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Uma perspectiva global sobre o feminicídio

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Uma perspectiva global sobre o feminicídio

A Global Perspective on Femicide

If we are to fight discrimination and injustice against women we must start from the home for if a woman cannot be safe in her own house then she cannot be expected to feel safe anywhere." Aysha Taryam

Monica Riutort [1]
Andrew Raya

Resumo: Uma em cada três mulheres é submetida a alguma forma de violência pelo menos uma vez na vida (OMS, 2021). O feminicídio, o assassinato de mulheres e meninas por causa de seu gênero, é a forma mais sombria e extrema de tal violência. Embora as mulheres representem apenas 18% de todos os casos de homicídio em todo o mundo, elas representam 64% dos assassinatos perpetrados por um parceiro íntimo ou membro da família, sugerindo que esses assassinatos são planejados, motivados e "enraizados em relações de poder historicamente desiguais entre homens e mulheres". (UNODC, 2019). De forma preocupante, o número de feminicídios cometidos globalmente está

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aumentando, com os impactos agravantes do Covid-19 ampliando ainda mais a crise. Este segmento busca entender o feminicídio tanto no cenário global quanto em suas nuances particulares no Canadá. Esboça os desafios enfrentados pela falta de coleta de dados sistematizada e considera a diferença entre feminicídio e feminicídio, com o último enfatizando o papel do Estado em não enfrentar a crise. Ele conclui com uma série de recomendações para o público e os formuladores de políticas para melhorar a compreensão e a visibilidade do feminicídio.

Abstract: One in three women are subjected to a form of violence at least once in their lifetime (WHO, 2021). Femicide, the killing of women and girls because of their gender, is the darkest and most extreme form of such violence. Although women only make up 18% of all homicide cases globally, they represent 64% of murders perpetrated by an intimate partner or family member, thus suggesting that these killings are planned, motivated and "rooted in historically unequal power relations between men and women" (UNODC, 2019). Concerningly, the number of femicides committed globally is on the rise, with the compounding impacts of Covid-19 further amplifying the crisis. This segment seeks to understand femicide on both the global stage and its particular nuances within Canada. It outlines the challenges faced by the lack of systemized data collection and considers the difference between femicide and feminicide, with the latter emphasizing the role of the state in failing to address the crisis. It concludes with a number of recommendations for the public and policymakers to improve the understanding and visibility of femicide.

Introduction

"Y la culpa no era mía, ni dónde estaba,ni cómo vestía" ("and the fault wasn't mine, not where I was, not how I dressed") can be heard echoing through not only the streets in Latin America but across the world. It is sung by blindfolded women as a protest to patriarchal violence against women and the subsequent victim shaming. The Chilean feminist song, written and popularised in 2019, became the anthem for revolution, empowering women to speak up about the constant violence they face each day from harassment on the street to murder.

While femicide is not new, recent uproar over recent cases of femicide have reinvigorated a renewed awareness of the issue. In 2020, under the slogan #WomenSupportingWomen, women in Brazil started sharing black and

white photos on social media to raise awareness about femicide. The black and white color reference the fact that the images of murdered women usually ended up in newsprint, a nod towards the often-sensationalized accounts of femicide and harmful gender stereotypes. After the murder of a 27-year-old Turkish woman, the hashtag spread to Turkey and flooded social media sites. It then began trending in the USA, after Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez spoke out about harassment in the workplace, before infiltrating to India. Now 14.7 million women from all around the world have posted a photo under the hashtag on Instagram.

Relatively new is the concept feminicide, which is the English translation to the originally coined term 'feminicidio'. With its origins in Latin American literature, feminicide has yet to garner mainstream public attention in the America in the same way femicide has. The prominence of feminicide in scholarly Latin American works is reflective in statistics that show the relevance of feminicide in these countries. According to Alvazzi del Frate (2011), Honduras ranks third in feminicide rates, Guatemala ranks second, and El Salvador ranks first in the world. The prevalence of feminicide in this region is exacerbated through the normalization of violence that is systemically embedded within patriarchal law/policies and social order that work to diminish women's rights (MENJIVAR; WALSH, 2017). The emersion and frequent exposure of anti-women notions in everyday life simultaneously work to "justify" this violence. This criticism is not unique to Latin America with feminicide garnering a social urgency that has attracted the attention of international organizations and national governments. The exploration of feminicide's transcendence of borders (particularly within a Canadian context) will be explored further on in the chapter.

As these examples show, femicide is a global issue and one that has been inscribed within international law as a violation of human rights. As a result, states are obliged to address and prevent such violence, yet, this chapter argues that femicide continues to be sidelined by governments. It starts by exploring how various legal and academic definitions of femicide have evolved over time, noting how the lack of a singular definition makes it more challenging to compare global or regional data. Then it considers the rise of femicide in the world before delving into how the gendered

data gap and the shortcomings of current data collection techniques have resulted in a failure to prevent femicide and sexual violence more broadly. Following the critical analysis of Paulina García-Del Moral, the differences between femicide and feminicide are then explored in the context of Canada. The chapter concludes with a series of recommendations for the public and policymakers on how to increase and improve the visibility and understanding of femicide both locally and globally.

Definition of Femicide and Feminicide

According to the World Health Organization, "violence against women comprised of a wide range of acts – from verbal harassment and other forms of emotional abuse, to daily physical or sexual abuse. At the far end of the spectrum is femicide: the murder of a woman" (WHO, 2012). The term femicide was first introduced as a political concept in 1976 by feminist expert and activist Diana Russell at the International Tribunal of Crimes Against Women in Belgium. While the word had pre-existed in the Anglo-Saxon language, Russell later refined the concept as 'misogynist killing of women by men' (GRZYB; NAUDI; MARCUELLO-SERVÓS, 2018) .With the passage of time, a number of definitions have emerged out of the literature and activist work that have cemented the essential idea of femicide as a form of gendered sexual violence. For example, the "murder of women by men motivated by hatred, contempt, pleasure, or a sense of ownership of women" (CAPUTI; RUSSELL, 1990 as cited by CFOJA, 2020). However, this definition fails to include state responsibility for circumventing the murder of women. Indeed, without an acknowledgement of the specific problem, in this case, how femicide stems from systemic violence towards women and the state's consistent neglect of the issue, there cannot be a robust and convincing solution.

Due to increased academic interest on violence towards women, scholars worry that the use of the term femicide in literature and politics has become increasingly diluted and vague. Deliberation as to whether

or not the word femicide accurately describes the complex nature of this system of criminal behaviors and the perpetrators' motives remains active within Canadian discourse on the subject (GARCÍA-DEL MORAL, 2018; CFOJA, 2020). To combat this issue, Marcela Lagarde, a Mexican academic and activist, developed the similar concept of feminicide, which stems from the traditional 'femicide', to address the underlying conditions femicide was not equipped to handle on its own. Specifically, Lagarde describes feminicide as, a "genocide against women, and it occurs when the historical conditions generate social practices that allow for violent attempts against the integrity, health, liberties, and lives of girls and women" (2020). However, Lagarde takes this a step further by noting that, "feminicide is able to occur because the authorities who are omissive, negligent, or acting in collusion with the assailants perpetrate institutional violence against women by blocking their access to justice and thereby contributing to impunity" (2020). This definition places focus on the state's complicity with maintaining the status quo in regard to gender-based violence. Such a definition allows us to properly question the motivations of the state that allow such violence to continue without adequate repercussions. This outlook calls for the recognition of the role of state actors and state institutions have in the prevention, maintenance, and reproduction of social constructionist principles. By uncovering the agendas of societal elites, feminists and activists alike can target the root causes that place women and girls in detrimental positions.

The emergence of feminicide from feminist theory on femicide often leaves the impression that the terms are mutually exclusive. However, as can be seen by the difference in meaning above, these terms should not be viewed as interchangeable. The separation of this terminology is necessary to avoid deflecting from and devaluing the interpretation and contexts in which use of this language is appropriate. Despite their theoretical lack of mutual exclusivity, in relevant Canadian literature there is a noticeable degree of variation in perspectives on the usage of these two terms; particularly which one is more appropriate when describing this horrific phenomenon

(GARCÍA-DEL MORAL, 2018). Therefore, their separation in this segment is consciously intended to avoid semantic conflation.

The Impact of Femicide on Our Lives

The universal conceptualisation that many activists have widely accepted is that femicide occurs in all societies throughout the world and is perpetrated by a wide range of individuals and groups, including those known to the victims (current and former intimate partners, family members, friends, and acquaintances) and those unknown. Moreover, femicide takes unique forms, including murders associated with interpersonal violence, dowry practices, honor crimes, sexual violence, political violence, gang activity, and female infanticide (STRENGTHENING UNDERSTANDING OF FEMICIDE, 2008).

Female homicide (femicide) is one of the leading causes of death for adolescent and young adult (AYA) women in the U.S (COYNE-BEASLEY et al., 2003). The United Nations (UN) describes how pubertal changes increase attention to sexuality and gender roles, heightening adolescent girls' vulnerability to sexual violence, child marriage, and others. (COYNE-BEASLEY et al., 2003).

In addition, the use of categories such as "crime of passion" to classify murders of women reflects a common practice of finding mitigating factors, usually referring to victims' actions, to excuse violence against women. Media reports which endorse this misleading language are destructive as they sensationalize the grim reality for victims of femicide and their families. However, the vast majority of femicides are not identified as such; their victims remain uncounted, and perpetrators remain free, with impunity for their crimes many times hidden by police and victims' relatives to conceal the nature of how the women died. (STRENGTHENING UNDERSTANDING OF FEMICIDE, 2008).

The horror stories that are impacted by femicide and feminicide make the everyday lived experience for women and girls around the word feel like one of danger. Using feminicide as an analytical lens, the state has manipulated conditions that make it impossible for women to "experience their personhood outside the social construction of their gender" (CARBADO, 2005). The inherent fear of gender-based violence has concrete consequences such as not walking at night, home seclusion, watching tone of voice/ attitude, and dressing "appropriately" to avoid harassment. This act of self-monitoring acts as a fail-safe for women. In addition, the increased risk of femicide results in higher levels of depression amongst women, as well as, higher levels of alcohol and tobacco consumption. In saying this, femicide and feminicide operate as a tool of patriarchal oppression that make these experiences common amongst women across the globe. The uniqueness of these experiences function in relation to other accompanying factors such as racism, colonialism, and classicism. In viewing this phenomenon from an intersectional stance, feminicide becomes a tool to describe the underlying context in which femicide occurs.

2016 statement from the UN - "Beyond the appalling personal cost, it reveals deep and damaging failures of society that ultimately have a high price in lost progress for each country." (UNWOMEN, 2016).

Femicide In the World

With the rise in social media and technology, many have taken their message to online platforms. For instance, the rises of the #MeToo social media hashtag was used to give a platform for the topic and disclosure of sexual assault worldwide and brought to light many allegations. Sparked by the #MeToo movement came the Purple Campaign, a worldwide organization whose main mission was "to address workplace harassment by implementing stronger corporate policies, establishing better laws and empowering people to create lasting change within their workplaces and communities". (THE PURPLE CAMPAIGN, 2014). Their main advocacy

was reporting and developing accurate statistics about the violence women face at work and in everyday society.

In Mexico, which averages 10 femicides per day, a group of women have taken their step toward change through embroidery as an act of resistance and resilience. (EMBROIDERING MEXICO'S MURDERED WOMEN, 2019). Every day, these women stand in front of the city hall building in Nezahualcóyotl, putting up the embroidered kerchiefs that share the story in the first person of the women whose lives were taken away by gendered violence. Their resistance takes a critical position against the politicians and officials who have failed to put an end to this senseless violence. Many of the women who are part of the embroidery initiative face harassment and some have even been beaten by men their towns for sharing the uncomfortable truth.

Around the world, the systemic embedment and normalization of gender-based violence often results in femicide and gender-based violence in general as being taboo subjects. Some countries even consider femicide as a warranted act due to the victims' actions and nature, thus excusing the perpetrator. In Turkey, the media and culture tend to portray the victim as morally reprehensible or troublesome, "while promoting sympathy and excusing responsibility for the perpetrator. The implicit and explicit ageism and sexism in Turkish news have deflected from the social injustice of femicide, normalizing violence against ageing women." (BASDOGAN; OZDOGAN; HUBER, 2021). However, many who oppose femicide are met with violence and even death.

Turkish sociologist Cetin Ozturk (2015) argues that these killings indicate a conflict between modern women's independent status and traditional patriarchal values, which promote men's sense of ownership and possession over women. Cetin proposes the term revolt killing to refer to femicides in

Turkey (CETIN, 2015). Femicide is "a result of her objection, of coming up against the ongoing [patriarchal] system, rejection of the man and a statement of her will" (CETIN, 2015).

Stories like these have sadly become a common theme in many parts of the world. In the next 24 hours, 137 women will be killed by a member of their family. It is estimated that of the 87,000 women who were intentionally killed in 2017 globally, more than half (50,000) were killed by intimate partners or family members. (UNWOMEN, 2021).

How The Gendered Data Gap Has Created A Failure Of Sexual Violence Prevention

> Humanity is male and man defines woman not in herself, but as relative to him; she is not regarded as an autonomous being. [. . .] He is the Subject, he is the Absolute – she is the Other.
>
> - Simone de Beauvoir, 1949

In her book *Invisible Women*, author Caroline Criado Perez describes that it is not just the shortage of reporting sexual violence incidents that affect women but also the gendered based data reporting itself that creates a distorted preceptive for many elements that contribute to the increased possibility of violence against women. This has become a bigger issue in recent years due to our increased reliance on data. As best stated by Caroline Criado Perez "The world increasingly reliant on and in thrall to data... Big Data, which in turn is planned for Big Truths by Big Algorithms, using Big Computers. But when your big data is corrupted by big silences, the truths you get are half-truths, at best. And often, for women, they aren't true at all" (CRIADO PEREZ, 2019). For example, the lack of female-based data in urban planning can negatively impact the decision-making process, increasing a woman's risk of being sexually assaulted. This is, as

Criado Perez puts it, "a clear violation of a woman's equal right to public spaces" (CRIADO PEREZ, 2019).

This data gap statement was further proved as most official data in countries show that men are more likely to be victims of a crime in public spaces including public transport. Anastasia Loukaitou-Sideris, Associate Dean of the UCLA Luskin School of Public Affairs, and Distinguished Professor of Urban Planning came to the conclusion that gender-biased data creates the image that women's fears of crime are irrational and more of a problem than the crime itself (DING; LOUKAITOU-SIDERIS; AGRAWAL, 2020).

The reporting and collection of accurate crime data has become increasingly challenging for any country, even first-world countries such as the United States of America. More challenging is the reporting of femicide. Police and medical data-collection systems that document cases of homicide often do not have the necessary information, do not report the victim-perpetrator relationship, or the motives for the homicide, let alone gender-related motivations for murder (WORLD HEALTH ORGANIZATION, 2012).

This lack of accurate data, as previously stated, creates a false sense of reality that can misalign the tackling of femicide. Many may ask the question, 'why do women not just report directly?', and the answer most would receive is 'where do we report?' and 'to whom?'. In most countries, there are no specific systems or structures in place for women to report gender-based violence, harassment and abuse. To prevent the escalation to femicide, countries need to create open forums and guidelines of what is considered gender-based violence to allow women to properly disclose their experiences and be supported. In Nottingham, England, for example, police have begun to record misogynistic behavior (everything from indecent exposure to groping to upskirting) as a hate crime (if their

behavior was not strictly criminal, hate incidents). They have found that the reports of such behavior shot up, not because men had suddenly become much worse, but because women felt that they would be taken seriously (CRIADO PEREZ, 2019).

Furthermore, many women do not report acts of violence due to a number of external factors such as stigma, shame, or a concern they'll be blamed. Familial obligation and the repercussions they may face from their community also effects a woman's ability to report. Additionally, women are most at risk of being murdered by someone they know: a family member or intimate partner. This conclusion is supported by studies conducted, for example, in South Africa (MATHEWS, et al., 2009); Jamaica (LEMARD; HEMENWAY, 2006); and the United States (CAMPBELL, 2007). The data are in stark contrast to male murder victims, who are most likely to have been killed by strangers, in random acts of violence (ACADEMIC COUNCIL ON THE UNITED NATIONS SYSTEM - ACUNS, 2017). According to a UN study, the largest number (20,000) of all women killed worldwide by intimate partners or other family members in 2017 was in Asia, followed by Africa (19,000), the Americas (8,000), Europe (3,000), and Oceania (300) (UNODC, 2019).

Current Barriers Toward Accurate Data Collection

Weaknesses in information systems and quality of data present major barriers in investigating femicides, developing meaningful prevention strategies, and advocating for improved policies. One of the main issues with current studies is that while many are conducted in well-resourced environments and produce somewhat accurate data, the specificity to certain areas poses challenges for researchers and activists attempting to extrapolate femicide data. In addition, often data collected from official sources such as the police, the justice system, and hospitals, is not consistent as there may not be a specific framework and definition for reporting. Many femicide cases are often hidden in the catchall box

"other." (STRENGTHENING UNDERSTANDING OF FEMICIDE, 2008). As a result, the fragmentary nature of available data limits efforts to fully understand femicide.

Recommendations Toward Accurate Data Collection and Analysis on Femicide

1. *Standardization of definition of femicide and reporting guidelines*

Currently, in the Canadian legal system, there is no recognized definition of femicide as a term or a crime. According to several studies of the legal systems around the world, not all homicides of women are eligible to be classified as femicides (ACUNS, 2017). According to the Latin American Model Protocol for the Investigation of Gender-Related Killings of Women (here in after Latin American Model Protocol), femicide exists when the killing of a woman (the death of a woman) is related to her gender. In other words, there must be specific signs that the motive of the killing, or the context of the killing is related to gender-based violence or/and discrimination (UNWOMEN, 2015).

Without a standard protocol when it comes to reporting femicide, the chance for a non-reported case to slip through the system is heightened. The development of compulsory protocols in regards to femicide cases would allow for: a) identification of gaps in institutional protection (if the case was reported before the murder); b) contribute to the prevention of femicide in the future c); the documentation of victim-perpetrator relationships and information regarding history of violence or threats of violence in those relationships to allow for proper evidence to be used in court (ACUNS, 2017).

2. *Creation of specialized units within the police and legal system*

Some countries have established special units with specialized expertise within the police to deal with: domestic violence (Bosnia and Herzegovina); hate crime (Canada); violence and victim protection (Italy); and violence against women and children (Japan and the State of Palestine) (UNODC, 2018). Specialized units allow for cases of femicide to be handled by professionals who are able to look for and investigate certain characteristics of the crime that can lead to persecution (ACUNS, 2017).

3. *Creation of National-level data, national registries, or dedicated sections on femicide is needed in existing homicide databases.*

The creation of these national level registries would allow for more concise data from a range of sources such as police, mortuaries, courts, medical examiners, and other services in a position to identify cases of femicide and the circumstances surrounding them to be collated in one place. Not only will allow for researchers to have access to more data, but also allow them to further determine the current gap in data collection and thus work to improve these records with each investigation.

For many, femicide is an uncomfortable truth, a smudge in a country's pride and culture. However, crucially it is the constant reality for many women and girls in today's society. The senseless deaths are evidence of a broken system, a system which has broken its promise to protect women and give them an equal chance. As researchers and activists, we owe it to not only those women who came before us in the fight but to the future generation. While generally, the definition remains relatively 'stable' worldwide, femicide and feminicide take on a variety of manifestations and patterns depending on the places where they are perpetrated (GARCÍA-DEL MORAL, 2011; GARCÍA-DEL MORAL, 2018).

Femicide and Feminicide in A Canadian Context

The number of historical perpetrations of femicide and feminicide that have taken place on Canadian soil is concerning. Some of the most prevalent examples have included:

- The 1989 mass femicide at the École Polytechnique where a lone white male murdered 14 women (injuring a further 10 women and 4 men) with misogynistic and anti-feminist intent
- The 2018 'Toronto Van Attack' where a self-proclaimed "involuntary celibate" or "incel" killed 8 women (injuring 16 other people)
- The 2018 'Danforth shootings" in Toronto where another so-called "incel" attempted a mass femicide which resulted in the deaths of a woman and female child
- The 2020 mass shooting at Portapique, Nova Scotia where a sole white male impersonating a police officer (in uniform and vehicle) murdered 13 women and 9 men, with misogynistic motives

This list is by no means exhaustive or representative of all femicides and feminicides which have been perpetrated in Canada. Attempting to do so would exceed the space allotted to this segment and would still fail to document the multitude of cases which remain unknown and/or unreported to the public. However, one of the most drastic and devastating cases of under reported/documented femicides and feminicides in the nation is the ongoing murders and disappearances of Canadian Indigenous women and girls (CFOJA, 2020; DAWSON, 2021; GARCÍA-DEL MORAL, 2018; TAYLOR, 2021). It has been estimated by the Native Women's Association of Canada (NWAC) that 662 Indigenous women were murdered or went missing between 1960 and 2013 (GARCÍA-DEL MORAL, 2018).

Furthermore, research findings have shown that in 2020, 1 in 5 women who were murdered in Canada were Indigenous (Martens, 2021). What makes this increasingly concerning is that there still exists a deep lack of precision and accuracy in Canada's statistical systems for reporting the actual number of missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls (GARCÍA-DEL MORAL, 2018). It is precisely this ongoing atrocity which has given rise to critical dialogue on the usage of the terms 'femicide' and 'feminicide' (GARCÍA-DEL MORAL, 2018; CFOJA, 2020).

According to Paulina García-Del Moral, a professor of Sociology and Anthropology at the University of Guelph, the word 'femicide' fails to accurately and adequately describe the intersectional issues that exist at the core of the Canadian 'missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls crisis (GARCÍA-DEL MORAL, 2018). Her position emerges from a critique of the "radical feminist" conceptualization of the phenomenon as being solely a result of systematic oppression in the form of patriarchalism and misogyny. Informed by Kimberle Crenshaw's theories on "intersectionality" and the work of Indigenous feminist activists, García Del-Moral acknowledges the role of other interlocking forms of oppression in perpetuating the problem. For indigenous women, these intersections include gender, race, and colonialism.

Additionally, García-Del Moral posits that this oversight could very well be a result of "colonial thinking" itself and the tendency to "[structure]… perceptual-cognitive experience [through] categorical hegemony". As a result of this erasure, the true complexity behind the crisis remains unaddressed, and the interconnected machinery behind femicide and feminicide is divided into supposedly exclusive categories such as "racist femicide", "stranger femicide", "homophobic femicide", "prostituted femicide", and so forth.

In order to counteract this, García-Del Moral calls upon the term "feminicide"; originally coined as "feminicidio" by feminist scholars

Marcela Lagarde and Julia Monárrez when analyzing the "murders of hundreds of women and the impunity of their killers" in a city named Ciudad Juarez in Chihuahua, Mexico. They posit that the usage of "feminicide", over "femicide", has the potential to promote a "decolonial intersectional" reconceptualization of the concept whereby "gender [is] a necessary but not definitive analytical category". This figuratively creates room for the consideration of interlocking forms of oppression as a causal factor in feminicide (GARCÍA-DEL MORAL, 2018).

Femicide and feminicide, in the Canadian context, can vary intra-nationally depending on a multitude of factors such as geographical region and demographics. According to an analysis of the social distribution of femicide and feminicide in Canada between the years 1921 to 1988, "twice as many…femicides occurred in Toronto" than in Vancouver, thereby revealing variations in the perpetration of femicide and feminicide between urban and rural settings (GARTNER; MCCARTHY, 1991). Furthermore, in Toronto "the majority of victims were killed by their intimate partner" in their home, "whereas in Vancouver, the victims were killed by less intimate acquaintances, strangers, or unidentified assailants". Thus, the presence of femicides and feminicides in Canada is in no way homogenous on a national scale.

In addition, there are other demographic factors (outside of Indigenous background, as previously mentioned) associated with higher vulnerability to victimhood of femicide and feminicide; these include identifying as a trans woman and being a senior/older woman (65+). Between the years 2016 and 2020, there were two reported killings of transgender women; these "transphobic homicides" are viewed as a form of 'femicide' in trans-feminist lenses (CFOJA, 2020). Furthermore, currently one third of the victims of femicide and feminicide in Canada can be categorized as "older women", who experience violence at the intersections of ageism and gender fueled by misogyny (Dawson, 2021). As femicide

is undoubtedly context dependent, the sheer complexity of the issue in Canada is unveiled.

It is also crucial to note that the responses of the Canadian judicial system to the killing of women has seriously impacted the ways in which femicide and feminicide are conceptualized and punished in the nation (DAWSON, 2016). Dawson argues that the presence of various patriarchal biases and heuristics among court actors, such as "chivalry/paternalism", and the "female victim effect" result in "crimes involving female victims being punished more harshly than crimes with male victims". However, this imbalance merely serves to perpetuate the disempowerment and objectification of women, a factor in driving perpetrators to commit femicide and feminicide (ibid: page). This is further supported by the fact that in Canada, so-called "stranger femicide is treated as a more serious crime… compared to intimate and familial femicide", thereby reflecting the notion that "women killed by male partners are still seen as property and, as such, these femicides are not treated seriously as [others]" in the legal system (DAWSON, 2016). This dangerous alteration to the workings of the judicial system is a result of the very societal forces, cognitions and behaviours that contribute to the perpetration of femicide and feminicide. Nevertheless, the Canadian legal system is not the only organizational body that contributes to the problem at hand. These concerning contributors to femicide and feminicide have been posited to be endemic to the very systems that are utilized to report their incidences, which segues into the following section.

Strategies for Reporting On Femicides and Feminicides In Canada

The most common way in which femicides and feminicides are reported in Canada is through mainstream news articles and specials produced by the likes of City TV News (CTV) and the Canadian Broadcasting Centre (CBC). A simple search of relevant online news

articles from the year 2021 reveals a variety of pieces written on the topic which elaborate on various statistical findings (i.e. "1 in 5 women killed in Canada in 2020 were Indigenous", or "one woman or girl is killed every 2.5 days in Canada") and concerning trends (i.e. "violent deaths of women in Canada increased in 2020", or "More women and girls were killed during the pandemic - mostly by men") (CBC, 2021; MARTENS, 2021; MILLER, 2021; TAYLOR, 2021). While these texts shed light on the issue of femicide and feminicide for the Canadian public, the "representation" of the individuals who have died at the hands of perpetrators of femicide and feminicide (especially Indigenous women and girls), is liable to cause violence in and of itself, hence putting vulnerable women at even greater risk (GARCÍA-DEL MORAL, 2011).

Furthermore, García-Del Moral states that "power is at the core of the construction of what is newsworthy and, when it comes to the representation of violence against women, newsworthiness is invariably linked to the discursive production of "worthy" and "unworthy" victims". In saying this, violence must be recognized as violence in order to be taken seriously (JIWANI, 2006). The continuous reproduction of imagery representing the "ideal victim" subsequently contributes the loss of creditability for women who do not meet the societal standard of worthiness. This normative referent for women often appears as a middle-class, white, heterosexual, cisgender and able-bodied. Deviation from this norm often leaves victims susceptible to stigmatizations that work to "justify" the perpetrators actions.

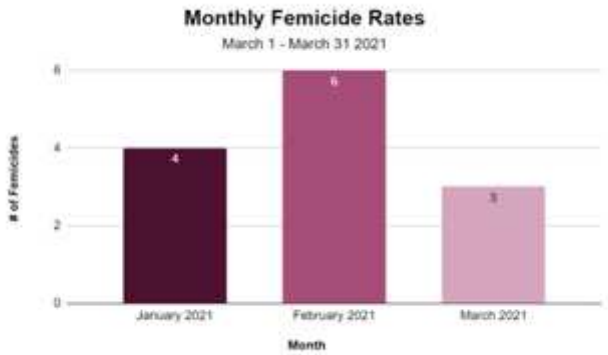
One of the most clear examples of the way this violence has been carried out involves the news coverage of the 'Robert Pickton' murders, where sources sensationalized the fact that Pickton may have fed his victim's bodies to pigs; thereby further "objectifying" the Indigenous women who died by his heinous actions through destructive representation (ibid). While this problematic strategy for reporting on femicides and feminicides is liable to

cause further harm, it also appears to be one of the largest sources of data utilized by organizations attempting to bring light to this issue.

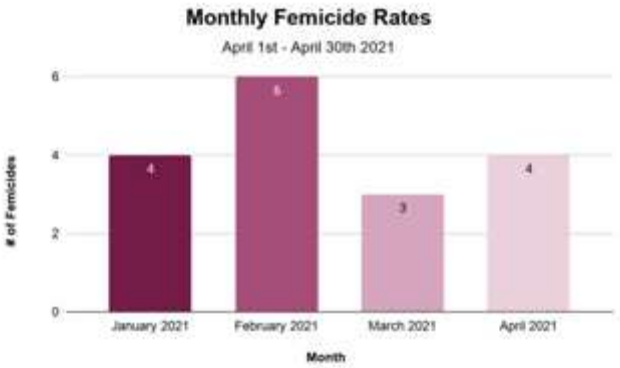
As there is "no official national data on femicide in Canada", the responsibility of reporting analyzing trends falls into the figurative hands of small organizations such as the Ontario Association of Interval & Transition Houses (OAITH) and the Canadian Femicide Observatory for Justice and Accountability (CFOJA) (APPIA, 2021; DAWSON, 2016; MILLER, 2021). Lauren Hancock, thepolicy and research coordinator for OAITH, is responsible for the production of a variety of reports pertaining to rates of "femicide in Ontario" from January 2020 to as recent as May 2021; all of which "[rely] on media reporting" and include coverage on collateral victims (i.e. children of victims) and "gender diverse individuals who are killed by men" (APPIA, 2021; HANCOCK, 2021). The reports produced by Hancock through OAITH have revealed:

- An observable increase in femicides when comparing the January to March periods of both years 2020 and 2021; with 7 occurring in the 2020 period, and 10 in the 2021 period (HANCOCK, 2021a)

- "A total of three confirmed femicide cases occurred between" March 1 and March 31 of 2021 (HANCOCK, 2021b)



- "A total of four confirmed femicide cases occurred between" April 1 and April 30 of 2021 (HANCOCK, 2021c)



- "A total of three confirmed femicide cases occurred between" May 1 and May 31 of 2021; refer to the second last row of the chart (HANCOCK, 2021d)

2019-2020	# of Femicides	2020-2021	# of Femicides	Change
Dec 2019	6	Dec 2020	5	(-) Decrease
Jan 2020	3	Jan 2021	4	(+) Increase
Feb 2020	4	Feb 2021	7	(+) Increase
Mar 2020	3	Mar 2021	4	(+) Increase
Apr 2020	2	Apr 2021	4	(+) Increase
May 2020	1	May 2021	3	(+) Increase
Total:	**19**	**Total:**	**27**	**(+) Increase**

This data reveals an alarming increase in perpetrated femicide and feminicide during the COVID-19 pandemic. Indeed, the public health restrictions (i.e. stay at home orders) have heightened the risk of violence against women (MILLER, 2021). This strengthens the argument that femicide and feminicide are a pandemic of their own, which has existed long before these unprecedented times and continues to rise in severity (CBC, 2021). Starting from May of 2021, OAITH, in alliance with Building a Bigger Wave (BBW), initiated a provincial initiative (a monthly alarm) to increase awareness of every incident of femicide and feminicide in Ontario. As of June 2021, a campaign to name the initiative was held.

Another immense effort to bring attention to femicide and feminicide in Canada takes on the form of the "#CallItFemicide: Understanding sex/gender-related killings of women and girls in Canada, 2020" report released by the Canadian Femicide Observatory for Justice and Accountability (CFOJA) (CFOJA, 2020). This landmark text, produced by the "sole Canadian initiative responding to the United Nations call

to establish femicide watches/observatories to more comprehensively and accurately document sex/gender-related killings of women and girls", takes on the growing challenge of collecting/reporting on the often inaccessible and hidden data pertaining to femicide in the nation\. One of the most concerning pieces of information released by the document is a statistical estimate that 160 women were killed by violence in Canada, in 2020 alone. The estimation of such numbers arise from the inability and failure of certain data collection/report systems such as "Statistics Canada" to differentiate between homicides and femicides/feminicides. The report elucidates "patterns in women & girls killed by violence in Canada", compares the "killing of female & male victims in Canada", outlines "sex/gender-related motives or indicators (SGRMIs) for feticide", touches on "current and emerging research priorities", reveals "data gaps & priorities" on the subject, and provides a memorial list of the Canadian "Women and Girls Killed by Violence in 2020". In addition to its power as a document and overall endeavour, this particular text has been cited by a number of news outlets as a primary source of data when reporting on femicide and feminicide in Canada (APPIA, 2021; MARTENS, 2021; MILLER, 2021; TAYLOR, 2021). However, despite the efforts of the CFOJA and OAITH (and other unlisted organizations), Canada (as a nation) has yet to adequately analyze, address and take measures to prevent the perpetration of femicide and feminicide within its own borders.

Conclusion

Femicide and feminicide in Canada has been, currently remains, and is projected to be an issue of deep concern. Its original radical feminist conceptualization as a dangerous trend emerging from patriarchal and misogynistic forms of thought among male perpetrators is now expanding and revealing itself to be a product of systematic and vastly interlocking forms of oppression (i.e. racism, colonialism, cis-hetero-sexism, etc); all of which are far from being mutually exclusive of each other (GARCÍA-DEL MORAL, 2018). The nation's current strategies for data collection, including annual/monthly reports and news articles, are insufficient for

a strong campaign to be established against the perpetration of femicide and feminicide. This is made especially evident by the observable dearth in research literature in a Canadian context. More efforts are required on micro (our individual selves), meso (communities) and macro (societal/ organizational) systemic levels to truly begin working towards the elimination of this malevolent phenomenon which is endemic to Canada. Based on the data that continues to unfold in the midst of the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, the perpetration of femicide and feminicide in this nation will only increase in incidence if the necessary actions fail to be taken by us all.

Recommendations

A non-exhaustive list of recommendations emerges from the resources cited in this segment on femicide and feminicide in the Canadian context. These include:

- To shift the dialogue on what Canadian men and boys can do to be accountable and responsible for others and themselves in the perpetuation of violence against women and gender-diverse individuals; this includes educational outreach and encouragement to seek mental health help (CBC, 2021)
- To further the investment of funds on the part of the federal and provincial governments into "programs led by violence-against-women organizations" which remain to be "stretched thin" (MILLER, 2021)
- To ignite greater discussion in Canadian society on the need for more prevention and punishment against femicide and feminicide (DAWSON, 2016)
- To add to the research literature which reveals and pertains to "[risks and protective] factors at community and societal levels" of femicide and feminicide, whilst increasing resources/

services that protect and empower women (DAWSON, 2021; GARTNER; MCCARTHY, 1991).

- To expand the discourse on the intersectional nuances of this issue and refining data collection and analysis methods, particularly in relation to Indigenous women (APPIA, 2021; GARCÍA DEL-MORAL, 2018).

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