvador, 147 women were murdered between January and May 2005. Twenty-eight women were murdered in Chile between 2001 and 2002. According to a 2001 study, in Uruguay, one woman was murdered by her partner every twelve and a half days. In Brazil, approximately 450 women have been murdered over the last ten years. Thirty-one husbands killed their wives in Puerto Rico in 2004, and in Peru, one hundred women were murdered that same year.[62]

As of 2001, approximately twenty-five hundred women had been murdered in Guatemala. Most of the victims were killed in a violent way, including strangulation, stabbing, and other forms of mutilation.[63] Femicide in Guatemala, as in Mexico, appears

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[60] Mónica Archundia, *El Universal,* "Hay Condiciones en el DF para Feminicidios," 13 September 2006.

[61] Icela Laguna, *El Universal,* "Pasan de los Golpes a Intentos al Asesinato," 18 September 2006.

[62] United Nations Population Fund. "Advancing Human Rights and Eliminating Violence against Women: Femicide."

[63] Ibid.

to be an exaggerated expression of the continued discrimination against women in society. The government of Guatemala has done little to combat the murders, and impunity often accompanies the investigations. According to Patricia Pinto, member of the Committee of Latin America and the Caribbean for the Defense of the Women's Rights and the Defense of the Women in Guatemala [Comité de América Latina y el Caribe para la Defensa de los Derechos de la Mujer y de la Colectiva para la Defensa de las Mujeres en Guatemala], the government and police do not have the mechanisms required to solve or prevent the murder of women.[64] The aggressors are not being punished, and the situation for women is not improving.[65]

As stated in the introduction, approximately five hundred women have been murdered in Ciudad Juárez since 1993. According to United States criminologist Antonio Mendoza, Ciudad Juárez authorities attribute the murders to the drug trade and shifting traditional values in the city. Mendoza asserts that pimps, drug dealers, husbands, or boyfriends accounted for many of the murderers. Local authorities believe that at least thirty of the murder cases have a common thread of torture and rape, indicating they are the work of either one or several serial killers.[66] However, Federal Bureau of Investigations agents who visited Ciudad Juárez found no evidence to support that theory.

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[64] *Chiapas Centro de Medios Independientes,* "En Guatemala es Asesinada una Mujer Cada Día y No Hay Fuerza que Logre Detener la Masacre, en la que Están Involucradas Varias Autoridades Policiales y Judiciales, Según la Premio Nobel de la Paz Rigoberta Menchú," http://chiapas.mediosindependientes.org/display.php3?article_id=108615 (accessed 17 January 2007).

[65] Networking Human Rights Defenders, "El Feminicidio en México y Guatemala," http://www.fidh.org/article.php3?id_article=3262 (accesed 5 January 2004).

[66] Antonio Mendoza, *Killers on the Loose: The Unsolved Cases of Serial Murder* (London: Virgin Books, 2002), 169.

According to women's activist Esther Chávez, "it's very hard to change the way people think about women [in Mexico]."[67] Chávez sees the murders as the end result of a broad spectrum of male violence against women. This violence, mostly domestic, has broken through previous boundaries in Ciudad Juárez, partly because of the city-wide culture of female disposability and partly because men understand that they can get away with it.[68] The culture of female disposability refers to high turnover in the maquiladoras. Maquiladora managers prefer hiring females because of they are more docile, are willing to work for lower wages than men, and are less likely to strike. Notwithstanding managers' preference for hiring females, Chávez believes maquiladora managers view their female employees as disposable, firing them if they fail to meet weekly goals of production or if they get pregnant. She argues that the view of female employees as disposable has permeated the minds of Ciudad Juárez men, who then adopt the belief that the life and body of a woman are disposable as well.[69] This culture of female disposability could account for one element of the continuation of femicide in Ciudad Juárez.

Furthermore, for centuries, men in Mexico have been the breadwinners. Control over family income is integral to patriarchal manhood. In Ciudad Juárez, however, the maquiladora managers have defined women as ideal workers and have enabled them, even with their low wages, to become economically independent. Unemployment, underemployment, low wages for men, defining women as model employees, and women working in general compromise masculinity and patriarchal manhood. Women now

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[67] Melissa W. Wright, "A Manifesto against Femicide," *Antipode,* 33 (July 2001), 562..

[68] Debbie Nathan, "Missing the Story," *The Texas Observer,* 94 (August 2002), http://www.womenontheborder.org/Articles/Senorita_Text.pdf (accessed 6 March 2007), 4.

[69] Ibid.

occupy the place of men, which fuels misogynistic ideals. Maquiladora managers also promote segregation and competition between the sexes in the workplace. They separate the men from the women in the maquiladoras, and when the men misbehave, the managers make them sit with the female workers as punishment.[70] Men whose masculinity is already threatened may respond to such tactics with violence.

As discussed earlier, in a patriarchal society, men suppress women's rights to maintain male dominance and superiority in society. Is such a need for dominance and control the only reason that men espouse violence against women? Mexican writer José Aguilera would answer "no." He asserts that males intrinsically are far more fascinated with violence than females and argues that violence is an integral part of human biology. Modern culture has tried to control and limit innately violent tendencies that have adapted for ten thousand years.[71] Moreover, human rights activist Adela Cortina declares that primitive tribes are violent and that violent deaths have always been more prevalent in primitive tribes than in developed societies. Nevertheless, Cortina contends that from an ethical-political perspective, it is necessary to recognize violent death as damaging to society and to try to reduce and eliminate violence.[72]

Many Latino men romanticize the past in an attempt to re-create male power. "This has become patriarchal machismo," according to sociology professor David Abalos.[73] Machismo is the Latino man's inherited concept of being in charge. This cultural lens has hurt the men's perception of themselves in Ciudad Juárez. Abalos

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[70] Livingston, "Murder in Juárez" 67-68.

[71] José M. Asensio Aguilera, "El Ayer No Nos Hace Violentos," *El sexo de la violencia: Género y cultura de la violencia.* (Barcelona: Icaria, 1998), 19.

[72] Adela Cortina, "El Poder Comunicativo una Propuesta Intersexual Frente a la Violencia," *El sexo de la violencia: Género y cultura de la violencia,* Barcelona, 1998, 30.

[73] Abalos, *The Latino Male*, 3.

asserts that because the maquiladora managers would rather hire females than males, the males fall into despair, resulting, perhaps, in their espousal of violence or use of drugs.[74]

Moreover, many Latino men have internalized the lie that has endured since the Spaniards began colonizing Mexico, that is, that mestizos are not as competent as European Americans. They internalize this belief and then act how society expects them to behave. Their inherent beliefs of manhood result in control and domination over others, especially women. When this power disintegrates, they feel insecure, inferior, and lost.[75] According to Abalos, domestic abuse and violence against women in general is a manifestation of men attempting to regain power and control. It is likely that domestic violence and femicide are linked; therefore, it seems likely that when authorities and Mexican society successfully address and prevent domestic violence, femicide in Mexico will decrease as well.

[74] Ibid.
[75] Ibid., 79.

CHAPTER III

HISTORICAL CONTEXT OF FEMICIDE IN CIUDAD JUÁREZ

The contrast between the border cities of El Paso, Texas and Ciudad Juárez, Chihuahua is striking. The nicer vehicles, the modern buildings, and the highways of El Paso juxtaposed with the dirt roads, the shantytowns, and the massive industrial parks of Ciudad Juárez symbolizes the disparity between the comfort and wealth of the United States and the poverty and death of Mexico. A person standing in El Paso looking south across the border will see a thick, brownish haze that shrouds Juárez. The American-owned factories, or maquiladoras, emit tons of noxious gases daily, which create a blanket of smog. This same person will see the shantytowns with makeshift houses constructed of shipping crates scrounged from alleyways behind the maquiladoras. These maquiladoras pay their employees roughly four dollars a day. After two recent peso devaluations, one in 1983 and another in 1994, the buying power of this wage has decreased significantly. These same maquiladoras employ thousands of women, a number of whom have been murdered over the last twelve years. Every day hundreds of Mexicans illegally cross the muddy river and climb the twelve-foot chain-link fence that divides these two disparate cities in an attempt to escape the poverty, violence, and murder that permeate the dirt roads, nightclubs, neighborhoods, and maquiladoras in Ciudad Juárez.

It is important to examine the historical and contemporary context of the phenomenon of femicide in Ciudad Juárez. Today, Ciudad Juárez is one of the largest cities in Mexico with a population of two million. It has also become one of the most violent cities in Mexico where murders occur on a daily basis. Several factors, including illegal immigration, drug trafficking, and the overwhelming presence of maquiladoras, have contributed to the disorder in Ciudad Juárez. In a city where crime rates are staggering and violence is the norm, femicide has been allowed to thrive. Factors such as illegal immigration and drug trafficking cannot be linked directly to femicide; however, they do contribute to an atmosphere of violence in which femicide is likely to occur.

Vice and corruption are present along many borders throughout the world, "especially in places where 'boom' conditions have existed."[76] University of Arizona Professor of Latin American History Oscar J. Martínez wrote his book, *Border Boom Town: Ciudad Juárez since 1848,* to provide a greater understanding of the historical development of the United States-Mexico border region through an examination of Ciudad Juárez. The "boom" conditions that have occurred in the border city of Ciudad Juárez have resulted in vice, corruption, and violence. However, Ciudad Juárez has not always been plagued by violence. The following analysis of the development of the city shows the circumstances that contributed to the atmosphere of hostility and crime that exists in Ciudad Juárez today.

The mountain pass on the Río Grande, or Paso del Norte, "has been an important crossing point on the Rio Grande since the sixteenth century."[77] Early Spanish explorers

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[76] Oscar J. Martínez, *Border Boom Town: Ciudad Juárez since 1848* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1975), xv.

[77] Milton H. Jamail and Margo Gutiérrez, *The Border Guide: Institutions and Organizations of the United States-Mexico Borderlands* (Austin: CMAS Books, 1992), 16.

such as Alvar Núñez Cabeza de Vaca and Juan de Oñate used Paso del Norte as a rest stop on their way from Central Mexico to the region of New Mexico. In 1659, Fray García de San Francisco y Zúñiga founded the mission of Nuestra Señora de Guadalupe at Paso de Norte to care for indigenous peoples and to serve as a way station. This tiny village would become Ciudad Juárez.[78]

In 1680, a Pueblo Indian revolt in New Mexico sent Spanish refugees fleeing into Paso del Norte, thereby increasing its population. By the mid-eighteenth century, approximately four thousand people, including indigenous people and Spaniards, inhabited the town. These inhabitants "lived comfortably in the fertile valley, supported by plentiful water, crops such as corn and beans, and grapes, which grew in abundance."[79] North Americans began travelling to the region by the beginning of the nineteenth century; at this time, residents of Paso del Norte began trading with the United States via the Santa Fe-Chihuahua Trail. Around 1827, Americans settled across the river from Paso del Norte at a place they called Franklin, that would later become El Paso, Texas. After the Mexican-American War (1846-1848), the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo established the Río Grande as the international boundary, which placed Paso del Norte in Mexico and the small community of Franklin across the river in the United States.[80] The discovery of gold in California brought increased traffic into the region as forty-niners travelling along the southern land route to California, made Paso del Norte and Franklin one of their rest stops.

[78] Martínez, *Border Boom Town*, 9.
[79] Ibid.
[80] Ibid., 10.

Despite increased traffic, local commercial activity remained at a reduced level due to isolation, lawlessness, and continual Indian attacks.[81] Protectionism served as the greatest hindrance to the local economy. Mexican federal duties on imported foreign goods ranged between 30 and 40 percent under the tariffs of 1845 and 1853. The onerous tax imposed on the country's internal trade was inherited from the colonial period. All of these factors—isolation, lawlessness, Indian attacks, and protectionist measures—resulted in the emigration of more than fifty Paso del Norte families to the United States. Despite periodic outmigration, "a strong agricultural base allowed native residents to maintain their viability."[82]

During the nineteenth century, frontier towns on the Mexican side of the border lacked a commercial and industrial base, were isolated from Mexico's centers of production, and were located just across the river from northern and European competitors. The lower cost of living and greater opportunities on the United States side encouraged emigration to the United States. In response to this outmigration, the governments of Tamaulipas and Chihuahua created the *Zona Libre* (Free Trade Zone) for certain border towns. The Free Trade Zone granted border towns in those two states free trade concessions and reductions in tariff fees. By 1858, the Zona Libre extended to Paso del Norte. The extension of the Free Trade Zone, officially sanctioned by the federal government in 1861, came at a crucial time for Paso del Norte because the arrival of the railroads in El Paso, Texas, had resulted in stronger competition from the United States' commerce and industry.[83]

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[81] Don M. Coerver, Suzanne B. Pasztor, and Robert M. Buffington, *Mexico: An Encyclopedia of Contemporary Culture and History* (Denver: ABC-CLIO, Inc., 2004), 81.

[82] Ibid., 13.

[83] Ibid., 14.

The Free Trade Zone in Paso del Norte, along with the introduction of railroads in 1881, led to boom times for the town by decreasing its isolation, encouraging new construction, and allowing merchants to expand their enterprises.[84] Local industry progressed as well, and Paso del Norte's standard of living increased due to the growth of agriculture, trade, industry, and population. However, El Paso's business community campaigned against the Zona Libre, claiming that it increased opportunities for smuggling and created unfair competition for El Paso buisnessmen. The Mexican government finally yielded to United States political pressure and abolished the Zona Libre in 1905.[85]

According to Oscar J. Martínez, "the absence of free trade, combined with water shortages and the depreciation of the peso, precipitated the collapse of the Juárez economy just prior to the turn of the century."[86] Paso del Norte, renamed Ciudad Juárez in 1888 after Mexico's popular liberal president Benito Juárez, turned to tourism to revive the economy. At a time when moral reform swept through the United States, North Americans flooded Ciudad Juárez's gambling halls, brothels, and saloons. However, the revenue accrued from tourism was not sufficient to provide for the growing migrant stream of Mexicans from the interior, which stressed local resources.[87]

The Mexican Revolution from 1910 to 1920 further strained the local economy and brought devastating damage to frontier towns. Ciudad Juárez endured physical destruction as well as commercial disruption. The enduring atmosphere of violence led to massive emigration to the United States. Most of the immigrants in El Paso were

[84] Ibid., 15-17, 148-149.
[85] Ibid., 24.
[86] Ibid., 149.
[87] Ibid., 36-37.

destitute; others were wealthy and brought additional prosperity to the city. The arrival of well-to-do immigrants meant the appearance of a Mexican middle-class in El Paso and the disappearance of one in Ciudad Juárez. Nevertheless, El Paso inhabitants criticized the aliens and complained that the workers from Mexico depressed El Paso's wages and hindered the organizing efforts of local unions.[88]

In response to the outmigration of such a large portion of its population, Ciudad Juárez focused on its more disreputable establishments to generate revenue for the city. By 1919, twenty-nine states in the United States had passed Prohibition laws, which fostered further economic activity in Ciudad Juárez.[89] During Prohibition, tourists seeking alcohol came to Ciudad Juárez, and the city produced whiskey and beer, sending it across the border.[90] Foreigners also spent a great deal of money in Ciudad Juárez's bars, cabarets, gambling houses, brothels, honky-tonks, and dope parlors. The tourist dollars spent on the Mexican side, "while beneficial because of the activity stimulated, actually pulled Juárez deeper into the economic orbit of the United States."[91] *Juarenses* even relied on El Paso stores for their daily necessities, which were considerably cheaper than those on the Mexican side.[92]

During the Great Depression, the economy of Ciudad Juárez suffered when tourism dropped sharply; the Mexican peso was devalued to thirty-eight cents to the United States dollar. Many Mexicans returned to their homeland and inhabited the city. In 1933, Prohibition ended in the United States, prompting the closing of many bars,

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[88] Ibid., 38-56.
[89] Ibid., 52.
[90] Debbie Nathan, "Missing the Story," *The Texas Observer* 94 (August 2002): 24; Crosthwaite, Byrd, and Byrd, eds., *Puro Border,* 140.
[91] Martínez, *Border Boom Town,* 63.
[92] Ibid., 76-77.

saloons, and other liquor-related industries in Ciudad Juárez. When tourism dropped, the city no longer generated enough revenue to fund critical municipal projects such as the installation of water pipes, the paving of streets, and the construction and maintenance of schools. The lack of water was a serious problem for farmers and the general population. Another setback was the peso devaluation of 1931. That depreciation increased the cost of living and prompted Mexicans to shop in El Paso, where the products were cheaper.[93]

The onset of World War II alleviated the effects of the Depression on Ciudad Juárez. The war created a demand in the United States for raw materials and labor from Mexico. Moreover, during the 1940s, United States troops stationed at Fort Bliss in El Paso stimulated tourism in the city, and money flowed freely as a result of the increased tourist activity. Ciudad Juárez's continuing economic dependence on tourism prompted Mexican businessmen to launch a "Buy Mexican" campaign in the hope that locals would buy Mexican products only to stimulate the local market. The campaign, however, had little effect. Currency devaluation did positively affect the economy by promoting native commerce and industry.[94]

In 1941, the Mexican and United States governments established the Bracero Program, which became a major catalyst for migration. Because of wartime labor shortages, the United States government invited Mexicans to work temporarily in the United States on railways, in agriculture, and in food processing for a wage much better that they could earn in Mexico. Approximately four million *braceros* immigrated to the United States between 1942 and 1960. However, the program "could not accommodate

[93] Ibid., 78-92.
[94] Ibid., 95-110.

the vast labor supply, and this prompted an illegal movement whose magnitude surpassed that of the Bracero Program itself."[95]

The Bracero Program fostered illegal immigration. United States' employers encouraged *braceros* at the end of their contracts to return illegally, which allowed the employers to pay the workers less and avoid red tape. Moreover, many Mexicans were enticed to the border to participate in the program only to find the requirements costly and the wait long. These migrants found surreptitious entry a less costly and easier way to enter and find work.[96]

Migrants, who hoped to participate in the Bracero Program, began crowding Ciudad Juárez as early as 1942. Overcrowding in border cities reached its peak during Operation Wetback, the deportation drive commenced in 1954 by the Dwight D. Eisenhower administration. The population of Ciudad Juárez grew from 55,024 in 1940 to 131,308 in 1950 to 276,995 in 1960. That was an increase of 139 percent from 1940 to 1950 and an increase of 111 percent from 1950 to 1960.[97] Overpopulation in Ciudad Juárez not only led to the depletion of the city's resources, but also resulted in an increased level of violence. Furthermore, after World War II, Ciudad Juárez became part of the international drug trade. The smuggling of marijuana, heroin, and cocaine into the United States also contributed to an increase in the crime rate and a generalized volatile

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[95] Ibid., 110.

[96] Ibid., 110-115.

[97] James Peach, "Modeling the Demographic Characteristics of the Paso del Norte Region," *Border + 20: A System Dynamics Approach to Understanding and Analyzing Communities along the U.S.-Mexico Border,* presented at the International Conference on Binational Planning Cross-border Cooperation, El Colegio de la Frontera Norte, Ciudad Juárez, Chihuahua, Mexico, November 30-December 1, 2001, http://www.borderplus20.sdsu.edu/english/publications_norte/dynamic_of_human_environment_interactions/pdf/Chapter%202-3.pdf (accessed 2 March 2007).

atmosphere.[98] It is in this historical context that the current milieu of violence can be understood. Overcrowding generates unemployment, hunger, and desperation, and often leads to violence. Ciudad Juárez became a more violent city when the massive influx of migrants arrived; because the population has increased exponentially since the 1940s, the level of violence has grown as well.[99]

When the soldiers returned from World War II, the United States government ended the Bracero Program and demanded that the Mexican workers repatriate.[100] This flood of thousands of returning male workers into the border region prompted Mexican officials to implement new programs to deal with the growing unemployment. One of these new economic initiatives was the Border Industrialization Program (BIP).[101] Under the BIP, the Mexican government granted licenses to foreign, predominantly United States, companies for the tariff-free importation of machinery, parts, components, and raw materials. Mexican officials offered these concessions to entice foreign companies to establish assembly plants in the border region that would employ the recently repatriated men. United States investment, as well as loans, poured into Mexico, increasing from $566 million in 1950 to $2,822 million by 1970.[102]

The Border Industrialization Program, launched in 1965, was the official initiative to industrialize border cities. Mexico allowed United States corporations to establish

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[98] Coerver, Pasztor, and Buffington, eds., *Mexico: An Encyclopedia,* 83.

[99] Ibid.

[100] Rachel Kamel and Anya Hoffman, eds., *The Maquiladora Reader: Cross-Border Organizing Since NAFTA* (Philadelphia: American Friends Service Committee, 1998, 3; María Fernández-Kelly, *For We Are Sold, I and My People: Women and Industry in Mexico's Frontier* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1983), 26; James Hamm, "Oppression in the Maquiladora Industry in Ciudad Juárez," (Master's thesis, University of Massachusetts, 2001), 4.

[101] Martínez, *Border Boom Town,* 116, 129.

[102] George W. Grayson, *The North American Free Trade Agreement: Regional Community and the New World Order*, 3 vols. (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, Inc., 1995), 3: 31.

assembly plants in the frontier region, ushering in the maquiladora program.[103] However, instead of offering jobs to the unemployed former *braceros*, maquiladora managers preferred to hire females. "BIP firms" claimed to "prefer females because of the intricate, tedious, labor-intensive nature of assembly work"; in reality, the firms desired female employees because they were believed to be more passive, compliant, and cheaper than male workers.[104] Therefore, the primary goal of the BIP was not accomplished.[105]

BIP had several negative consequences for Ciudad Juárez. First, many men without jobs resorted to abusing alcohol or narcotics to cope with the resentment and frustration of unemployment. Second, BIP increased the city's dependence on the United States. Third, BIP served as yet another migration magnet to the region, which exacerbated increased overcrowding, strain on border cities' resources, and unemployment. Violent crime also rose in Ciudad Juárez as the population exploded.[106] Immigration continues to be a problem for Ciudad Juárez. In 1999, the United States Border Patrol agents arrested 1,600,000 individuals attempting to enter the United States illegally. Ciudad Juárez has become a major port of entry for Mexicans seeking jobs in the United States. These hopeful migrants caused further overcrowding, resulting in an increase of chaos and violence in the city.[107] While overpopulation cannot be directly linked to femicide, it does contribute to an atmosphere of violence in which femicide is likely to occur.

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[103] Coerver, Pasztor, and Buffington, eds., *Mexico: An Encyclopedia,* 83.
[104] Ibid., 132.
[105] Ibid., 131-132.
[106] Martínez, *Border Boom Town,* 141-146.
[107] Jorge Chabat, "Mexico's War on Drugs: No Margin for Maneuver," *Annals of the Academy of Political and Social Sciences* 582 (July 2002), 135.

Many groups in Mexico, including scholars, human rights groups, and labor organizations, have criticized BIP, claiming the "incentives granted multinational corporations undermine basic concepts of autonomy and national sovereignty."[108] BIP allowed 100 percent foreign control over industry, the purchase of Mexican land by foreigners, and the de facto conversion of the Mexican border into a manufacturing and processing zone. The industrialization of the frontier also stimulated migration from rural areas to the border, which led to further overcrowding in Ciudad Juárez.[109]

However, according to Vanderbilt University political science professor Mitchell Seligson, BIP did not attract most Mexican migrants to the northern border region of Mexico. In 1981, he found that while 61.2 percent of the BIP workers were migrants, 45.2 percent of the employees reported that their reason for migrating was family considerations; only 31.7 percent had migrated to find work.[110] A closer examination of the family considerations, however, reveals that of the workers who reported moving for family reasons, 23.1 percent did so to accompany their families, who likely migrated for work-related reasons. Had Seligson included the 23.1 percent of the workers who moved to accompany their families in the "migrated to find work" category, the percentage of workers who went to the border region because of the BIP increases to 55.6 percent.[111]

Although maquiladora managers reportedly hired females because they were more patient with tedious work, in reality, the women's appeal was their docility,

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[108] Fernández-Kelly, *For We Are Sold,* 36.
[109] Ibid., 37.
[110] Mitchell A. Seligson and Edward J. Williams, *Maquiladoras and Migration Workers in the Mexico-United States Border Industrialization Program* (Austin: University of Texas at Austin, 1981), 71.
[111] Seligson, *Maquilas and Migration Workers,* 70.

malleability, passive demeanor, and willingness to work for lower wages than men.[112] Three years was a typical stay at a maquiladora job; managers claimed that productivity decreased after a female worker's second year because of increased absenteeism and discontent. Low wages, the tediousness of the work, eyesight deterioration, and nervous and respiratory ailments led to the workers' dissatisfaction with their jobs. Female workers quit because they were physically and mentally exhausted.[113] Many female workers were either passive or unaware of their rights in Mexico; therefore, when they experienced such conditions, they simply left the job.[114]

Proponents of United States and Mexico's trade policies claimed that maquiladora work was an attractive option for women for many reasons. First, the maquiladora was an alternative to illegal work in the United States. Second, although the income was low, maquiladoras offered medical care, which was not available with most other jobs accessible to women. Third, other types of employment, such as receptionists or salespersons, typically paid less.[115] Finally, women in Mexico are typically raised by their mothers to get married and have children. Maquiladora work provided an escape from early marriage and motherhood.[116] Supporters of the trade policies applauded the fact that women in Mexico worked in maquiladoras, which, they professed, strengthened women's power, eradicated archaic cultural patterns, instilled discipline and efficiency in female workers, and decreased prostitution. Furthermore, wives who worked in the

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[112] Fernández-Kelly, *For We Are Sold,* 193; Kamel and Hoffman, eds., *The Maquiladora Reader*, 21; Christina Gladwin and Carrie M. Thompson, "Impacts of Mexico's Trade Openness on Mexican Rural Women," *The American Journal of Agricultural Economics,* 77 (August 1995): 712-713.

[113] Gay Young, "Gender Indentification and Working-Class Solidarity among Maquila Workers in Ciudad Juárez: Stereotypes and Realities," in *Women on the U.S.-Mexico Border: Responses to Change,* eds. Vicki L. Ruiz and Susan Tiano (Boston: Allen & Unwin, 1987), 108.

[114] Kamel and Hoffman, eds., *The Maquiladora Reader,* 2.

[115] Ibid., 55.

[116] Young, "Gender Identification," 108.

maquiladoras were more likely to refuse to comply with the demands of their husbands and assert themselves in their homes.[117]

However, trade policies during the eighties created a precarious situation for young women in Ciudad Juárez. For example, the female maquiladora workers were usually the main wage earners of the household, yet the males typically did not allow them to have a greater role in household decisions. University of Texas sociology professor Gay Young asserts that "nothing suggests that women's increased purchasing power brings significant alterations in ideas about the proper roles of men and women in Mexican society."[118] In fact, the role reversal of women being the main income earner spurred even tighter male control over females.[119] Some men in Ciudad Juárez resented both the multinational corporations who profited from the maquiladoras and the women who worked for them.[120] The typical male refused to relinquish his position as "man of the house" and refused to participate in housework. Women employees, thus, had the double responsibility of a ten-hour workday at the factory and the obligation to cook, clean, and take care of siblings or children at home.[121]

By the 1980s, the maquiladora industry showed no signs of altering its employment practices, and opponents of the program continued to argue that the preponderance of male unemployment in Ciudad Juárez resulted in their loss of status.

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[117] Fernandez-Kelly, *For We Are Sold,* 138.

[118] Young, "Gender Identification," 110.

[119] Ibid.; Mario F. Bognanno and Kathryn J. Ready, eds., *The North American Free Trade Agreement: Labor, Industry, and Government Perspectives* (Westport, CT: Praeger Publishers, 1993), 14.

[120] Jessica Livingston, "Murder in Juárez: Gender, Sexual Violence, and the Global Assembly Line," *Frontiers—A Journal of Women's Studies,* 25 (January 2004): 64.

[121] Fernandez-Kelly, *For We Are Sold,* 137; James Hamm, "Negotiating Power: A New Discourse of the Maquiladora Industry in Ciudad Juárez," (Ph.D. diss., University of Massachusetts Amherst, 2005), 164; Kathleen A. Staudt, "Economic Changes and Ideological Lag in Households of Maquila Workers in Ciudad Juárez," *The Social Ecology and Economic Development of Ciudad Juárez,* Gay Young, ed. (Boulder: Westview Press, 1986), 110; Kamel and Hoffman, eds., *The Maquiladora Reader,* 21.

Moreover, the media continued to print articles about women's "new and unnatural emancipation."[122] This emancipation included living in matriarchal, rather than traditional patriarchal homes, earning and spending money, and for some, even participating in strikes. The combination of men losing their status and women enjoying unprecedented freedom likely fostered resentment toward women employees, thereby increasing males' propensity to use violence against women.

In the 1990s, maquiladora work remained the same as in decades past—long hours, low wages, tedious work, and poor health conditions.[123] The perpetual "social subjugation of women increase[d] their vulnerability to economic exploitation."[124] Female maquiladora workers were subjected to sexual violence and abuse; this situation was the social reality of the "docile" women workers.[125] Sexual harassment occurred in the form of supervisors staring, flirting, asking employees out for dates, and even conducting beauty contests in which selected females modeled swimsuits and evening gowns. Winners were crowned "*Señorita Maquiladora*."[126] It is in this context of female subjugation and objectification that violence against women in Ciudad Juárez must be understood.

Factory girls have been subjected to sexual harassment and violence, of which murder is only the most horrendous and tragic extreme. Some scholars believe there is a direct link between maquiladoras and femicide in Ciudad Juárez. Melissa Wright, Professor of Geography at Pennsylvania State University, contends that "in almost all of

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[122] Leslie Salzinger, *Gender in Production: Making Workers in Mexico's Global Factories* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2003), 39.
[123] Kamel and Hoffman, eds., *The Maquiladora Reader,* 21.
[124] Ibid.
[125] Ibid.
[126] Ibid.

the international coverage on the murders, a connection has been made linking the crimes [murdered women] to the existence of the city's maquilas."[127] By 1999, maquiladora workers accounted for 50 percent of the victims. Many were abducted during their daily commute to or from work, while others were abducted from a night club.[128] Despite the threat of violence and crime in the city, many maquiladora workers frequented dance clubs to forget the dehumanizing aspects of their work.[129] As discussed earlier, many men in Ciudad Juárez resent both the maquiladoras and the women who work for them. This resentment could be another link between the presence of maquiladoras and femicide.

Although maquiladoras amassed tremendous wealth, they offered little protection for their workers.[130] As of 2005, a few corporations provided private bus transportation to and from work, required background checks on all bus drivers, and offered security awareness training programs. However, the majority of corporations did little or nothing to ensure the safety of their employees.[131]

In the 1990s, male homicide rates also increased in Ciudad Juárez.[132] The city surpassed Mexico City as the country's murder capital. As of 2004, there were over five hundred street gangs in Ciudad Juárez.[133] Although the murder rate for women was lower than men, statistics showed that the rate of female homicides per capita was

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[127] Melissa W. Wright, "A Manifesto against Femicide," *Antipode,* 33 (July 2001): 557.
[128] Ibid.
[129] Livingston, "Murder in Juárez," 60.
[130] Mexican Solidarity Network. "Femicides of Juárez and Chihuahua." http://www.mexicosolidarity.org/Juarez%20and%20Chihuahua/ (accessed 11 May 2006).
[131] *US Federal News,* "New York City Comptroller Raised Concerns about Worker Safety in Ciudad Juárez, Mexico," 5 April 2005.
[132] Nathan, "Missing the Story."
[133] Sam Quiñones, "Dead Women of Juárez," *Puro Border: Dispatches, Snapshots & Graffiti,* eds., Luis Humberto Crosthwaite, John William Byrd, and Bobby Byrd (El Paso: Cinco Puntos Press, 2003), 142.

significantly higher in this city than any other major city in Mexico or the United States.[134]

Journalists and scholars in the United States and Mexico claim that drug trafficking is a major contributor to the high rate of homicide in Ciudad Juárez.[135] Mexico became a producer of heroin and a transshipment point for other drugs in the 1940s. Drug trafficking continued to grow in Mexico in the following decades, and Ciudad Juárez became a major smuggling point for drug traffickers. According to sociologist Debbie Nathan, in the 1980s, most cocaine entering the United States from Colombia came through the Caribbean and South Florida. When the United States' Drug Enforcement Agency and other anti-drug agencies shut down that route the drug conduit shifted to Mexican border cities such as Ciudad Juárez. Soon narcotic-mafias overran the area and brought with them violence and increased police corruption.[136] In the 1980s, Mexico became the supplier of 70 percent of the marijuana and 25 percent of the heroin imported into the United States.[137] Despite the efforts of Mexico and the United States to disrupt drug trafficking, the drug trade continued to grow in the 1980s, 1990s, and after.[138]

During the 1990s, Ciudad Juárez became home to one of Mexico's leading drug-trafficking organizations, which was one of the major factors that has contributed to the general culture of violence in the city. Illegal drug trafficking generated corruption and

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[134] Wright, "Manifesto against Femicide," 550-552.

[135] Scott Carrier, "Maquiladoras of Ciudad Juáez," *Day to Day, NPR News,* 5 July 2004; Jo Tuckman, "Deadly Frontier," *Guardian,* 25 March 2002; James Pinkerton, "City's Growth Contributes to Corruption in Juárez," *The Houston Chronicle,* 5 December 1999; Chabat, "Mexico's War on Drugs," 134; Diana Washington Valdez, *La Cosecha de Mujeres: Safari en el Desierto Mexicano,* (México, D.F.: Océano, 2005), 47.

[136] Debbie Nathan, "Work, Sex, and Danger in Ciudad Juárez," 2.

[137] Chabat, "Mexico's War on Drugs," 135.

[138] Coerver, Pasztor, and Buffington, eds., *Mexico: An Encyclopedia,* 145.

led to a disruption in Ciudad Juárez's governance and society. Mexican scholar Jorge Chabat believes there is a correlation between increased crime and the strengthening of drug cartels.[139] The establishment of drug cartels created an explosion of violence and some of the highest homicide rates in Mexico.[140] In 1997, Mexican newspapers declared that an international narcotics trafficking ring led by Amado Carrillo Fuentes based in Ciudad Juárez was responsible for the death of five hundred people. Carrillo Fuentes died that same year after a botched plastic surgery. His death caused a wave of violence in Ciudad Juárez as hitmen gunned down rivals in restaurants and other public places with machine-gun fire. Howard Campbell and Josiah McC. Heyman, Professors of Anthropology at the University of Texas at El Paso, explained that the level of violence—especially femicide and drug killings—increased in the 1990s to an unprecedented level as a result of the presence of feuding drug cartels. The anthropologists contend that the hyper-violent narcotics trade and the rampant spread of weapons associated with it have transformed Ciudad Juárez into a dangerous city.[141] It is in this context that femicide occurs. Although drug trafficking cannot be directly linked to femicide, it does exacerbate an already violent milieu in which femicide is likely to occur.

Another possible factor in promoting or permitting femicide in Ciudad Juárez is impunity, or the exemption from punishment for crimes committed. Amnesty International contends that impunity for "all forms of violence against women remains

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[139] Ibid., 137-138.

[140] Molly E. Moore, "Nightmare in a City of Dreams," *Washington Post,* http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-srv/photo/onassignment/juarez/ (accessed 23 June 2006).

[141] Josiah McC. Heyman and Howard Campbell, "Recent Research on the U.S.-mexico Border," *Latin American Research Review* 29 (2004): 207-208.

widespread in many parts of Mexico."[142] The women's rights commitment assumed by the Mexican federal government is not applied in practice. For example, although Mexican has adopted many international treaties involving women's rights, the Constitution does not require the state courts to adhere to these treaties. Therefore, judicial rulings rarely take the women's rights treaties into account. According to Amnesty International, the Mexican federal government needs to improve the accountability mechanisms of the police, prosecutors, and judges to end impunity.[143]

Controversy surrounds the "apparent inability of law enforcement authorities to locate and prosecute the people responsible for the murders."[144] The prevalence of impunity in Ciudad Juárez has resulted in little justice for the victims or their families. According to journalist Lydia Alpízar, the judicial and governmental institutions of Ciudad Juárez are corrupt and infiltrated by interests representing the drug trade, adding to the pervasiveness of impunity. It seems that anyone with money is able to offer a bribe to either a police officer or government official to ensure their freedom.[145] Because of high levels of impunity, only 1 percent of the murders have resulted in successful prosecution and sentencing.[146] Impunity sends a clear message to potential murderers—they can and will get away with committing murder. It is in this context that impunity may be linked to femicide. Because the murders remain unsolved it is impossible to

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[142] Amnesty International, "Mexico: Briefing to the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women," 1 June 2006, http://web.amnesty.org/library/Index/ENGAMR410312006?open&of=ENG-MEX (accessed 13 January 2007).

[143] Amnesty International, "Mexico: Injustice and Impunity: Mexico's Flawed Criminal Justice System," 7 February 2007, http://web.amnesty.org/library/Index/ENGAMR410012007 (accessed 30 March 2007).

[144] Analisa DeGrave, E.L. Santos, and Jeff Phillips, eds., *Taking Sides: Clashing Views on Latin America, (*Dubuque, Iowa, McGraw, 2007), 97.

[145] Lydia Alpízar, "Impunity and Women's Rights in Ciudad Juárez," *Carnegie Council: The Voice for Ethics and International Policy,* http://www.cceia.org/resources/publications/dialogue/2_10/articles/1056.html (accessed 6 March 2007).

[146] Ibid.

know for sure what causes femicide. It does seem likely, however, that impunity for femicide contributes to its continuation.

One of the major factors in allowing impunity to continue in Ciudad Juárez is police corruption.[147] Police and corruption have been synonymous in Mexico for centuries. According to journalist Patrick Oster, "any encounter with Mexican police could involve extortion, robbery, torture, or even murder."[148] A common fear in Mexico is police extortion; some officers demand payment after stopping a driver instead of writing them a ticket. Bribes to traffic officers are as customary as highway tolls. Furthermore, many Mexican police use torture as an investigative technique to prompt confessions. Although torture is illegal according to the Mexican constitution, in the mid-1980s, Attorney General Sergio García Ramírez admitted that Mexican police often used torture. Police are not well trained and usually mishandle evidence at crime scenes. One major problem is that the police are not well-funded. There is not enough money to pay officers adequate salaries, which explains why they accept bribes.[149]

Much of the controversy surrounding the murdered women in Ciudad Juárez has focused on police incompetence and inexperience. Police investigators have misidentified corpses, lacked basic information on the victims' cases, failed to obtain expert tests when necessary, and have presented some victims' families with the remains of other victims.[150] Families have reported that they received remains with dental work

[147] DeGrave, Santos, and Phillips, eds., *Taking Sides,* 97.
[148] Patrick Oster, *The Mexicans: A Personal Portrait of a People* (St. Louis, Harper and Row Publishers, 1989), 166.
[149] Ibid., 170-171.
[150] John Burnett, "Chasing the Ghouls: The Juárez Serial Murders," *Columbia Journalism Review,* 42 (March/April 2004), 12.

although their daughter had none, or vice versa.[151] Some investigators have no gloves with which to handle evidence, nor do they have bags to place and transport evidence.[152] Police deny other investigators or victims' families access to files to corroborate the exact number of killings and whether or not the perpetrators have been convicted. All of these examples demonstrate the inability of the police to deal with the problem and to ensure public safety in Ciudad Juárez.[153]

For two centuries, Ciudad Juárez has been a major gateway between the United States and Mexico, which has not only brought prosperity to the city, but has also created serious problems including overpopulation and drug trafficking, which have led to violence and a high crime rate. It is in this historical and cultural context of violence that femicide has been allowed to thrive. Furthermore, the prevalence of police corruption in Ciudad Juárez has promoted a climate of impunity that encourages perpetrators to continue committing femicide. Perhaps the greatest concern related to femicide in Ciudad Juárez is the degree to which the perpetrators go unpunished. It seems likely that the murders will continue until the criminals are identified, caught, and punished.[154]

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[151] Victor Ronquillo, *Las muertas de Juárez: Cronica de una larga pesadilla (*México, D.F.: Planeta Mexicana, 1999), 17.

[152] Qiñones, "Dead Women of Juárez," 149.

[153] Julia Monárrez Fragoso, "Serial Sexual Femicide in Ciudad Juárez: 1993-2001," *Debate Feminista,* 25 (April 2002): 279-280.

[154] DeGrave, Santos, and Phillips, eds., *Taking Sides,* 112.

CHAPTER IV

CHRONOLOGY OF THE MURDERS IN CIUDAD JUÁREZ

In 1993, the bodies of young women started appearing in the desert on the outskirts of Ciudad Juárez. These deaths were the beginning of an epidemic of rape and murder that has plagued the city for more than thirteen years. Before 1993, most of the homicides in Ciudad Juárez were drug- and gang- related executions. Until women began disappearing, the public believed that people not involved with gangs or drugs were relatively safe.[155] However, over the past thirteen years, approximately five hundred women have been murdered. Most were not involved with either gangs or drugs. In 2005, the World Health Organization reported that homicide was the second main cause of death among young women in Ciudad Juárez.[156] Few perpetrators have been punished for these murders. These crimes thrive in a city where it is now common knowledge that one can murder women with impunity. This chapter will provide a chronology of the murders and offer an analysis of femicide in Ciudad Juárez.

From 1993 to 1996, at least eighty-two women were murdered in Ciudad Juárez.[157] More recent estimates reveal that from 1993 to 2005 between 327 and 400

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[155] Sam Quiñones, "The Dead Women of Juárez," *Puro Border: Dispatches, Snapshots & Graffiti,* eds., Luis Humberto Crosthwaite, John William Byrd, and Bobby Byrd (El Paso: Cinco Puntos Press, 2003), 140**.**

[156] Diana Washington Valdez, *La cosecha de mujeres: Safari en el desierto mexicano.* (México, D.F.: Océano, 2005), 47.

[157] Julia Monárrez Fragoso, "La Cultura del Feminicidio en Ciudad Juárez, 1993-1999," *Frontera Norte,* 12 (2000): 87.

women had been murdered in Ciudad Juárez.[158] The Latin American Working Group Education Fund (LAWG) compiled reports from the Casa Amiga Domestic Violence and Rape Crisis Center, the Chihuahua Women's Institute, and the Special Prosecutor's Office in Ciudad Juárez and has concluded that between 1993 and 2005, the total number of victims in Ciudad Juárez and Chihuahua City is 414. One hundred fifty two of the murders were sexual, or accompanied by rape, and 262 were not accompanied by rape.[159] The following tables represent an estimate of how many women and girls were killed between 1993 and 2005.

[158] Rafael Loret de Mola, *Ciudad Juárez.* (México, D.F.: Océano de México, 2005), 25; Amnesty International, 2004, "Mexico: Fear for Safety," http://web.amnesty.org/library/index/ENGAMR410302004 (accessed 11 May 2006).

[159] Latin America Working Group Education Fund, "Scapegoats of Juárez: The Misuse of Justice in Prosecuting Women's Murders in Chihuahua, Mexico," www.lawg.org (accessed 28 June 2006).

Table 4.1 Number of Women Killed in Ciudad Juárez, 1993-2005[160]

Year	**Number killed**
1993	17
1994	11
1995	24
1996	30
1997	24
1998	30
1999	26
2000	29
2001	31
2002	38
2003	22
2004	18
2005	34
Total from 1993-2005	**334**

The estimates from Table 4.1 are also lower than many of the sources discussed above. One problem with analyzing the incidence of femicide in Ciudad Juárez is the lack of data available for the total number of women murdered. Table 4.1 shows conservative estimates of the number of victims from 1993 to 2005. All of the figures from 1993 to 199 are from Monárrez's Fragoso article, "La Cultura del Feminicidio en Ciudad Juárez, 1993-1999." Because her article chronicles the murders only until 1999, the estimates from 2000 to 2005 are from the Latin American Working Groups Education Fund, a human rights group in the United States. These figures show that there has been no decrease in femicide from 1993 to 2005.

Writer Victor Ronquillo compiled a list of newspaper articles in an attempt to determine exactly how many women were killed in Ciudad Juárez. He says not only

[160] Monárrez Fragoso, "La Cultura del Feminicidio," 93; LAWG, "Scapegoats of Juárez," www.lawg.org (accessed 28 June 2006).

were the numbers terrifying, but also the manner in which the women were brutally sacrificed. Many of the perpetrators raped, strangled, or gagged the women, and in some instances they mutilated their breasts or nipples or penetrated them with objects.[161] One attacker beat his victim with a piece of water hose later found near the body; she died of skull trauma. Some of the perpetrators crushed their victims' heads, while others drove over them with vehicles.[162] The following table classifies the violent acts used against the victims. Sociologist Julia Estela Monárrez Fragoso compiled this list from Ciudad Juárez newspaper articles between 1993 and 1999.

[161] Victor Ronquillo, *Las Muertas de Juárez: Cronica de una Large Pesadilla* (México, D. F.: Planeta Mexicana, 1999), 23; Jessica Livingston, "Murder in Juárez: Gender, Sexual Violence, and the Global Assembly Line," *Frontiers—A Journal of Women's Studies,* 25 (January 2004): 59.

[162] Ronquillo, *Las Muertas de Juárez,* 15-16.

Table 4.2 Classification of Violent Acts against the Victims, 1993-1999[163]

Violent Act	**Total**	**Percentage**
Strangled and/or raped	58	21.9
Struck	44	16.6
Presumed violated	32	12.1
Firearm	26	9.8
Stabbed	20	7.5
Bones	13	4.9
Body decomposed	12	4.5
Mutilated	12	4.5
Tied up	10	3.8
Neck broken	6	2.2
Buried, half-buried	6	2.2
Incinerated	5	1.9
Intoxicated	5	1.9
Bitten on the nipples	5	1.9
Run over	3	1.1
Not specific	3	1.1
Gagged	2	0.8
Buried in cement or corrosive acid	2	0.8
Bitten	1	0.4
Total	**265**	**100**

Table 4.2 shows that many of the victims had been raped and then strangled, suggesting the perpetrators desired a sense of power and control over their victims. A more recent report from the Associated Press in 2004 stated that about one hundred of the four hundred victims had been raped and strangled.[164] National Public Radio reporter John

[163] Monárrez Fragoso, "La Cultura del Feminicidio," 94-95.

[164] *The Associated Press*, "Commission: Killings of Women Decline in Ciudad Juárez," 7 December 2004, http://web.lexis.nexis.com/universe/document?_m=f687733fld082d05d11cb14711761ce5.doc (accessed 19 May 2006).

Burnett corroborates this statistic, stating that as of 2004, 137 of the victims had been raped and murdered.[165]

Not all of the victims have been identified (by 2000, 63 victims out of 193 were unidentified),[166] but of those whose occupation was known, 51.3 percent either worked in a maquiladora or were in the process of acquiring a job there.[167] In 2004, the New York City's Council Report on International Intergroup Relations corroborated the statistic that more than half of the victims whose occupation was known were employed by, or seeking employment from, maquiladoras. Many of the victims, 25.6 percent, were students.[168] The following table shows the victims' occupations.[169]

[165] John Burnett, "Chasing the Ghouls: The Juárez Serial Murders," *Columbia Journalism Review,* 42 (March/April 2004), 13.

[166] Casa Amiga. http://www.casa-amiga.org (accessed 18 June 2006).

[167] Alicia Gaspar de Alba, "The Maquiladora Murders, or, Who Is Killing the Women of Juárez, Mexico?" *Latino Policy & Issues Brief,* 7 (August 2003): 1.

[168] Ibid.

[169] New York City Council, Committee on Cultural Affairs, Libraries, and International Intergroup Relations. *Report of the Human Services Division,* http://webdocs.nyccouncil.info/attachments/63271.htm?CFID=2119457&CFTOKEN=60533412 (accessed 9 March 2007).

Table 4.3 Victims of Serial Sexual Femicide by Occupation, 1993-1999[170]

Occupation	**Number of Victims**	**Percentage**
Maquiladora worker	20	51.3
-Maquiladora worker	14	35.9
-Sought work in a maquiladora	4	10.3
-Maquiladora worker/student	2	5.1
Student	8	20.5
Domestic employee	2	5.1
Bar employee	2	5.1
Drug addict	1	2.6
Laborer	1	2.6
Homeless	1	2.6
Secretary	1	2.6
Prostitute	1	2.6
Supermarket employee	1	2.6
Homemaker	1	2.6
Total	**39**	**100**

This table includes only victims of "serial" sexual murder from 1993 to 2000. However, the statistics still show that approximately half of the victims whose occupation was known worked in, or were seeking employment at maquiladoras.[171]

In January 1993, Alma Chavira Farel was found beaten, raped, and strangled in the outskirts of Ciudad Juárez. She was thirteen years old and from a poor background. Her death marked the beginning of the epidemic of femicide in the city.[172] That same year, a total of seventeen women were murdered in Ciudad Juárez. The following year, eleven more young women were killed. Many of the victims worked in maquiladoras

[170] Monárrez Fragoso, "Femicide in Ciudad Juárez," 287.
[171] Ibid.
[172] Amigos de Mujeres, "Murders in Ciudad Juárez, Mexico: Fact Sheet and Timeline," http://www.amigosdemujeres.org/MurdersFactSheet.htm (accessed 7 March 2007).

and shared similar physical features: they were slender, dark-skinned, and had shoulder-length dark hair.[173] In 1995, the total number of women murdered rose to fifty-two.[174]

In 1995, the authorities blamed the victims, and the murders increased.[175] Initially, state authorities assumed the victims were prostitutes and moved slowly to solve the cases. Police acted indifferently towards the women's parents, who pressed the police to find their daughters' killers.[176] In 1995, the Chihuahua State Assistant Attorney General blamed the murders on the "double life" of the maquiladora workers. In other words, authorities believed that the women who worked all day in a factory and then went out dancing and drinking at night invited rape and murder by going out alone and not adhering to societal expectations of women.[177] Local officials placed advertisements around the city that read "Do you know where your daughter is?"[178] Because many of the victims worked in maquiladoras, authorities tagged the workers' "conduct" as the reason for their murder. In 1995, Chihuahua Governor Francisco Barrios announced "we found a pattern. The women hang out in certain places with certain people and develop relationships with bad people who later become their aggressors."[179] Governor Barrios was not alone in blaming the murders on the victims. Jorge López, Chihuahua State Attorney General from 1992 to 1998, said, "the community could choose to impose a curfew. All the good people should stay at home with their families and let the bad

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[173] Debbie Nathan, "Death Comes to the Maquilas: A Border Story," *The Maquiladora Reader* (Philadelphia: American Friends Service Committee, 1999), 30; Livingston, "Murder in Juárez," 59.

[174] Monárrez Fragoso, "La Cultura del Feminicidio," 93

[175] Lourdes Portillo, *Señorita Extraviada,* Produced by Xochitl Films (New York: Women Make Movies, 2001).

[176] Nathan, "Work, Sex, and Danger in Ciudad Juárez," *NACLA Report on the Americas,* 33 (November 1999): 25.

[177] Livingston, "Murder in Juárez," 61.

[178] Nathan, "Work, Sex, and Danger," 26.

[179] Francisco Barrios, in Lourdes Portillo, *Señorita Extraviada,* Produced by Xochitl Films (New York: Women Make Movies, 2001).

people be out on the street."[180] One obvious problem with this "solution" was that in Ciudad Juárez most of the maquiladora workers' shifts began at 5:00 A.M or end around midnight, forcing the workers to "be out on the street" after dark and making them easy targets.

Government authorities who blamed the murders on the women's behavior made the victims culpable of femicide instead of the men who committed the crimes.[181] Officials alleged that overt sexuality invited rape and murder.[182] Authorities in Chihuahua claimed that the victims' behavior was morally deviant; for example, they frequented clubs not appropriate for their age. Prevention campaigns in Ciudad Juárez called upon women to assume responsibility of their own safety. Authorities issued warnings about attending parties, staying out late, and wearing provocative clothing. The police suggested that women should vomit on themselves to appear less appealing during an attack.[183] Furthermore, authorities called upon men to watch over their women, thus perpetuating the machismo mindset.[184] According to Monárrez Fragoso, some men believed they should kill women who were unsuitable by society's standards, and authorities confirmed this view. Chihuahua officials stated that it was important to note that the conduct of some of the victims did not agree with the moral order—they stayed out late and went to places that were considered inappropriate.[185] The authorities blamed the murders on the parents for allowing their daughters to behave "inappropriately."[186]

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[180] Jorge López, in Lourdes Portillo, *Señorita Extraviada*.
[181] Monárrez Fragoso, "La Cultura del Feminicidio," 88.
[182] Ibid.
[183] Melissa Wright, "A Manifesto against Femicide," *Antipode* (July 2001): 562.
[184] Monárrez Fragoso, "Femicide in Ciudad Juárez," 282.
[185] Monárrez Fragoso, "La Cultura del Feminicidio," 88.
[186] Ibid.

Contrary to what the state officials initially stated, Special Prosecutor Suly Ponce found that more than 50 percent of the victims were good workers and students.[187]

In 1994, the chief forensic expert in Ciudad Juárez, Oscar Maynez Grijalva, informed his superiors that the killings were the work of a serial killer.[188] By 1995, over fifty women had been murdered, and the public also believed it was the work of a serial killer. Because the crimes continued, police began arresting men at random, claiming they had caught the killers to improve their public image. Many of those held were innocent and were used as scapegoats by authorities. These men became easy prey because they had few family connections or financial or legal resources. As discussed earlier, in Mexico, authorities usually grant criminals impunity based on who he knows or his ability to pay off the authorities.

In 1995, Ciudad Juárez police arrested Egyptian engineer Sharif Abdel Latif Sharif and accused him of raping and killing several women. Sharif had previously lived in the United States, where he served time in Florida for rape. After his release, he moved to Ciudad Juárez to do consulting work for maquiladoras. After a teenage girl, Blanca Estela Díaz, reported to authorities that he had attacked her, he was arrested. Although the judge acquitted him of rape, twenty minutes after his release, Sharif was again arrested and charged with murdering Elizabeth Castro García. Authorities claimed that they had seen him with this woman who was later found dead. Sharif, however, denied murdering anyone. Despite his denial, the media presented Sharif as the man responsible for all the murders. When the police initially arrested Sharif in 1995, they celebrated as if they had found the murderer. However, Sharif was barely behind bars

[187] Livingston, "Murder in Juárez," 59.
[188] Amigos de Mujeres, "Murders in Ciudad Juárez, Mexico."

when more corpses began surfacing.[189] He remained in prison for four years while awaiting trial. In 1999, he was convicted of one murder and sentenced to thirty years in prison. Upon review in April 2000, a judge revoked his sentence, claiming a lack of evidence regarding the identity of Castro Garcia's body. In 2003, Sharif was convicted again and sentenced to twenty years in prison. His lawyers appealed the sentence. However, in 2006, he died in prison while awaiting a decision on his appeal.[190]

In April 1996, the police organized a massive sweep of the downtown bar area and took 150 people into custody. After releasing most of the detainees, the police arrested nine young men who the police claimed were members of a gang called *Los Rebeldes* (the Rebels). The authorities believed that Sharif, in an effort to prove his innocence, had hired Los Rebeldes to murder more women while he was in prison. The suspects were arrested without warrants, denied lawyers, injured during questioning, and threatened with death if they did not confess.[191] Even though the authorities stood by their claims, several of the gang members were released. A few were convicted of other crimes and remained in prison.[192] However, while these members of Los Rebeldes were incarcerated, the murders continued.

In 1998, after a woman identified a bus driver as her attacker, and, as a consequence, police arrested many bus drivers and accused them of working for Sharif. Suly Ponce, Special Prosecutor for Women's Homicides, claimed that Sharif had paid the bus drivers to kill women to make him look innocent. Again, the suspects reported that

[189] Nathan, "Work, Sex, and Danger," 26; Nathan, "Death Comes to the Maquilas," 28.
[190] The Latin American Working Group Education Fund, "Scapegoats of Juárez."
[191] Nathan, "Death Comes to the Maquilas," 29-30; Livingston, "Murder in Juárez," 62.
[192] Amigos de Mujeres, "Murders in Ciudad Juárez."

the police tortured them until they confessed.[193] By the beginning of 1999, after eight more women had been murdered, police arrested members of a gang called *Los Choferes,* charging them with the abduction and rape of a thirteen- year- old girl. Two members of this gang were local police officers. Authorities also accused the gang members of working for Sharif.[194]

In an interview in 1998, Sully Ponce, said "when I became special prosecutor we didn't have the most basic equipment—paper bags, gloves, police tape. The scene of the crime wasn't preserved. These areas became contaminated, evidence was lost, and it became very difficult to find the culprits."[195] Police regularly brought the wrong body to victims' families. Families reported that the police put the wrong clothes on the cadavers.[196] Photographers moved bodies, police trampled evidence, reporters littered the crime scenes, and the police missed articles of clothing crucial to the cases.[197] Police investigators also misidentified corpses, failed to obtain expert tests when necessary, and lacked basic information on the increase of cases involving murdered women.[198] Police did not allow outside access to the files on the murdered women to corroborate the exact number of victims, the way in which they were murdered, or if the suspected attackers had been convicted.[199]

In 2001, Lourdes Portillo directed a documentary, *Señorita Extraviada—Missing Young Woman*, which provided a chronology of the murders in Ciudad Juárez from 1993 to 2001. In the film, Portillo shows personal stories of victims' families and details their

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[193] Lourdes Portillo, *Señorita Extraviada."*
[194] Amigos de Mujeres, "Murders in Ciudad Juárez."
[195] Sully Ponce, interviewed by Lourdes Portillo, *Señorita Extraviada.*
[196] Ibid.
[197] Livingston, "Murder in Juárez," 61-62.
[198] Burnett, "Chasing the Ghouls," 15.
[199] Monárrez Fragoso, "Serial Sexual Femicide," 279.

problems with local police. One mother said the police brought her a skull and told her it was her missing daughter. The mother told the doctor that her daughter had dental work, but the doctor said that these teeth showed no evidence of any such work. According to Portilla, police had burned over one thousand pounds of clothing collected from the victims' bodies.[200]

Mexican writer and social commentator Luis Humberto Crosthwaite asserts that there is no criminal-justice infrastructure in Ciudad Juárez. There are a total of twelve hundred police officers—three hundred per shift—for a city of one and a half million. Crosthwaite believes that this inadequate number of accounts for at least part of the police force's ineptness in solving the crimes. He writes, "Juárez wonder[ed] whether it [was] in the midst of an enormous serial murder, a variety of unrelated crimes with a serial murder included or whether there's been a serial murder at all and the whole thing has just been bungled by the cops."[201]

Women's rights advocate Esther Chávez Cano, who has worked at the forefront of the effort to solve the murders, believes that the increasing practice of maquiladoras to hire only female workers has contributed to the violence against women in Ciudad Juárez.[202] Chávez is the spokeswoman for Ciudad Juárez's Coalition of Nongovernmental Women's Organizations, which has done groundbreaking work to fight sexual and domestic violence in Chihuahua. Chávez, a former accountant, began to take notice of the phenomenon when she continually saw pictures of murdered women and girls in the newspapers. She decided to get involved when she realized that Ciudad Juárez had become a place for killing and dumping women. In 1999, she organized Casa

[200] Lourdes Portillo, *Señorita Extraviada.*
[201] Quiñones, "Dead Women of Juárez," 149-150.
[202] Antonio Mendoza, *Killers on the Loose,* 171.

Amiga, Ciudad Juárez's first sexual assault center. The center's creators advocate saving women's lives by helping them regain self-respect. Chávez "launched a social movement on several fronts against the idea that the women of Juárez are cheap, promiscuous and not worth the effort to enable them a safe refuge from domestic violence, incest, and rape."[203] She claimed that the murders persisted because men knew that they could get away with it. In a 2001 interview, Chávez stated "it's very hard to change the way people think about women here."[204]

In 2001, eight bodies were found in a field within the city. Police arrested two male bus drivers almost immediately and charged them with the murders, again claiming that they had been working for Sharif. And again, the police allegedly beat the bus drivers. Oscar Maynes Grijalva resigned his post as Chief of Forensics after his superiors reportedly asked him to plant evidence in the bus drivers' van. The wives of the bus drivers attested that the local police threatened them. The police also killed one of the bus driver's lawyers, claiming they had mistaken him for a drug dealer. One of the bus drivers died while in custody.[205]

In 2003, the Mexican government allowed Federal Bureau of Investigation agents from the United States to provide technological assistance to police in Chihuahua. The FBI claimed that the crimes were not the work of a serial killer, and other foreign criminologists agreed.[206] In January 2006, Mexican federal authorities released a report affirming that the slayings were not serial.[207] Along with the assistance of the FBI, in

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[203] Wright, "A Manifesto against Femicide," 550.
[204] Ibid., 562.
[205] Amigos de Mujeres, "Murders in Ciudad Juárez."
[206] Monárrez Fragoso, "Serial Sexual Femicide," 279-280.
[207] Louie Gilot, "Federal Police End Investigation of Juárez Killings," *El Paso Times,* 26 July 2006.

2003, the El Paso Police Department created an anonymous tip line to help prevent and solve the crimes in Ciudad Juárez. El Paso Mayor Raymond Caballero announced that the toll-free number would "assist in the prevention of further loss of life and in the apprehension and prosecution of those who perpetrated these crimes."[208]

Mexican President Vicente Fox accepted an invitation to visit Ciudad Juárez in February 2002, nine years after authorities found the first victim. After years of pressure from Mexican non-governmental organizations, in February 2003, the federal government finally joined the state and local police and government officials to help solve and prevent the murder of women. President Fox indicated that the government's number one priority would be to combat the impunity that had characterized these crimes.[209]

According to the Mexican Undersecretary of Multilateral Affairs and Human Rights, the government made gains in the struggle to solve and prevent the crimes against women. The government established the Sub-Commission for Coordination and Liaison to Prevent and Eradicate Violence against Women in Ciudad Juárez, an eighteen-member organization which, according to the undersecretary, improved communication between agencies and received the equivalent of 1.4 million US dollars from the Mexican federal government. The Sub-Commission installed four domestic violence shelters, designed a program to extend psychological assistance to the victims of urban violence, initiated two national campaigns against domestic violence, and transferred one suspect from Chihuahua to the Ciudad Juárez jail, among other activities. In addition to these efforts,

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[208] Amigos de Mujeres, "Murders in Ciudad Juárez, Mexico."

[209] Secretaría General, Organización de los Estados Americanos., *Situación de los derechos de la mujer en Ciudad Juárez, México: El derecho a no ser objeto de violencia y discriminación* (Washington, D.C.: Inter-American Commission on Human Rights, 2003), 1.

between 2002 and 2004, the Mexican government arranged for the specialized technical training from the United States' Federal Bureau of Investigation and established the Joint Agency for Investigation for the Homicides of Women in Ciudad Juárez between the federal and state governments, which established the office of the Special Persecutor for the Attention of the Homicides of Women in the Municipality of Ciudad Juárez. The national government also worked toward systematizing information regarding the murders of women and founded assistance programs for victim's families. In 2004, the Mexican Undersecretary of Multilateral Affairs and Human Rights asserted that while the government had made only modest gains in its effort to solve and prevent the continuing murders, it was committed to continue its efforts.[210]

By 2003, Mexican federal police claimed to have helped solve more than twelve cases. According to an Associated Press report, in December 2004, the increased police efforts and federal government involvement resulted in a 50 percent decrease in the number of women murdered when compared with the previous year.[211] However, Table 4.1 shows that although fewer women were murdered in 2004 than in 2003, the number rose again in 2005. According to Table 4.1, twenty-two women were murdered in 2003, eighteen women were murdered in 2004, and thirty-four were murdered in 2005. If one accepts these figures, it seems that Mexican federal government's involvement has not improved the situation for women living in Ciudad Juárez.

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[210] Subsectretaría de Asuntos Multilaterales y Derechos Humanos, "Updated Informative Document Regarding the Mexican Government's Actions in Ciudad Juárez, Chihuahua," August 2004, http://www.sre.gob.mx/substg/derechoshumanos/juarezingles.htm, accessed 2 January 2007.

[211] From July 2002 to 2003, 34 were women murdered; from July 2003 to 2004, 14 were women murdered; *The Associated Press*, "Commission: Killings of Women decline in Ciudad Juárez," 7 December 2004.

Despite the Mexican federal government's claims, in June 2006, federal authorities quietly closed their inquiries without any arrests and returned responsibility to state authorities. When asked why the federal police had withdrawn, they reported that they had found no evidence of a federal crime. In Mexico, murder is a state crime.[212]

On 18 August 2006, United States officials caught Edgar Alvarez Cruz for violating United States immigration laws. Mexican authorities claimed that Alvarez has killed fourteen young women in Ciudad Juárez and dumped their bodies near the Hill of Black Christ, for violating United States immigration laws. After United States authorities found him in Denver, they sent him back to Mexico where he awaits possible prosecution.[213] According to Mexican authorities, Alvarez's capture was an important break in the ongoing investigation into the Ciudad Juárez murders.[214]

The Mexican Solidarity Network, a United States lobbying organization dedicated to social change in Mexico, asserts that Ciudad Juárez authorities have been indifferent to the crimes. This organization also states that some public officials may be involved. Police corruption and corruption of the judicial system enables criminals to continue to perpetuate these crimes because there are no consequences.[215] According to Amnesty International, police authorities have undermined investigations into the murders by failing to follow leads, to question key witnesses, and by mishandling and contaminating forensic evidence, among other acts of negligence. From 1993 to the present, Mexican federal officials, Chihuahua state officials, and Ciudad Juárez government officials and police have failed to stop the murders or prosecute those

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[212] Gilot, "Federal Police."

[213] *Norte de Ciudad Juárez,* "Confiesa Los Crímenes en Cartas a Familiares," 19 August 2006.

[214] Ibid.

[215] Mexican Solidarity Network, "Femicides of Juárez and Chihuahua," http://www.mexicosolidarity.org/Juarez%20and%20Chihuahua/ (accessed 11 May 2006).

responsible. Many suspects have been arrested, and some have spent up to ten years in prison without prosecution or conviction. These men confessed after being tortured, but authorities have refused to investigate the use of torture. All of these acts of incompetence and corruption have undermined the credibility of the judicial system.[216]

Authorities have blamed the murders on the victims themselves, claiming that they were either prostitutes or promiscuous. It seems likely that the epidemic of rape and murder that began in 1993 with the murder of Alma Chariva Farel will continue until authorities recognize that the murders are femicide. Misogyny is the main component of femicide; unfortunately, misogyny is rarely considered a factor in many of the cases in Ciudad Juárez. When authorities ultimately acknowledge that the murders are, in fact, femicide, they can then take the necessary steps for its prevention and prosecution. Moreover, government officials and police must promote efforts to gather data in a coherent and coordinated manner. Most vital, authorities need to work to decrease, and eventually eradicate, the prevalence of impunity that exists for men who commit these crimes.[217]

[216] Amnesty International. 2004. "Mexico: Fear for Safety."

[217] United Nations Population Fund, 16 Days of Activism against Violence against Women, November 25-December 10, 2006, "Advancing Human Rights and Eliminating Violence against Women: Femicide," http://www.unfpa.org/16days/documents/feminicidio.pdf (accessed 17 January 2007).

CHAPTER V

HISTORIOGRAPHY

The causes of femicide in Ciudad Juárez are elusive. Were the killings actually committed by a single serial murderer, narcotics traffickers, or unemployed men envious of women workers? Were the perpetrators misogynistic men threatened by the sex-role reversal that has occurred in Ciudad Juárez in recent years? Several Mexican and North American scholars have attempted to determine the cause or causes of femicide in Ciudad Juárez. They offer several competing and conflicting theories as to who the killers are and why the murders continue.

According to Mexican writer Victor Ronquillo, the fact that many of the women's bodies bear similar mutilations indicates that the murders have been the work of one or several serial killers. He claims that the perpetrators cut their victims' breasts from left to right and their nipples from right to left. However, he fails to report how many victims received these types of injuries. According to Ronquillo, in 1999, a shift occured in the manner in which the women were murdered. He writes that the perpetrator(s) began stabbing their victims with rage. Some of the victims received forty-one puncture wounds, others twenty-one. All had been raped. Although he believes the similarity of

injuries is not a coincidence and that a serial killer is responsible for the murders,[218] Mexican federal officials and the United States' Federal Bureau of Investigations claim that they found no evidence that the murders were serial. The murders are too different. The variety of ways in which the women were murdered, shown in Table 4.23, indicate that 7 percent of the women had mutilated breasts and 12 percent were stabbed. These statistics seem to discredit Ronquillo's theory that the murders were the work of a lone serial killer.

Mexican writer and social commentator Luis Humberto Crosthwaite attributes the murders to changing sex roles and to the social decomposition of Ciudad Juárez. He writes that the city was built on making money and that education, the government, and other institutions are in crisis. According to Crosthwaite, in Ciudad Juárez growth occurred too quickly and threw society off balance.[219] He asserts there has been a "quick and brutal mashing of a rural people into an industrial work force" in Ciudad Juárez.[220] According to Crosthwaite, men from rural areas are accustomed to controlling every aspect of a woman's life. In only a few years, the maquiladora reversed sex roles, and women became the family providers. Maquiladoras, he asserts, "created the new Mexican woman . . . but this same process did not create a new man."[221] He believes that women manifested their new sense of independence at home when resisting their husband's attempt to control them. Such resistance resulted in the husband's loss of power and control, resentment and anger, and eventual espousal of violence. He cites

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[218] Victor Ronquillo, *Las Muertas de Juárez: Cronica de una larga pesadilla* (México, D.F.: Planeta Mexicana, 1999), 23.

[219] Sam Quiñones, "The Dead Women of Juárez," *Puro Border: Dispatches, Snapshots & Graffiti,* eds., Luis Humberto Crosthwaite, John William Byrd and Bobby Byrd (El Paso: Cinco Puntos Press, 2003), 152.

[220] Ibid., 146.

[221] Ibid.

one specific example: a woman took a job, became more independent, and began to talk back to her husband, who then strangled her. However, this scenario is the only example he cites of this nature, which weakens his argument. Crosthwaite also believes there is a connection between the murdered women who were maquiladora workers and nightclubs. He writes, "the bars and dance halls now play an essential function in maquiladora life and, for that reason, probably have something to do with the killings."[222] Maquiladora work is monotonous, and female employees escape the tedium by going out dancing. Crosthwaite believes that it is likely that some women met their killers at nightclubs. Although it seems likely that the sex-role reversal brought on by the maquiladoras is one component of why femicide has occurred in Ciudad Juárez, it is certainly not the sole reason for the murders.

United States sociologist Debbie Nathan views the murders as an exaggerated form of violence against women in Mexico and believes that the transnational factories are at the root of such violence. She reports that Ciudad Juárez also registers the highest levels of domestic violence in Mexico. Reports of domestic abuse, including beatings, stabbings, and rape, have also skyrocketed since 1993.[223] She disagrees with Lourdes Portillo, who directed the movie *Señorita Extraviada,* and asserts that before 1990 almost no women were murdered in Ciudad Juárez. Nathan also refutes Portillo's contention that most of the killers dumped their victims in the desert. In fact, asserts Nathan, less than one-third of the victims fit the description given in *Señorita Extraviada.*[224]

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[222] Ibid.,148.

[223] Debbie Nathan, "Work, Sex, and Danger in Ciudad Juárez." *NACLA Report on the Americas,* 33 (November 1999): 29.

[224] Debbie Nathan, "Missing the Story." *The Texas Observer,* 94 (August 2002).

According to Nathan, the male homicide rate also skyrocketed in the early nineties. She believes that the problem began with transnational factories using gender difference to exploit labor; "factory girls are subject to unprecedented sexual harassment and violence, of which serial killing is only the most horrific extreme.[225] International corporations do not take into account cultural sensitivity when establishing factories—only efficiency and profit. Transnationals have introduced gender competition into patriarchal cultures.[226] Nathan seems to blame the maquiladoras for violence against women in Ciudad Juárez. While it seems clear that the maquiladora managers' practice of hiring mostly women has led to resentment among men and that this resentment has possibly led to violence against women in some cases, it seems unlikely that the maquiladoras are directly responsible for femicide in Ciudad Juárez. By placing sole responsibility of gender inequality in Mexico on maquiladoras, Nathan ignores other cultural and societal factors that create gender imbalance, including the prevalence of machismo that has existed for centuries in Mexico.

Sociologist Melissa Wright sees a correlation between how maquiladora managers view women and the murders. She notes that female employees move from one maquiladora to another. When they leave their workplace, they become obsolete or "erased" from that factory. Wright terms this phenomenon "corporate death" and asserts that it reveals a cycle of consumption and disposal of women. She makes a connection between the discarding of women from maquiladoras and the murdering and dumping of women. However, she is careful not to blame the maquiladoras for the murders. Wright

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[225] Debbie Nathan, "Death Comes to the Maquilas: A Border Story," *The Maquiladora Reader: Cross-Border Organizing since NAFTA,* Rachel Kamel and Anya Hoffman, eds. (Philadelphia: American Friends Service Committee, 1999), 27.

[226] Nathan, "Work, Sex, and Danger," 30.

believes the maquiladoras simply exacerbated the violence against women that already existed in Ciudad Juárez.[227]

El Paso Times reporter Diana Washington-Valdez disagrees with the maquiladora theory. Although multinational factories are popular targets of labor, women's rights, and anti-globalization groups, Washington-Valdez asserts that the murders are simply a police story—that is, the fault of the police. In an interview in 2004, she stated "it's not about socio-economic conditions in Juárez. It's not about the maquilas. It's about people killing women and getting away with it. When the police catch the killers, that's when the murders will stop."[228] She bases her argument on the fact that between 1995 and 1997, 124 women were murdered in Ciudad Juárez, compared to the thirty-six victims who were murdered in Tijuana, a border city with similar socio-economic conditions as those in Ciudad Juárez.[229]

Washington-Valdez alleges that some of the killers are young members of important Ciudad Juárez families with connections to the local drug cartel and who have murdered women for sport. According to Washington-Valdez, these young men's families buy them protection from the police and ensure obstruction of investigations. She also claims that there is a connection between the police and the drug cartel, which helps to explain the continuation of the murders. In her book, *La cosecha de mujeres: Safari en el desierto mexicano*, she claims that drug trafficking is the main cause of death by gunshot in Ciudad Juárez.[230] According to Washington-Valdez, Mexican federal

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[227] Melissa W. Wright, "A Manifesto against Femicide," *Antipode,* 33 (July 2001), 558.

[228] John Burnett, "Chasing the Ghouls: The Juárez Serial Murders," *Columbia Journalism Review,* 42 (March/April 2004): 16.

[229] Ibid.

[230] Diana Washington Valdez, *La cosecha de mujeres: Safari en el desierto mexicano,* (México, D.F.: Océano, 2005), 47.

investigators have enough evidence to arrest the men, but they have not done so.[231] Her simplistic view ignores underlying cultural, economic, and social conditions that have resulted in a generalized violence against women in Mexico. Moreover, she offers little convincing proof to support her theory. While there is no doubt police corruption enables the perpetuation of the murders, it seems improbable that it is the only factor contributing to the murder of women in Ciudad Juárez and in other regions of Mexico.

Writer Jessica Livingston believes that the murders are an extreme form of violence against women that has existed in Mexico for centuries and that have been spurred by the threatened patriarchy in Ciudad Juárez. She states that being a breadwinner is integral to patriarchal manhood. Factors that have compromised masculinity in Ciudad Juárez include low wages, maquiladora managers' defining women as ideal workers, and women earning as much or more money than men. Livingston declares that these women now occupy the space of men in a culture of absolute male dominance, a circumstance that has created misogyny. Furthermore, she asserts that the macho backlash is expressed by violence against women.[232] Compiling several newspaper articles, she discovered that in 1998 there were nine thousand cases of violence (rape, kidnapping, domestic violence) in Ciudad Juárez. She also found that a woman in Mexico cannot file domestic abuse charges if her injuries heal in less than fifteen days.[233] Moreover, the courts rarely interfere in domestic violence cases. Livingston believes this apparently established tolerance of violence against women has led to the perpetuation of the murders. She concludes that if "male resentment and

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[231] Burnett, "Chasing the Ghouls," 13.

[232] Jessica Livingston, "Murder in Juárez: Gender, Sexual Violence, and the Global Assembly Line," *Frontiers—A Journal of Women's Studies,* 25 (January 2004): 67-68.

[233] Ibid., 65.

hostility was not tolerated by Mexican authorities, and if it could also be reduced with more egalitarian and better-paying working conditions, perhaps the murdering of women in Juárez would also cease."[234]

Mexican sociologist Julia Monárrez Fragoso believes the murders in Ciudad Juárez are femicidal in nature. She defines femicide as the "misogynist killing of women by men and a form of continuity of sexual assault, where you must take into account: the acts of violence, the motives and the imbalance of power between the sexes in political, social, and economic environments."[235] She notes that the motives for femicide are hatred, pleasure, anger, evil, envy, separation, disputes, robbery, and desire for domination over a woman. She analyzes the crimes from the perspective of gender and creates a theoretical construction of femicide. According to Monárrez Fragoso, a social hierarchy exists in Mexico with race at the top, gender in the second position, and class in the third.[236] In other words, white or European wealthy men occupy the top tier of the hierarchal pyramid in Mexico, while poor mestizo or Indian women occupy the lowest level. She asserts that when analyzing femicide in Ciudad Juárez, one must examine patriarchal hegemony and capitalist hegemony, or the dominance of one social class over another. She avers that the perpetrators commit femicide to control women and dominate them as a sexual class to maintain the patriarchal system.[237]

Monárrez Fragoso believes these crimes against women are not isolated acts, nor are they products of psychotic individuals. They are members of one group killing

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[234] Ibid., 69.

[235] Julia Monárrez Fragoso, "Serial Sexual Femicide in Ciudad Juárez: 1993-2001," *Debate Feminista,* 25 (April 2002): 280.

[236] Julia Monárrez Fragoso, "La Cultura del Feminicidio en Ciudad Juárez, 1993-1999," *Frontera Norte,* 12 (2000): 90.

[237] Ibid., 88.

members of another group. Furthermore, she believes that the domination of gender is interrelated with the forms of national, ethnic, and racial domination. Analyzing perspectives of gender along with social class, she writes that violence is necessary for the dominant class to maintain the existing order.[238] Therefore, she contends that the murders are allowed to continue because the social and political institutions are controlled by men who want to maintain patriarchal hegemony. She juxtaposes the motives and violent acts with social structures of the area and differences of power between genders. She concludes that existing attitudes toward women—that they are inferior—has caused these crimes.[239] Although she explains how the culture of male domination has contributed to the murders, she gives little attention to other societal factors, such as police corruption, poverty, and overpopulation, which have led to increased violence in Ciudad Juárez.

The fact that the murders remain unsolved means that these scholars' theories are merely conjecture. No one, except the murders themselves, knows for sure who is killing the women or why they are committing these crimes. It seems likely that a myriad of societal and cultural factors enable femicide in Ciudad Juárez. The maquiladora managers' practice of hiring mostly female employees has undoubtedly led to feelings of resentment among the unemployed men. It is possible that these men espouse violence as a means to re-exert dominance over women. Furthermore, it seems probable that police corruption and impunity also have allowed the murders to continue. However, at the root of these problems is the fact that Mexico is a patriarchal country in which men systematically dominate women. Patriarchal supremacy exists not only in the home but

[238] Monárrez Fragoso, "Femicide in Ciudad Juárez," 282-284.
[239] Monárrez Fragoso, "La Cultura del Feminicidio," 87-88.

also in the political institutions in Mexico. Women traditionally have been denied access to political power, which means they have been denied their rights, including rights to personal safety and security. It seems possible that if more women had greater access to political power, the level of impunity for murdering women would be far less pervasive. Although several theories exist as to who the murderers are, one fact seems to be apparent—the murders continue because men know they can murder women without punishment because of the degree to which impunity exists in Mexico.

CHAPTER VI

CONCLUSION

Many scholars have termed the murders in Ciudad Juárez "femicide," or the misogynistic killing of women to maintain male supremacy in a society. Femicide is as old as patriarchy. As noted in the introduction, killing women to maintain male dominant status is a form of femicide. The phenomenon is not unique to Mexico; rather, femicide has occurred in many patriarchal societies throughout the world. For hundreds of years, Mexico has been a patriarchal culture in which men ruled society and fathers ruled households. Government institutions have tolerated and minimized violence against women. For example, in Mexico, the courts rarely interfere in cases of domestic violence. Furthermore, judges have given light sentences to men who kill their wives because of actual or suspected infidelity. In Mexico, machismo, or an exaggerated sense of masculinity based on the domination of women, combined with police and political authorities' tolerance of violence against women, has resulted in an increased incidence of femicide. Although human rights organizations and the feminist movement in Mexico have made some progress in advancing women's rights, Mexico remains a country with entrenched negative attitudes toward women. Sexual harassment is a pervasive problem.

Moreover, many men believe women should not receive an education or work outside the home, but rather, they should stay at home to cook, clean, and care for the family.

Over the past few decades, however, women have challenged patriarchal hegemony at the family and institutional levels. Many women are the sole wage earners of their households, enjoy economic independence, attend universities at an increased rate, and serve as politicians, all of which threaten the established patriarchal system. It is important to recognize that femicide occurs in response to such challenges to male domination, and is likely that femicide occurs in Mexico to maintain male supremacy.

Another factor contributing to femicide in Mexico is impunity, or the failure to punish perpetrators of crimes. Amnesty International has condemned the Mexican government for failing to address the level of impunity that surrounds all forms of violence against women. There are no federal mechanisms of accountability to ensure that the state governments uphold international treaties pertaining to women's rights. Therefore, state governments often fail to prosecute cases involving crimes against women. Furthermore, in some states in Mexico, men are exempt from incarceration for killing their wives if the case is found to be a "homicide by honor," implying that killing is justified when the wife has been unfaithful. Another element contributing to impunity is police corruption. Mexican police officers customarily demand bribes and use torture as an investigative tool. A common fear in Mexico is police extortion. Moreover, police officers in Mexico are infamous for their incompetence and inexperience. Much of the controversy surrounding the murdered women in Ciudad Juárez has focused on investigators misidentifying corpses and lacking basic information on the victims' cases. The prevalence of impunity means that little punishment has been meted out to those who

commit crimes. As a consequence, the victims' families, as well as human rights organizations, have criticized local, state, and federal authorities for failing to address and eradicate police corruption and impunity.

According to the Diagnostic Investigation of Femicide Violence [*Investigación Diagnóstica sobre Violencia Feminicidio*], more than six thousand girls and women were murdered in Mexico between 1999 and 2005. States where the greatest incidence of femicide has occurred include Chiapas, Chihuahua, Guerrero, Mexico, Morelos, Oaxaca, and Veracruz. The rate of femicide is exceptionally high in Ciudad Juárez, Chihuahua. In this city of 1,142,354 inhabitants, approximately five hundred women were murdered between 1993 and 2006. These numbers seem particularly high when compared to El Paso, which is just across the river. In El Paso with a population of 700,000, ninety-one women were killed between 1993 and 2004.[240]

Ciudad Juárez has become one of the most violent cities in Mexico, and murder there is a daily occurance. Factors that have contributed to the atmosphere of violence in Ciudad Juárez include illegal immigration, overpopulation, drug trafficking, and the employment practices of maquiladoras. Government-sponsored plans such as the Bracero Program and the Border Industrialization Program became major catalysts for Mexican internal migration to the city and led to overpopulation and poverty for many juarenses. The city's population has grown exponentially from 1942 to the present, which not only has depleted water supplies, but it also resulted in an increased level of violence as well. Overcrowding creates unemployment, hunger, and desperation, which can lead to violence. The Border Industrialization Program also brought maquiladoras,

[240] U.S. Department of Justice, Bureau of Justice Stats, http://bjsdata.org.usdoj.gov/dataonline/Search/Homicide/Local/RunHomJurisbyJuris.cfm (accessed 1 April 2007).

which employed mainly females because they were cheaper and more docile. Women began replacing men as the household's main wage earners, spurring even tighter male control over females. Men resented maquiladoras and the women who worked for them. Over 50 percent of the victims either worked or were seeking employment in maquiladoras, suggesting that the resentment among males toward females' new economic independence was a factor contributing to femicide in Ciudad Juárez. Approximately 20 percent of the adult female population of the city work in maquiladoras. Although the gender role-reversal has occurred in a relatively short period of time, attitudes about gender—that is, societal expectations of women's and men's behavior—have not progressed as quickly. Women's rights activists have made progress, and attitudes toward women are changing; however, the process of altering engrained misogynistic views is painstakingly slow.

Further exasperating the situation in Ciudad Juárez is the prevalence of local and international drug trafficking, which is a major contributor to the high rate of homicide. Drug cartels participate in turf wars in which innocent civilians are sometimes caught in the exchange of gunfire. Thus, drug trafficking, as well as overpopulation, has turned Ciudad Juárez into a dangerous city for both men and women. Although immigration, overcrowding, and drug trafficking cannot be directly linked to femicide, they do contribute to the omnipresent climate of violence in which femicide has thrived.

Approximately five hundred women have been murdered in Ciudad Juárez since 1993. Many of them were raped and strangled. Men who rape and strangle their victims typically feel a need to exert power and control over women. Many of the victims worked in maquiladoras and shared similar physical attributes such as youth, dark skin,

and shoulder-length hair. Because most men in Mexico continue to adhere to machismo, authorities have often blamed the victims for these crimes, claiming the women do not behave according to accepted societal norms (i.e. they do not stay at home to cook, clean, and raise children). The police also arrested several innocent men and charged them with the murders, allowing them to boast to the public that they had captured the killers. Most of the men arrested were merely scapegoats. They had few family connections or financial resources with which to bribe authorities. The practice of detaining innocent men underscores the pervasiveness of police corruption and how it contributes to the perpetuation of femicide. Police officers refuse to arrest men suspected of committing crimes if the suspects are able to pay off the officers. This practice sends a clear message to potential perpetrators: in Ciudad Juárez, you can get away with killing a woman.

Scholars who have presented the strongest analyses of the causes of the murders include North American writer Jessica Livingston and Mexican sociologist Julia Monárrez Fragoso. Livingston asserts that the murders reflect an extreme form of violence against women that has existed in Mexico for centuries and for which patriarchy has served as the principle impetus. She believes that, in Mexico, the concept of masculinity involves earning the household income and making all decisions pertaining to the family. Livingston argues that low wages, maquiladora managers' hiring mostly females, and women's earning as much or more money than men have all threatened notions of masculinity and led to crimes fueled by misogyny. Monárrez Fragoso believes that the crimes are members of one group—males—killing members of another group—females. She asserts that perpetrators commit femicide to control and dominate women as a sexual class to maintain patriarchal hegemony. Although both scholars argue

convincingly that male domination and the patriarchal system in Mexico have contributed to and allowed the perpetuation of femicide, they dismiss other societal factors such as overpopulation, drug trafficking, and general poverty, all of which have resulted in the violent atmosphere that exists in Ciudad Juárez today.

By the late 1990s, the murders of women in Ciudad Juárez began to attract international attention. Amnesty International, the Latin America Working Group Education Fund, and the United Nations Development Fund for Women, among others, published recommendations to guide the actions of human rights groups, police, government officials, and the general public. They hope these recommendations can help bring justice to those women who have been murdered and decrease the incidence of femicide in Mexico: First, communities should offer courses on self-defense and sexuality. Second, human rights activists should campaign to abolish discriminatory hiring and mandatory pregnancy testing in the workplace. Third, government officials should eliminate the term "crimes of passion" from the penal code, which results in reduced sentences for men who murder their partners. Fourth, because a lack of data and incorrect record keeping make it difficult to determine the number of cases of femicide, the police should improve their methods of gathering data. Furthermore, authorities need to corroborate the exact number of women murdered, explain how they were murdered, and reveal how many murderers have been convicted. Fifth, investigations should be opened into all murders where a suspect has been released or acquitted. Sixth, investigators should work with the victims' families to gather information useful to the

cases. Finally, authorities should investigate all accusations by prisoners that torture was used as a means to induced confessions.[241]

In 2005, United States congressmen and congresswomen became interested in the murders in Ciudad Juárez and passed legislation to assist Mexican authorities in their effort to prevent and solve the crimes. United States Congressman Silvestre Reyes (D-TX) attached an amendment to the Foreign Relations Authorization Act, requesting more federal help for Mexican authorities investigating the murders. The amendment allowed United States officials to establish training procedures for DNA testing and forensic analysis to assist Mexican officials in the identification of perpetrators.[242] The House of Representatives passed the bill in July 2005.[243]

In 2006, United States Congresswoman Hilda Solis (D-CA), co-chair of the Congressional Women's Caucus, urged Congress to pass House Concurrent Resolution 90, which condemned the abduction and murder of women in Ciudad Juarez and proposed a set of actions to investigate and prevent these crimes. The congresswoman said that the killings had been allowed to continue for thirteen years without much involvement by the United States. "I felt compelled as a woman, as a Latina, that if we are going to stand up for women's rights in other continents of the world . . . why not then also come forward and support the women of Ciudad Juárez," she said in her address

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[241] United Nations Population Fund. 16 Days of Activism against Violence against Women, November 25-December 10, 2006, "Advancing Human Rights and Eliminating Violence against Women: Femicide," http://www.unfpa.org/16days/documents/feminicidio.pdf (accessed 17 January 2007); The Latin American Working Group Education Fund. "Scapegoats of Juárez: The Misuse of Justice in Prosecuting Women's Murders in Chihuahua, Mexico," www.lawg.org/docs/ScapegoatsofJuarez.pdf (accessed 28 June 2006).

[242] Alicia A. Caldwell, *The Associated Press,* "Lawmaker wants U.S. Forensic Training for Mexican Authorities," 21 July 2005.

[243] U.S. Representative Sylvestre Reyes, "Juárez Murders Resolution Passes House of Representatives," 2 May 2006, http://wwwc.house.gov/reyes/news_detail.asp?id=958 (accessed 17 August 2006).

to the House.[244] She urged the President and the Secretary of State to request that the governments of Mexico and the United States create a bilateral agenda to investigate and prevent the crimes. The resolution passed in May 2006.[245]

In response to the murders in Ciudad Juárez and the culture of violence against women in Mexico, in 2006, a Special Commission for Equality and Gender, chaired by Mexican Congresswoman Diva Hadamira Gastélum Bajo, created the *Ley General de Acceso de las Mujeres a una Vida Libre de Violencia,* or the General Law of Women's Access to a Life Free of Violence. In May 2006, Congresswoman Gastélum Bajo called a special session of the Mexican Senate to discuss the proposed legislation. The Senate approved the new law, and in January 2007, new President Felipe de Jesús Calderón Hinojasa, who took office on December 1, 2006, implemented the Ley General, which addressed both violence against women and impunity in Mexico. The law defines the diverse forms of violence against women, declares that all types of violence and discrimination against women are criminal acts, and establishes sanctions for those who commit such crimes.[246] The new law acknowledges that women's rights in Mexico have been ignored for centuries. According to the Ley General, men have exerted complete dominance over women, who have been at the mercy of their fathers and husbands and are located on the lowest level of the social hierarchy. Thus, the President believed that it was necessary to add a constitutional amendment declaring the legal equality of men and

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[244] Congresswomen Hilda Solís, speech to U.S. House of Representatives, 2 May 2006, http://www.house.gov/apps/list/speech/ca32_solis/morenews3/juarez.html (accessed 17 August 2006).

[245] Ibid.

[246] De Ley General de Acceso de las Mujeres a una Vida Libre de Violencia, suscrita Por las Diputadas Diva Hadamira Gastélum Bajo, Marcela Lagarde y de los Ríos y Angélica de la Peña Gómez, Presidentas de las Comisiones de Equidad y Género Especial de Feminicidios en la República Mexicana, y Especial de la Niñez, Adolescencia y Familias, Respectivamente, www.equidad.org.mx/Sintesislegislativa2005/legislalia6/documento%207.doc (accessed 1 March 2007).

women. Furthermore, the Ley General affirms the belief that a democratic state that ignores violence against women lacks civility and development.

Although Mexico has adopted international treaties dealing with violence against women, these agreements have never been implemented, which is another goal of the new law. Other objectives include enforcing sanctions against those who commit crimes against women, implementing measures to protect women, eradicating the institutional tolerance of violence against women, and taking steps to ensure that women have access to safety. The new law establishes the legal conditions to offer security to all Mexican women and is applicable at all three levels of government—federal, state, and local. All levels of government will be required to provide information on these issues at the request of citizens. This measure seeks to ensure that the government is held accountable for its actions and makes all three levels of government responsible for promoting safety for women.[247]

The creators of the Ley General define general violence against women as the social control of women that causes death, physical or mental damage, or psychological suffering. The forms or manifestations of such violence can occur include physical violence, sexual violence, or psychological violence that happens in the home, community, or society. These diverse types of violence and discrimination include forced prostitution, pornography that glorifies violence against women, and femicide. These forms of violence have been tolerated by the state, a condition that has only increased their prevalence.[248]

[247] Ibid.
[248] Ibid.

According to the new law, it is the responsibility of the state to establish and implement mechanisms to eliminate the sanctioned supremacy of men over women, a factor that has generated violence against women. First, the law requires that the state fulfill all the international treaties it has adopted concerning women's rights. Second, the state must commit to upholding the Ley General. Third, it must promote a legal structure of sensitivity toward violence against women. Fourth, state government officials should avoid abuse of authority when dealing with women. Fifth, local officials must guarantee the democratic participation of women in their communities. Sixth, authorities must ensure that women have access to justice—attorneys and legal administrative personnel. Seventh, the state must establish strategies to implement this new law. Eighth, it should implement strategies to punish those who commit violence against women. Ninth, officials should ensure that victims have access to services, financial aid, and health care. Tenth, the state must prevent judges, police officers, and other government officials from discriminating against women. Finally, the Mexican state must seek to eliminate the impunity that surrounds criminal acts against women.[249]

Much of the law is dedicated to eliminating domestic violence. The Ley General allows victims of domestic violence to have access to federal aid (women's shelters, food, etc.) and psychological care, including self-help groups. The law requires courts to impose a penalty on those who commit domestic violence. It also establishes in the penal code a mechanism for classifying the diverse types of domestic violence, including physical, verbal, sexual, and economic. All victims will have access to legal counsel and will have the right to choose the sex of their legal counsel, doctor, and social worker.

[249] Ibid.

Furthermore, the new law eradicates the rule that a dispute is not considered abuse if the injuries take less than fifteen days to heal.[250]

The Ley General also deals with sexual violence and compels agents of the public ministry, judges, and other public servants to provide aid to victims of these types of crime. It also encourages officials to obtain consent from the victims for medical examinations and legal consultations. It also demands that police officers handle the investigation of accused sexual violence correctly, valuing the declaration of the victim. Like the victims of domestic violence, the victims of sexual violence will have access to psychotherapeutic care and have the right to choose the sex of their doctors and legal council.[251]

A section of the law is dedicated to the elimination of femicide. The law defines femicide as the murder of a woman for the simple fact that she is a woman. The authors of the Ley General explain that femicide and other types of violence against women, including domestic abuse and sexual violence, have the same common denominator—misogynistic men attempting to exert complete domination over women. The new law states that anyone found guilty of committing femicide will spend thirty to sixty years in prison. It also requires that government and police officials safeguard the integrity of the victims. In other words, police officials should not assume the victims were prostitutes or that they invited violence by behaving promiscuously.[252]

One representative of the Special Commission for Equality and Gender, Marcela Lagarde y de los Ríos, has been touring the country to discuss the new law. She explains that the purpose of the law is to create a federal policy dealing with violence against

[250] Ibid.
[251] Ibid.
[252] Ibid.

women that can be implemented at all levels of government. Some Mexicans have responded positively to the efforts of the new administration. For example, Lydia Cacho, Director of *Centro Integral de Atención a la Mujer* (Integral Center of Attention to Women), commended the new law for addressing sexual harassment. She hopes the Ley General will lead to a decrease in the prevalence of sexual harassment in the workplace and schools.[253] Others believe that the authors of the Ley General had the right intentions but failed to create an adequate legal instrument. Senator Ricardo García Cervantes asserts that the law defines unacceptable conduct but fails to indicate what specific sanctions should be. While he agrees with the objective of the new law, he warns that its execution will be complicated.[254] Although its implementation may be difficult at the state and local levels, Ley General is an important piece of legislation and a positive response to crimes against women. The law is a step toward creating a safe environment for women and girls and establishing equality between men and women.

In 2006, Amnesty International claimed that "impunity for human rights violations and all forms of violence against women remains widespread in many parts of Mexico."[255] In any patriarchal society, violence against women is tolerated and minimized by state and religious institutions. Notwithstanding the sexism of certain legal codes, the law can be a tool that helps women. The Ley General adopted by the current administration is an encouraging response to the phenomenon of femicide and the problem of general violence against women in Mexico. From 1999 to 2007, Amnesty

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[253] Adriana Varillas, *El Universal* "Buscan que acoso sexual se tipifique como delito," 28 February 2007, http://historico.eluniversal.com.mx/buscar.html (accessed 1 April 2007).

[254] *El Universal,* "Mujeres, sólo Buenos deseos," 12 February 2007, http://www.eluniversal.com.mx/editoriales/36748.html (accessed 4 April 2007).

[255] Amnesty International. 2004. "Mexico: Fear for Safety." http://web.amnesty.org/library/index/ENGAMR410302004 (accessed 11 May 2006).

International called on the Mexican federal government to implement the international treaties dealing with women that it had adopted previously. This new law answers that call and requires all levels of government to ensure the protection of women's rights. It is unlikely that femicide will be eradicated anytime soon in Mexico, and it will take more than writing a law to prevent violence against women. The major challenge authorities now face is implementation of the law. Hopefully, this new law will lead to more prosecutions for those who commit crimes against women, bring justice to the murder victims of Ciudad Juárez, and create a safer environment for all Mexican women.

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VITA

Natalie Brooke Panther

Candidate for the Degree of

Master of Arts

Thesis: VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN AND FEMICIDE IN MEXICO: THE CASE OF CIUDAD JUÁREZ

Major Field: History

Biographical:

Education:

Bachelor of Arts, psychology, Fort Lewis College, December 2003.

Master of Arts, history, Oklahoma State University, May 2007.

Professional Memberships:

Graduate and Professional Students Government Association, January-May, 2006.

Phi Alpha Theta

Name: Natalie Panther Date of Degree: May, 2007

Institution: Oklahoma State University Location: Stillwater, Oklahoma

Title of Study: VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN AND FEMICIDE IN MEXICO: THE CASE OF CIUDAD JUÁREZ

Pages in Study: 101 Candidate for the Degree of Master of Arts

Major Field: History

Since 1993, over five hundred women have been murdered in Ciudad Juárez, most of which remain unsolved today. Many scholars have defined the murders femicide, or the misogynist killing of women to maintain male domination. It seems likely that the women have been murdered in an attempt to perpetuate the patriarchal system in Ciudad Juárez. Although Mexico is a patriarchal society, women have been gaining more access to income and power in recent years. Female encroachment on male domains of society has threatened the patriarchal hegemony in Mexico, which could be one reason why women have been the targets of violence in Ciudad Juárez and other areas of Mexico. In February 2007, the Mexican federal government passed an important piece of legislation pertaining to violence against women and femicide. Hopefully, this new law will lead to more prosecutions for those who commit crimes against women and bring justice to the murder victims of Ciudad Juárez.

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