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Gender and Violence: Feminist Theories, Deadly Economies and Damaging Discourse

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A theory on violence which is gender blind and without a feminist lens inevitably results in the presentation of the dominant patriarchal perspective. Consequently, the way male subjects perceive violence is exhibited, thereby rendering the theory partial (Conway, 2016). A feminist perspective however provides a deeper understanding of violence by analysing how it is connected to, and embedded in, patriarchal structures of power (Cockburn, 2004, pp. 29-30). As Cynthia Cockburn argues “Gender power shapes the dynamic of every interaction” (2004, p.28). In this way, gender norms shape and are shaped by power structures, moreover, the positioning of human subjects within these structures are central to all feminist theory (Cockburn, 2004, p.29). Violence is inherently linked to power and there is arguably no act of violence that does not intersect with gender. However, feminist theories examining gender specific violence tend to remain within the confines of the male female binary (Heyes, 2013, p.201). If the feminist lens is to offer a more complete understanding of violence on the global stage, the feminist space needs to be opened up to include the analysis of violence targeted at individuals or groups whose gender identities do not conform to established gender constructions (ibid, p.207, p.211).

To be sure, the aim of this study is not to position feminist theories against each other or to construct a gendered hierarchy of suffering. Nor is it to omit the suffering of men – in fact, it is the contention of this study that by examining the hierarchies of masculinity, a feminist theory can offer a deeper understanding of violence targeted at men. As follows, the aim of this paper is to exemplify how feminist theory can be applied to the analysis of gender specific violence against both men and women, as well as, transgender and gender queer groups. In this way, the two theories of gendercide and femicide will be examined in conjunction with related empirical examples exemplifying that gendercide and femicide enable for the analysis of the intersection of violence with culture, ethnicity, power structures, economic structures and gender ideology.

Firstly, the theory of femicide – referring to the gender specific violence directed at females will be explored. This first section will scrutinise male preference and gender disparities in population ratio, as well as the example of violence against women in Ciudad Juarez, Mexico (Grech, 2015; González Rodríguez, 2012). In this way, it will be demonstrated that the theory of femicide is essential to highlight the global scale of violence directed against women and girls. This will be followed by an analysis of the theory of gendercide and how it has been used to examine the vulnerability of men and boys as gendered subjects; focusing on gendered violence in Darfur and how this can be connected to ethnic hierarchies (Ferrales, Brehm & McElrath, 2016). The primary criticism of the gendercide and femicide frameworks put forward in this paper is that those at the forefront of developing the theories, such as Jones (1994) and Russell (1977), have focused solely on binary males and females. As follows, this paper will culminate in a discussion of how the theory of gendercide can be used to analyse violence against transgender and gender queer groups. The last section will consist of the following empirical examples: the death of a transgender woman following medical neglect, the killing and torture of Two Spirited Native American groups and the gendercide that can be connected to the pathologization of the transgender identity and body (Snorton & Haritaworn, 2013; Miranda, 2013, Heyes, 2013).

Femicide: Taking it Seriously

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Gender specific violence has been recognised since the eighteenth century with the first official reference to femicide appearing in British legal discourse upon the publication of John Wharton's *Law Lexicon* (1848) (Grech, 2015, p.851). However, femicide was not developed as a feminist theory until it re-emerged in conjunction with second wave feminism in the 1970s, when Diana Russell (1977) used the term at the *International Tribunal on Crimes against Women*. The femicide framework is highly valuable because it communicates something language such as murder and homicide cannot (Corradi et al, 2016, p. 977). As Radford points out: "You cannot mobilise against something with no name"(1992, p. 7). In this vein, the theory of femicide brings attention to the patriarchal power structures which impose masculine dominance over the female embodied and social life (Corradi et al, 2016, p. 981). The act of femicide intersects with complex economic, cultural and geographical factors, revealing that violence is embedded in patriarchal structures of power (Cockburn, 2004, p. 30). In India, economic factors such as the continued use of dowry make it difficult for poorer families to sustain female children. Similarly, in China, the one child policy has increased male preference (Hudson, 2009, p. 67; Grech, 2015, p. 852). These issues, which intersect with gender, have ultimately manifested in gender selective abortion and infanticide against females. Moreover, there is often an intense societal pressure for women to become pregnant or give birth until a male is produced. The health risks associated with repeated pregnancies and births, as well as violent retribution for the failure to produce a male, can result in the femicide of the mother as well as foetus or infant (Grech, 2015, p. 852).

In societies where females are less valued and possess fewer rights than males, they are inevitably more vulnerable to violence and death (Hudson, 2009, p. 67). As follows, femicide is not always a result of direct violence, it can take the form of medical and nutritional neglect. For example, there are lower vaccination rates among female populations in India and Pakistan, later presentation for medical treatment and females are more likely to suffer malnutrition than males (Grech, 2015, p. 852). In areas such as South and East Asia, this manifests in high mortality rates of females and in parts of China and India males are in excess of females by 10-15% (ibid). Globally, there are 101 males to every 100 females, denoting 100 million less females on the planet than would be expected when considering overall birth rates (ibid; Hudson, 2010, p. 67). Disparities in sex ratio and a surplus of males have potentially devastating consequences for society (Hudson, 2009, p. 70). Historically, spikes in male population have been linked to increased societal violence and militarism, related to dominant gender norms of violent masculinity (Cockburn, 2004, p.31). As follows, there was a rise in the male population prior to: European territorial expansion in 1500, Japanese imperialism in 1914, civil uprisings in Algeria and El Salvador, and the rise of Islamic extremism in Iraq, Afghanistan and Pakistan (ibid).

The border city of Ciudad Juarez has some of the highest rates of femicide in the world; Ciudad Juarez provides an example of how femicide is linked to patriarchal control of, and the social construction of, the female body (Corradi et al, 2016, pp. 584-585). Ciudad Juarez was built around capitalist factories; low wages and poor working conditions combined with Ciudad Juarez's border location gave rise to poverty, drug use and criminal gangs. Women, particularly those who were employed, became a target for murder and sexual violence (ibid). The dehumanisation of women in Ciudad Juarez has its roots in the neo-liberal capitalist economy – which itself has become intertwined with criminal structures and political corruption (González Rodríguez, 2012, p. 42). The dehumanisation of women in Ciudad Juarez rooted in neoliberalism also takes place beyond the city boundaries. For example, in 2010 makeup brand MAC released a range modelled on the femicide of Ciudad Juarez (ibid, p. 90). Profiteering from femicide represents the brutality of global neo-liberal capitalism and arguably renders MAC complicit in the femicide carried out in Ciudad Juarez, as González Rodríguez (2012, p. 94) argues:

MAC joins the drug traffickers, the economically and politically powerful, and the authorities that have protected them throughout the years [...]. The marketing of a makeup brand inspired by the drama along the US/Mexican border reflects the incredible degree of amnesia and indifference that global culture has arrived at. Scandal is also primordial. Global culture's banality is a sister to those who wish to deny the problem of the murders of women in Ciudad Juarez.

Femicide rates can be directly linked to economic cycles; arguably, the United States' North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) exacerbated the economic situation in Ciudad Juarez, coinciding with the 1993 rise in violence (ibid, p. 96). Additionally, corresponding with a drugs boom and increased border insecurity, 164 women were murdered in Ciudad Juarez in 2009 and 306 were murdered in 2010 (ibid, pp. 95-96).

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Mexican national and local authorities have repeatedly denied that there is a problem of femicide in Juarez. For example, there is a culture of impunity in Ciudad Juarez which serves to perpetuate femicide, authorities fail to fully investigate murders and the search for bodies of the disappeared often falls to the victims' families (Corradi, 2016, p. 984). Moreover, officials in Ciudad Juarez and in the national government do not recognise the murders as femicide, and when murders are investigated, they are considered homicides. By refusing to acknowledge the misogynistic elements of the murders in Ciudad Juarez, the power structures of patriarchal dominance which result in violence against women are reinforced (González Rodríguez, 2012, p. 76). Femicide in Ciudad Juarez can thus be located within the broader culture of criminality, power structures and violent expressions of dominant masculinity – resulting in the punishment of women for breaking the prescribed norms of femininity (Corradi, et al, 2016, p. 984; González Rodríguez, 2012, p. 30).

Applying the femicide framework to the murder of women in Juarez and disparity in global gender ratios enables the recognition of gender based crimes that specifically target women. The theory of femicide also places victims within patriarchal power structures of economics and politics, allowing for a deeper insight into how violence is connected to patriarchy and masculinity. Femicide thus highlights the complex relationship between violence, economics, politics and gender ideology. The global responsibility to prevent femicide must also be considered, particularly when considering the connection between femicide and neo-liberal capitalism and the economic conditions of poverty it creates. Following on from the analysis of femicide and the focus on women, the theory of gendercide will be interrogated. Gendercide in the next section will be used to analyse how hierarchies of masculinity and violence target men.

Gendercide: Hierarchies of Masculinity and the Vulnerability of Battle Aged Men

The theory of gendercide was developed by Mary Ann Warren (1985) and refers to the elimination of persons of a particular sex. Warren's (1985) research primarily focused on the experience of women and girls, though she rejected exclusionary terms for sex selective killing such as femicide. Jones (1994) expanded on Warren's work by using gendercide to examine the genocidal targeting of males during the Balkan Wars. Additionally, in his later work *Straight as a Rule* (2006), he applies gendercide to sexual violence against males and the expression of hegemonic masculinity. Jones' (2000, p. 192) application of gendercide centres on the assertion that the most vulnerable group in the context of war and genocide is battle aged non-combatant men. Jones (2006, p. 463) thus argues that the United Nations and humanitarian NGO's should consider males to be an at-risk gendered category. Despite abundant examples of gender specific violence against men, such as the killing of Muslim men and boys in the Balkans, the killing of and sexual violence toward Arab men and boys in Darfur, and the targeting of young males with machetes in East Timor, feminist frameworks have typically focused on violence against women (Jones, 2004 pp. 7-9; Ferrales et al, 2016, p. 565).

Theorists such as Carpenter (2004), Stein (2004) and Radford (1992) argue that the killing of men is not gendered or sex specific because there are factors other than gender which cause them to be victims of violence. For instance, Carpenter (2004, p. 237) argues that men are not killed because they are men but are targeted instead because of the social roles they inhabit as men. However, men inhabit masculine social roles because of the gender norms which place them there. The targeting of men in Darfur due to their positioning within ethnic and masculine hierarchies is a deeply gendered calculation (Ferrales et al, 2016, p. 565). In Darfur, Arab males were the primary targets of violence which took the form of emasculation through feminisation and genital harm, thus reflecting masculine hierarchies connected to ethnic power dynamics (ibid, p. 567). The perpetrators of violence were able to assert the heteronormative power informed by ethnic and gender ideology – to conduct gender specific genocide (Ferrales, Brehm & McElrath, 2016, p. 565). Furthermore, as has been illustrated, there are also factors other than gender which create the conditions for the femicide of women and girls (Cockburn, 2004, p. 37). For example, the extraordinary rates of violence against women in Ciudad Juarez is not a result of misogyny alone, it is embedded in the neo-liberal system which has created the conditions of economic strife and criminal culture (Corradi et al, 2016, p. 984).

As follows, violence against females can be located within patriarchal economic systems of power, whereas gender specific violence against men is typically embedded in masculine hierarchies connected to race and ethnicity. The

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key strength of gendercide as a theory is its adaptability, which makes it a particularly useful feminist theory. Gendercide can be applied to violence against women and men, as well as violence against those who do not fall within the male female binary. While theorists such as Jones (2004, p. 260) have focused on binary men, he makes the point that his work is just one way of viewing gendercide and of theorising genocide:

There should be no greater difficulty in recognising the gender variable that operates to consign men to genocidal slaughter, blended with the oppositionist, subversive, or elitist/exploitative tendencies that the *genocidaires* disproportionately inflict on out of group males. [However] theorising genocide need not be a zero-sum game in which one ascriptive trait necessarily cancels out all others.

In this vein, the next section will explore the violence inflicted on transgender individuals and exemplify how gendercide can be used to open up the feminist space to those whose identities do not follow straightforward binaries.

Gendercide of Transgender and Gender Queer Groups

Despite the fact that there has been some attempt by organisations such as the United Nations to address the gendered constructions which condition violence against transgender and gender queer groups, these efforts have not catalysed meaningful policy progression (Dolan, 2014, p. 487). The UN's Age Gender and Diversity Policy (UNADG) refers to the protection of all persons and to the respect for difference but no specific reference is made to gender identity (UNHCR, 2011). Similarly, academic efforts to incorporate the gendercide framework to the analysis of violence against non-binary groups have been lacking (Heyes, 2013, pp. 201-204). This is despite a wealth of examples where transgender or gender queer individuals have been the victims of violence. The death of transgender woman Tyra Hunter in 1995 forms a particularly disturbing case study since it involves the transphobia of emergency services and medical professionals. Hunter was hit by a car in Washington D.C; emergency services rushed to treat her until her clothes were removed to reveal male genitalia (Snorton & Haritaworn, 2013, pp. 68). A series of derogatory remarks and a delay in treatment both at the scene and in hospital ultimately resulted in her death. When Hunter was recognised as a binary female, her body warranted saving but when she was revealed as transgender her body was allowed to die (ibid, pp. 68-69). This is what Foucault (1978) has referred to as the bio politics of disposability; Hunter's transgender body was viewed as unruly and therefore disposable. The gendercide of Hunter was not planned but the medical neglect because of her gender which resulted in her death, was gendercide nonetheless.

The pathologization of transgender men and women, who choose to seek or undergo sex reassignment surgery, can also be categorised as gendercide. To be sure, those seeking sex reassignment surgery deserve the proper medical and psychological support but for professionals to discourage or prevent sex reassignment surgery constitutes the denial of the right to bodily autonomy and the expression of embodied gender identity (Heyes, 2013, p. 207; Butler, 2014). Furthermore, for feminist theorists, such as Shelia Jefferies (1997), to oppose male to female sex reassignment surgery, arguing it represents a form of patriarchy which appropriates the female body, completely contradicts the concepts at the root of feminism and feminist theory (Butler, 2014). As Gloria Steinman (2013, p. xx) puts it:

I believe that transgender people, including those who have not transitioned, are living out real, authentic lives. Those lives should be celebrated, not questioned. Their health care decisions should be theirs and theirs alone to make. And what I wrote decades ago does not reflect what we know today as we move away from only the binary boxes of "masculine" or "feminine" and begin to live along the full human continuum of identity and expression.

The targeting of gender queer and transgender groups is not a new or modern issue; it is something that has occurred historically in indigenous communities whose gender expressions did not fit European norms (Miranda, 2013, p. 350). Native American communities have historically adopted diverse and fluid interpretations of gender and sexuality. Two Spirited Native Americans were believed to possess both male and female spirits; they had a respected and pivotal role within indigenous communities as intermediaries who guided the dead to the afterlife (Lang, 2016, p. 299). They included both men in women's roles and women in men's roles (ibid, p. 300) However,

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when encountered by Spanish colonisers and missionaries, they were cast as sexual and spiritual deviants, and thereby subjected to violent deaths, torture and humiliation (Miranda, 2015, p. 351). For instance, Spanish soldiers commonly fed the Two Spirited to their dogs and the clergy in Spanish missions often separated Two Spirited groups from their communities, forcing them to adopt European masculine or feminine heteronormative social functions (ibid, p. 359).

Association with the Two Spirited was also punishable by death; as follows, what made the indigenous gendercide of the Two Spirited even more devastating, was the fact that it conditioned communities to turn on the Two Spirited and commit gendercide themselves (Lang, 2016, p. 303). Ultimately, this culminated in a spiritual and social crisis; with nobody to carry out death rituals, many indigenous communities sought spiritual refuge in Catholicism and social refuge in the ideology of their European colonisers (Miranda, 2013, p. 354, pp. 358-361). The Spanish thereby used European Christian discourses of the male female binary to attribute deviance to the status of two spirited Native Americans. In this way, the gendercide of transgender and gender queer groups in the Americas can be viewed as part of the structure of colonial dominance used to assert white European racial and ethnic superiority.

By seeking to appropriate the cause of transgender and gender queer equality, some groups wishing to target groups of the perceived racial or ethnic other seem to have reversed ideology which has its roots in European homo-colonialism (Snorton & Haritaworn. 2013, p. 267). For instance, the racial or ethnic other is cast as the violent and less accepting other, and thereby more likely to commit gendercide against gender non-binary groups (ibid). This constructs a complex paradigm, whereby the racial other is endowed with the greater potential to commit a hate crime; this is then used as a means of legitimising racial violence against the out of group other. Specific examples of this can be viewed in the 2008 moral panic in Berlin when Muslim migrants were accused of violence at a drag festival (ibid, 2013, pp. 71-72).

By using gendercide to focus on the violence targeting transgender groups, it has been highlighted that non- binary gender groups have been omitted from the academic and policy considerations of violence. Until theories such as gendercide can be applied with a fully intersectional feminist lens, which incorporates a wider range of gender identities, the complexity of violence cannot be fully theorised or conceptualised (Heyes, 2013, pp. 201-204). Using the theory of gendercide and applying it to the targeting of transgender and gender queer groups has enabled the link to gender specific violence and racial dominance rooted in European colonial ideology to be made (Miranda, 2013, p. 351). It has also been illustrated that transgender identities are not a modern phenomenon; arguably it is transphobic violence emergent from colonial structures which is the more modern construction. If the notion of gender is not expanded in policy and academic discourse, rates of violence against transgender and gender queer individuals will inevitably continue to rise (Ortega & Busch-Armendariz, 2013, p. 5).

Conclusion

In sum, femicide is a crucially important feminist theory to highlight violence against women and acts as a useful starting point to reveal how masculine dominance asserts itself within power structures (Corradi et al, 2016, pp. 976-977). Additionally, Jones' application of gendercide to the genocide framework was overdue and highly valuable in that it extended feminist theory on violence beyond women and girls. Furthermore, using gendercide to bring a gendered lens to genocide enriches our understanding of mass violence and its connection to gendered hierarchies. Jones' application of gendercide acted as a starting point enabling the application of the gendercide frame to cases such as the ethnic killing of males in Darfur. Stefanie Rixecker (cited in Jones, 2004, p. 266) sums up the value of Jones' contribution:

There is the assumption that highlighting the different aspects of genocide waters it down and removes the serious aspects of the act itself. I do not think this is true at all. If anything highlighting the contributing factors is essential if humankind wishes to pre-empt such atrocities. The more we understand of the different labelling of hate – and perpetuating violence based upon these labels – the better off we will be in ensuring future genocides do not take place. I would have thought that this was the ultimate goal and the ultimate policy outcome.

In this way, a broad application of the theory of gendercide can give rise to a more holistic conceptualisation of how

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gender specific hate and violence is constructed. Moreover, Rixecker's sentiments can easily be applied to gender specific violence against transgender and gender queer groups as exemplified by the cases of Tyra Hunter, the killing and torture of Two Spirited Native American groups and the gendercide that can be connected to the pathologization of the transgender identity and body (Snorton & Haritaworn, 2013; Miranda, 2013). If gender specific violence is to be fully theorised or have any meaningful policy application to ensure the most vulnerable are protected, stagnant gender based models must be modified to include situational analysis and the application of feminist theories such as gendercide to the targeting of transgender and gender queer groups (Dolan, 2014, p. 486), thereby providing a mode of analysis to help us begin to understand a wide range of gender specific violence which takes place within dominant local and global patriarchal power structures (Cockburn, 2004, p. 37). Arguably, the absence of gender diversity in policy and feminist theories of violence reflects a new form of gender blindness. Consequently, the lack of consideration for non-binary groups reinforces dominant power structures constructed by cis-gender notions of hegemonic masculinity (Ortega & Busch-Armendariz, 2013, p. 5). Violent hegemonic masculinity embedded in patriarchal power structures harms women and girls, men and boys, as well as transgender and gender queer groups. Until feminist theories such as gendercide become more inclusive of transgender and gender queer identities, feminist theory on violence will remain reductionist and incomplete.

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