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„Femicide – Killing Women Is Political.
A Theoretically Informed, Structural Analysis of
Femicide Trends in High-Income Countries. “

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Abstract

Femicide is a marginalised issue when it appears, then in a highly scandalised form. Femicides, however, present a significant threat for women and those close to them, and policy responses seem to fail at their prevention. Current research on femicide does not investigate structural causes for the relative stability of femicides and presents significant limitations in comparability. This thesis aims at filling this gap, analysing gender-disaggregated homicide victimisation data, provided by the UNODC of several high-income countries. In these high female homicide countries (HFHC), the female homicide victimisation rate often exceeds the male victimisation rate, as their average female homicide rate is around 40% of all homicides, diverging significantly from the worldwide average which lies at 20% of female victimisation. This thesis investigates the structural difference in male and female homicide victimisation in HFHC. Through a qualitative literature review informed by quantitative data, significant gaps in femicide studies are discussed, before analysing HFHC homicide data. In a theoretically informed analysis, the structural differences in male and female homicide victimisation are presented, stressing the importance of gender-saturated data collection and improved comparability. The thesis concludes that a structurally informed, interdisciplinary approach is needed to grasp the complexity of femicides. With a multipolar understanding of power, complex occurrences of violence can be accounted for and alleviate the invisibility of gender non-conforming individuals, as well as male victims.

Abstract Deutsch

Femizid ist eine marginalisierte Thematik, die erst kürzlich durch besonders gehäufte Gewalttaten mehr Aufmerksamkeit bekommt. Jedoch ist Femizid ein substanzielles Problem für Frauen und ihr enges Umfeld. Die aktuelle Forschung beschäftigt sich kaum mit der stabilen Femizidzahl und die Vergleichbarkeit zwischen Ländern und von Daten allgemein ist nicht gegeben. Diese Arbeit will die Forschungslücke schließen indem sie Mordstatistiken einiger Länder, hier HFHC (high female homicide countries), analysiert. Die Besonderheit dieser Länder ist ihre hohe Frauenmordrate, welche oft die männliche Mordrate übersteigt. Diese HFH Länder weisen eine durchschnittliche Frauenmordrate von 40% aller Morde auf, wobei der weltweite Durchschnitt nur bei 20% liegt. Hier werden die strukturelle Differenz zwischen Viktimisierung von Männern und Frauen aufgezeigt und die Wichtigkeit von Gender-sensibler Datenerhebung und erhöhter Vergleichbarkeit internationaler Statistiken hervorgehoben. Durch ein multipolares Verständnis von Macht werden komplexe Phänomene von Gewalt besser analysiert, sowie der Unsichtbarmachung Gender-nicht-konformer Identitäten und männlicher Opfer entgegengewirkt. Ein strukturell informierter, interdisziplinärer Ansatz wird angedacht, mithilfe dessen das Phänomen Femizid besser beschrieben und somit wirkungsvolle präventive Maßnahmen ergriffen werden können.

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Abbreviations & Glossary

CCPCJ	The Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice
CEDAW	Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women
DV	Domestic Violence
EIGE	European Institute for Gender Equality
EUROSTAT	Statistical Office of the European Union
FGM	Female Genital Mutilation
GBV	Gender Based Violence
GII	Gender Inequality Index
GSNI	Gender Social Norms Index
HDI	Human Development Index
HFHC	High Female Homicide Countries
HIC	High Income Countries
ICCS	UNODC International Classification of Crimes for Statistical Purposes
IPF	Intimate Partner Femicide
IPFMV	Intimate Partner and/or Familial Violence
IPH	Intimate Partner Homicide
IPV	Intimate Partner Violence
LGBTQ	Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans and Queer
UN	United Nations
UNICEF	United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund
UNHCR	United Nations Human Rights Council
UNODC	United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime
VAW	Violence Against Women
WHO	World Health Organisation

1 Introduction

In November 2012, the Vienna Declaration on Femicide has been signed by the Academic Council on United Nations System (ACUNS), a big step in making femicide visible on a global level (Academic Council on United Nations System 2013). Still, the gender-specific killing of women and girls remains a worldwide problem, with victimisation rates on the rise. The global number of homicides has dramatically decreased since the 13th century.¹ The report on homicide rightfully states, “*lessons from history can help to frame strategies for reducing homicide.*” (UNODC 2019d, 27).

On a worldwide level, the homicide victimisation rate for men lies at 80%, while the female victimisation rate is only 20% of total homicides globally (UNODC 2019d). This ratio of 80:20 has been taken as “normality”. However, the ratio of homicide victimisation per gender seems to change, especially in high-income countries with a generally low homicide rate per 100.000 inhabitants. What is causing this change, and how can it be explained?

Even though the overall number of women killed has decreased until the 1990s, together with the total homicide rate, there has been a relative stability in intimate partner (IP) killings of women in the last 25 years (UNODC 2013, 49, UNODC 2019d). In general, the rate of women killed has not decreased in the same way the male murder rate has. The murder rate of women seems to follow a different structural pattern than the murder rate of men, as can be seen at the example of the United States of America. In the United States, according to statistics provided by the Federal Bureau of Investigations, “*the percentage of males killed by an intimate fell from 10.4% in 1980 to 4.9% in 2008, a 53% drop. For females, the percentage killed by an intimate increased 5% across the same period*” (Cooper and Smith 2011, 18).

A more recent example are homicide statistics collected during the Covid-19 lockdown between March and May 2020 in Italy. Although the homicide number in March this year saw a 71% drop compared to the numbers of March 2019, looking at the gender disaggregated data shows a different picture. In March 2019, female victims accounted for 32% of all homicide victims in Italy, however, in March 2020 they accounted for 64% of all homicide victims recorded in that month.² Looking at these numbers, it becomes clear that while the overall homicide rate sank by

¹ Our World in Data: <https://ourworldindata.org/grapher/homicides-per-100000-people-per-year?country=IND+ITA+CHE+DEU+AUT+JPN+USA> (retrieved 10.02.2020) Although there are statistical outliers like the United States of America and some Latin American countries, the global trend still presents a general decline.

² «Le donne, non potendo uscire, hanno subito senza più chiedere aiuto» (12.05.2020) Il Post, online: <https://www.ilpost.it/2020/05/12/violenza-donne-coronavirus/> (retrieved August 2020)

71%, the female homicide victimisation rate only sank by 42% - a significant difference. Moreover, the femicide number, which is recorded by civil society organisations across Italy, has remained constant, with 26 femicide victims from March to May 2019, and 25 in the same time period in 2020.

One of my research questions is – why has the general decrease of murder rates not significantly affected the murder rates of women in high-income countries? Is the rate of intimate partner femicides (IPF) worldwide on the rise? I approach the topic in an unconventional way. By focusing on countries where the percentage of women killed is equal or higher than the percentage of men killed. I will include countries where the number of women killed is higher than 45% of all murders committed in the country (high female homicide countries, HFHC); due to the fact that these countries defy the worldwide statistical trend of a 80:20 - male:female homicide victimisation. By analysing the statistic “outliers”, I explore the underlying structures that lead to the killing of women. I will compare the rate of intimate partner femicides of the total number of women killed of the countries analysed and try to establish a structural framework in an attempt to uncover structural similarities between the countries in question.

Questions that I will answer include: Do some of the countries where the murder rate of women is higher than 45 or even 50% have other features in common? What percentage of murders are intimate partner femicides? I will look at the general homicide rate, the intimate partner femicide rate as well as at the Human Development Index (HDI) and the Gender Inequality Index (GII). Are there patterns to detect? One hypothesis is that the policies affecting murder rates are inherently gendered, therefore only affect the male homicide rate, but do neither prevent nor detect the structural difference in the female homicide rate.

Most publications on femicide I reviewed, were published in a criminological or psychological/psychiatric context. They are dealing with the medical implications, with individual perpetrator pathologies and other factors influencing intimate partner femicides like substance abuse and previous records of violence. While these studies are essential and relevant in a national criminal justice and legal context, especially to train executive and medical workers in risk factors proceeding femicides; these studies are less relevant in analysing the structural causes for intimate partner killings. A hypothesis is that there is a structural cause for the relative stability (or even increase) of intimate partner femicides which seems to be stable across the countries investigated here. Without neglecting the importance of individual case studies, which are essential in

developing country specific prevention strategies – the aim of this thesis is to analyse the causes for this relatively stable phenomenon and to point at the blind spot of femicides. In the previous literature research, I have found a lack of structural analysis of intimate partner femicide, which is alarming considering the rise in intimate partner femicide numbers in many countries. It points at a blind spot of understanding and preventing intimate partner femicides in many judiciaries. Countries like Austria, where the number of female homicide victims has doubled since 2013, are examples of seemingly ineffective or lacking policies.³

Moreover, the academic research and discussion of femicides appears to be mostly addressing India, Latin American countries, which have the highest homicide rates in general (García-Del Moral, 2016); and shows otherwise an overrepresentation of the United States of America (S. G. Smith, Fowler, and Niolon 2014; Cooper and Smith 2011; Bouzerdan and Whitten-Woodring 2018; Fulu et al. 2013) and Sweden (Caman et al. 2017), likely due to their public census data. Country studies are mostly significant to the national judiciary system and national prevention plans. My attempt in this thesis is to apply a wider lens and therefore see the underlying process in the failing of successfully combatting femicides.

In its 2019 global homicide report, the UNODC states,

“The death of those killed by intimate partners is not usually the result of a random or spontaneous act, but rather the culmination of gender-related violence that is rooted in historically unequal power relations between men and women. This gender-based violence is overwhelmingly underreported.” (UNODC 2019d, 21).

There is the slow realisation on an international level, that killings of women are fundamentally gendered and structurally different than killings of men. In this thesis I aim to define femicide, informed by scholars from the global south, human rights and feminist approaches and show the necessity of making the killing of women visible.

“The concept of ‘femicide’ takes ‘isolated incidents’ and looks at them as a collective phenomenon, in doing so allows us to see men’s fatal violence against women, not as a matter of individual pathology, but as a social problem, and one that extends beyond the most commonly identified form, intimate partner homicide.” (K. I. Smith 2018, 160).

³ Autonome Österreichische Frauenhäuser, online: <https://www.aoef.at/index.php/zahlen-und-daten> (retrieved 10.08.2020)

Next to making femicides visible, this thesis aims to shine a light on the lacking visibility of intimate partner violence victimisation of trans and non-binary persons, and the lack of representation in national as well as international statistics. Making use of a multipolar understanding of power and violence can help in acknowledging the victimisation of women, men and those outside/between the binary as well; helping in alleviating the stigmatisation and silencing of male or Gender-nonconforming victims. A multipolar understanding of power also makes the investigation of same sex couple violence possible and stresses the importance of nuance.

The UNODC has recognised as many researchers have postulated (R. P. Dobash and Dobash 2015; Walby et al. 2017) that intimate partner femicides are structurally different to other forms of homicide, also but not exclusively due to the perpetrator profile.

“Men who kill their intimate partners have a markedly different profile to men who kill outside relationships, according to studies from several European countries. They tend to have better jobs and enjoy a higher standard of living than other perpetrators, and often have no criminal background.” (UNODC 2019d, 24).

In my thesis I shine a light on the structural differences between the killing of men and women, with a special focus on intimate partner femicide. I attempt to formulate a number of general structural features present in all the countries I will be analysing (see Table III or subsection 4.1.1. List of countries with female victimisation over 45%).⁴

Before moving on, a brief outline of the thesis is presented in the following paragraphs. After introducing the topic and the research outline in the present chapter, the origin of the term femicide is discussed as well as the terms and definitions used in this thesis, in chapter two (2. Femicide). Who is understood as “woman” is addressed, as well as the Latin American influence on the theory and concept of femicide. Before moving on to chapter three, the structural differences in male and female homicide victimisation are addressed.

In chapter three (3. State of the Art) the current debate on femicide is presented, bringing light to the discourses in different disciplines like criminology and sociology. Chapter four (4. Methodology & Theory) introduces the data and methods used in this analysis, before moving onto a presentation of the hypotheses of this work. Then, an in-depth discussion of the theoretical

⁴ The countries I will be analysing will include the countries shown in Table III. Their characteristic is that the murder rate of women in these countries is higher than 45%. Moreover, I will omit the countries where the total number of homicides per year is lower than 10 as they do not have statistical significance.

framework is presented, discussing first the contribution to the analysis of violence by Galtung, before moving on to a feminist expansion of Foucault's theory of power by Taylor.

In chapter five (5. Counting dead women), the data I am working with in this thesis is presented in a thorough discussion, while pointing out the problems with lack of comparability and availability of data. The chapter includes a discussion of structural features like historical trends and the influence of age distribution on homicide victimisation, before defining the common features present in the data on high female homicide countries (HFHC) at the heart of the analysis of this thesis. Structural particularities are discussed before moving on to chapter six (6. Towards a structural analysis of femicide), an extensive literature review of criminological, sociological and normative contributions to femicide research. The different approaches are presented and discussed while presenting their main findings. In the last step, I aim at defining a new theoretical approach, which does the structural factors influencing femicides justice.

Chapter seven (7. Analysis) discusses the results of the overall analysis are discussed, showing the structural particularities of high female homicide countries, providing a detailed view of the outcomes.

The conclusion offers a summary of the findings of this thesis, as well as presenting final remarks in chapter eight (8. Conclusion). Chapter nine (9. Future research) concludes this thesis, outlining ideas and directions of future research. A list of figures can be found at the beginning of this work, as well as a list of abbreviations and a glossary for reference (List of Figures, Abbreviations & Glossary).

2 Femicide

The first researcher to make use of the term femicide in an international context was Diana E.H. Russell at the International Tribunal on Crimes against Women, which she organised alongside Nicole Van den Ven, in Brussels 1976.⁵ Since then the term has gained international visibility, especially since the Vienna Declaration on Femicide was signed in 2012 (Academic Council on United Nations System 2013; Dawson, Carrigan, and Hill 2019, 1). Since then there has been slow but continuous progress in placing the term in the glossary of international organisations and nation-states. Today there are definitions available by the European Parliament, the EIGE Gender equality glossary, the Council of Europe, the Vienna Declaration, the WHO, the Special Rapporteur on violence against women (VAW), the UN High Commissioner of Human Rights, the United Nations, ICCS and others (EIGE 2017a).

There exist a variety of different definitions of the term *femicide*.⁶ Russell's popularised and then updated (in 2001) definition from 1976 and reads, "*the killing of one or more females by one or more males because they are female*".⁷ Definitions used by different organisations and national states range from the minimal definition: female homicide victims; to very specific definitions e.g. the intentional killing of women due to intimate partner violence (IPV) or another specific form of use of force. E.g. Oxford Bibliographies offers a definition that takes unequal power relations into account, defining femicide as "*killings motivated by hatred and unequal power relations between men and women*" (Dawson, Carrigan, and Hill 2019, 2). In a 2012 report, Rashida Manjoo, the UN Special Rapporteur on violence against women, described "gender-related killings of women" as,

"rather than a new form of violence, gender-related killings are the extreme manifestation of existing forms of violence against women. Such killings are not isolated incidents that arise suddenly and unexpectedly but represent the ultimate act of violence which is experienced in a continuum of violence. Women subjected to continuous violence and living under conditions of gender-based discrimination and threat are always on death row, always in fear of execution." (Human Rights Council 2012, 4–5).

⁵ International Tribunal on Crimes against Women (1976 : Brussels, Belgium), online: https://archive.org/details/crimesagainstwom00inte_0 (retrieved 05.05.2020)

⁶ The terms *femicide*, *feminicidio*, *femicido* are widely synonymous although stemming from different national/regional contexts and histories. Henceforth, as a measure to increase readability and refer to the context of high-income countries I am discussing, I will be using *femicide* exclusively. For a more detailed description of the term *feminicidio* and a further explanation see section 2.3.

⁷ Information on gender-related killing of women and girls provided by civil society organizations and academia, online: <https://www.unodc.org/documents/justice-and-prison-reform/UNODC-CCPCJ-EG.8.2014.CRP.2.pdf> (retrieved 05.05.2020)

The report further states four different spheres where violence can occur, i.e. violence in the family; violence in the community; violence that is perpetrated or condoned by the State; and violence that occurs in the transnational sphere. It distinguishes between active or direct and passive or indirect killings.

„The direct category includes: killings as a result of intimate-partner violence; sorcery/witchcraft-related killings; honour-related killings; armed conflict-related killings; dowry-related killings; gender identity- and sexual orientation-related killings; and ethnic- and indigenous identity-related killings.

The indirect category includes: deaths due to poorly conducted or clandestine abortions; maternal mortality; deaths from harmful practices; deaths linked to human trafficking, drug dealing, organized crime and gang-related activities; the death of girls or women from simple neglect, through starvation or ill-treatment; and deliberate acts or omissions by the State.“ (Human Rights Council 2012, 5).

The multiplicity of definitions ranging from minimal definitions to describing specific crimes is one of the problems at the heart of finding an international or even regional standard. Many if not all of the above-mentioned causes of death can apply to men as well as women. What makes them useful in defining femicide is the uncovering of the gender-specific interaction of structural and personal violence that increases the danger of women to suffer these types of violence at the hands of their intimate partners, family members or even the state. The UNHCR Special Rapporteur includes structural as well as personal violence in her 2012 report.

The World Health Organisation's (WHO) definition of femicide reads,

“Femicide is generally understood to involve intentional murder of women because they are women, but broader definitions include any killings of women or girls.” (WHO 2012, 1).

The WHO's definition includes a broader spectrum, it references the use of femicide in the early 1970s, when the feminist movement called for a gender-specific term of female homicide (Human Rights Council 2012, 6). In this context, femicide describes all killings committed against women and girls.

The UNODC's International classification of crimes for statistical purposes (ICCS) defines femicide as, *“the intentional killing of a woman for misogynous or gender-based reasons.”* but does not have a specific tag for femicide. It rather includes femicides in the statistical tags of intentional and attempted intentional homicide (UNODC CCPCJ 2014; EIGE 2017a, 19).

Definitions determine how statistics are recorded and communicated. In the European Union, the European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE) published the first document calling member

states for a uniform definition and collection of data on gender-related crimes i.e. rape, IPV and femicide, only in 2017.

As I will expand on in chapter six of this thesis, there are different approaches to femicide research (Corradi et al. 2016). This becomes visible when comparing the different definitions of femicide. The WHO's definition is human rights-based, as well as the definition of the UNHCR. UNODC's definition leans more towards a feminist understanding of femicides. As of the publication of this thesis in 2020, there still exists no uniform way of data collection nor definition of femicide in the European Union (EIGE 2016, 2017b). There are statistical guidelines published by the United Nations Department for Economic and Social Affairs (UNDESA) namely "Guidelines on producing statistics on violence against women" and the WHO (WHO 2012; United Nations 2014). These guidelines, however, are mere recommendations that remain not implemented by the majority of nation-states.

Shalva Weil et al. published the first comprehensive volume on femicide in Europe in 2018 (Weil, Corradi, and Naudi 2018) and the first significant publication on a global femicide index was published only in January 2020 (Walklate et al. 2020). That indicates at the sparse structural research on the topic, the high regional or even national heterogeneity of data collection and the general research desiderate.

2.1 Definition of Femicide

As described in the previous section, there exist a variety of different definitions of *femicide*. Definitions of direct femicide commonly include one or more of the following factors (according to EIGE 2017, 6): Intentional killing, gender-based act and/or killing of women, killing of partner/spouse, death of women resulting from IPV, female genital mutilation (FGM)-related death, death related to unsafe abortion, honour killing, female foeticide, dowry-related deaths. Definitions used by different organisations and national states range from the minimal definition: female homicide victims; to very specific definitions e.g. the intentional killing of women due to IPV or another specific form of force or context. Russell's definition of, "*the killing of one or more females by one or more males because they are female*" (Dawson, Carrigan, and Hill 2019, 1) is helpful in a theoretic context, but places law enforcement agencies before significant hurdles. Determining if a female victim was intentionally killed because she is female or in a context of coercive control

might be impossible when there is a lack of witnesses, records or simply lacking cooperation by state agencies as well as the perpetrator.

Moreover, the gendering of the perpetrator leaves out a small but significant number of crimes, in which women are the perpetrators. Accounting for the structural difference in male and female homicide victims is nonetheless essential, as the data provided at this moment, is not sufficient to improve the protection from and prevention of femicides.

The theoretical impact and central contribution to the theoretical and definitional advancement of the concept of femicide by Latin American theorists and scholars have to be mentioned. Fregoso and Bejarano (2010) clearly state that their definition of *feminicidio* is informed by gender norms as a power dynamic and further broadens the understanding of femicide as a structural problem. In my thesis, I draw upon the knowledge and findings of scholars from the global South in deepening the understanding of femicide in the high-income countries I am investigating.

“(…) [W]e draw from a feminist analytical perspective that interrupts essentialist notions of female identity that equate gender and biological sex and looks instead to the gendered nature of practices and behaviors, along with the performance of gender norms. As feminist thinkers have long contended, gender is a socially constructed category in which the performance of gender norms (rather than a natural biological essence) is what gives meaning to categories of the “feminine” and “masculine”. Instead of a scenario in which gender and sex necessarily concur, the concept of femicide allows us to map the power dynamics and relations of gender, sexuality, race, and class underlying violence and, in so doing, shift the analytic focus to how gender norms, inequities, and power relationships increase women’s vulnerability to violence.” (Fregoso and Bejarano 2010, 3).

The concept of femicide therefore clearly contradicts essentialist understandings of gender, which try to equate biological sex and gender identity – including also gender-non-conforming and trans women in their definition. Although especially trans women have even further intersections of discrimination and violence to face, it is detrimental to work with definitions which are negating the existence of this form of violence against *all* women.

Here, I mainly distinguish between the intentional killing of men and women (male and female homicide victims) and the intentional killing in an intimate partner or familiar context (intimate partner or familial femicide/homicide). Taking hatred and unequal power relations into account is essential when analysing the structural factors influencing femicide rates. Without negating the agency of neither victim nor perpetrator in a homicide, structural factors cannot be ignored.

In this thesis, I want to focus on the structural differences in female and male homicides. The main structural difference is seen in the relation of victims and perpetrators, as the majority of female victims are killed in IPFM femicides. While the academic debate on the definition of femicide is still happening and likely to continue, I will use the following terms to describe the following phenomena in this thesis:

Femicide	Umbrella term describing gender related killing of women and girls, it refers to personal as well as structural violence that lead to the death of women and girls. Informed by the contribution of Latin American feminists, this definition includes the killing of women and girls based on a gender power structure by private or state actors; it is characterised by systemic violence rooted in social, political, economic and cultural inequalities.
Intimate Partner Femicide	The intentional killing of women and girls through former and current intimate partners, husbands, boyfriends and acquaintances. This definition is referring to the United Nations' definition. ⁸
Intimate Partner or Familial Femicide	The intentional killing of women and girls through former and current intimate partners, husbands, boyfriends, acquaintances, family members of any kind (including parents, cousins, uncles and aunts, siblings or children of the victim.)
Female Homicide	The intentional killing of a woman or girl. Represented in sex disaggregated national homicide statistics.

Figure I, Definitions Femicide⁹

The definitions used here are influenced by the reflections of Karen Boyle. She advocates for continuum thinking when working with feminist theories of gender violence (Boyle 2019).

„Continuum thinking has allowed us to make sense of experiences which had no name – or no name which women recognised – and to understand the ways in which gender violence is itself an expression of gender inequality.“ (Boyle 2019, 32)

⁸ “The killing of a woman by a man with whom she had a relationship or intimate connection: husband, ex-husband, life-partner, boyfriend, ex-boyfriend, lover, or person with whom she had a child. This includes the situation where a man murders a female friend or acquaintance that refuses to engage in an intimate relationship (emotional or sexual) with him.” (UN Latin American Model Protocol (femicide/feminicide) 2015, 15).

⁹ All tables, figures and graphs in this thesis are created by the author unless another author is referenced.

Boyle criticizes the attempt to name the diverse experiences of violence which are informed by gender too generally or broadly. She also denounces the inflated use of violence when it comes to hateful language; albeit it should be condemned, the hateful language will not have the same impact on a victim like a dangerous physical attack i.e. rape (Boyle 2019, 28).

“In particular, the too-frequent conflation of ‘violence against women’ and ‘gender-based violence’ performs a number of erasures which should be of concern to feminists. Simply naming gender does not mean that our analysis is gendered – indeed, gender-based violence can be a worryingly gender-neutral term which flattens important differences in terms of who is doing what to whom, in which contexts, to which effects and to whose overall benefit.”(Boyle 2019, 32)

Boyle further suggests,

“Women and men are differently positioned in relation to gender-based violence. Placing men in gender-based violence more often means making men visible as perpetrators. None of this is to deny that women can be perpetrators, or men victims. Rather, it is to highlight the conceptual limitations of the ways in which we currently frame gender-based violence, and argue that the inter-relationships between gender and violence are more multi-faceted than some models suggest.” (Boyle 2019, 31).

Informed by a multipolar understanding of power, violence can be experienced and perpetrated by a variety of individuals. Nevertheless, it has structural implications that have to be addressed and defined in a theoretical context. Acknowledging that inter-relationships between gender and violence are complex is essential to also combat invisibility of homosexual, gender-non-conforming and trans victims in the context of femicide.

2.2 When we say “women” who are we talking about?

The question of gender-disaggregated data extends further than which numbers are included in statistics. All national statistics are based on the birth-certificate or means of identification of the sex of the subject in question. The UN defines gender statistics as, “...statistics that adequately reflect differences and inequalities in the situation of women and men in all areas of life” (United Nations, 2006).¹⁰ A definition that excludes gender identities that exist outside the male/female binary. The UN Gender Statistics Manual furthermore states that,

¹⁰ United Nations Statistics Manual, online: <https://unstats.un.org/unsd/genderstatmanual/What-are-gender-stats.ashx> (retrieved 20.05.2020)

“The word “sex” refers to biological differences between women and men. Biological differences are fixed and unchangeable and do not vary across cultures or over time. “Gender”, meanwhile, refers to socially-constructed differences in the attributes and opportunities associated with being female or male and to social interactions and relationships between women and men.” (UN Gender Statistics Manual).

Recent research shows that more than one in every 1.000 babies is born with inconclusive sex traits (Aydin et al. 2019). This is a number not to be underestimated, given that in 2020 UNICEF estimates around 400.000 babies are born every day.¹¹ The global birth rate in 2019 was at around 140 million children – assuming that one in 1.500 to 1.3 in 1.000 children are born intersex, there were 93.333-182.000 children born with inconclusive sex traits worldwide in 2019 (Domurat Dreger 1998, 26; Aydin et al. 2019). The previously mentioned numbers state a fact that is not represented in national census data, nor official UN statistics. These numbers are big, while not yet including gender non-conforming identities, transgender, non-binary, and other diverse identities that do not identify or perform the gender role corresponding to the sex they were assigned at birth.

How then are intersex, transgender and gender non-conforming people represented in data. The answer is often “not at all”. Who then is included in the statistics cited in this paper? Humans biologically and medically determined to be women at birth. However, I argue alongside Butler that the

“category of women “ought not to be the foundation of feminist politics” (Butler 1999, 9).

Rather, feminists should focus on providing an account of how power functions and shapes our understandings of womanhood not only in the society at large but also within the feminist movement.” (Mari 2019).

Butler claims in her widely cited and until today controversial works that bodies do not exist outside cultural and social meanings, this is to say that also the physical reality of sex is socially constructed like gender is. The premise of Butler is not that physical bodies and biological realities do not exist, instead,

“she takes our understanding of this existence to be a product of social conditioning: social conditioning makes the existence of physical bodies intelligible to us by discursively constructing sexed bodies through certain constitutive acts.” (Mari 2019).

¹¹ United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, World Population Prospects 2019, online: <https://population.un.org/wpp/Graphs/900> (retrieved 20.05.2020)

“If the immutable character of sex is contested, perhaps this construct called ‘sex’ is as culturally constructed as gender; indeed, perhaps it was always already gender, with the consequence that the distinction between sex and gender turns out to be no distinction at all.” (Butler 1999, 10–11)

Mari provides a comprehensive description of Butler’s work:

“Sexed bodies are not empty matter on which gender is constructed and sex categories are not picked out on the basis of objective features of the world. Instead, our sexed bodies are themselves ‘discursively constructed’: they are the way they are, at least to a substantial extent, because of what is attributed to sexed bodies and how they are classified.”(Mari 2019)

The biological differences between male and female are, as shown earlier in this chapter, a continuum rather than binary, opposing poles. How women are discursively constructed informs to a large extent their societal stand and their agency.

In many publications on homicide, it is claimed that the majority of homicide victims worldwide are male. That claim does not hold for the high-income states portrayed here. The extent to which trans and non-binary women are included in national statistics cannot be investigated in this thesis but should be a vantage point for future research (see chapter nine).

This thesis is dealing with the category of women as it is constructed today – a complete analysis would extend this definition further. Gender as a concept should be used to dismantle binaries instead of manifesting them (Brownfield 2019, 1). However, drawing upon definitions of femicide informed by and drawn from scholars in the global South, femicide is understood as the *“murder of women and girls founded on a gender power structure”* (Fregoso and Bejarano 2010, 5). The definition by Fregoso and Bejarano cited in section 2.1 defines femicide as systemic violence rooted in structural inequalities, which do not equate gender and biological sex, but instead analyses the systemic nature of gendered practices and performance of gender norms (Fregoso and Bejarano 2010, 3). For a detailed description of how scholars from the Americas have informed the concept of femicide see the next section 2.3.

2.3 Femicide vs. Feminicidio – the context and influence of Latin American feminism

When discussing femicide, the contribution and development to the concept by Latin American theorists, activists and researchers cannot be understated. This section is to acknowledge the central position of Latin American women in the theoretical and political discourse on violence

against women and the definition of femicide. The authors of “Terrorizing Women in the Américas” explain in detail why they chose to use the word *feminicidio* or *feminicide* instead of femicide, as their goal was to address the specific structural conditions of femicide in the Americas. The definition of feminicide according to Lagarde y de los Ríos in the preface of “Terrorizing Women” is as follows:

“Feminicide is one of the extreme forms of gender violence; it is constituted by the whole set of violent misogynist acts against women that involve a violation of their human rights, represent an attack on their safety, and endanger their lives. It culminates in the murder of girls and women. Feminicide is able to occur because the authorities who are ommissive, negligent, or acting in collusion with the assailants perpetrate institutional violence against women by blocking their access to justice and thereby contributing to impunity.” (Fregoso et al. 2010, xxiii)

Fregoso et al. define feminicide as a form of violence against women which is not only attributed to the individual perpetrators but rather the structure that enables it i.e. state authorities. It is a definition including institutional including juridical and executive violence; considering a much wider array of misogynist acts than other definitions (see chapter two).

While the term femicide is still a concept in evolution and under construction, it is vital to note the centrality of work done by theorists and researchers in the global South. Fregoso et al. state,

“Our elaboration of feminicide is based on the knowledge and expertise of feminist and legal scholars, researchers, and activists working in the field of human rights and gender justice throughout Latin America. In preferring the concept of feminicide over femicide, we aim to register the shift in meanings as the concept travelled from its usage in the English language (North) to a Spanish-speaking (South) context. In other words, we are using feminicide to mark our discursive and material contributions and perspectives as transborder feminist thinkers from the global South (the Américas) in its redefinition. one that exceeds the merely derivative.” (Fregoso and Bejarano 2010, 4).

Fregoso and Bejarano are drawing on a critical transborder perspective and aim to increase the relevance of theories originating in the global South. Regarding feminicide, the central role of researchers, scholars, and activists from the South and especially the Americas cannot be understated. With their choice of terminology, they highlight the “local histories” creating new understandings and elaborating the concept. The hierarchies of knowledge, which are usually understood from North to South, are thereby reversed and the impact of scholars from the global South amplified (Fregoso and Bejarano 2010, 5). For a comprehensive historical review on the

formation and definition of the term feminicide in the Americas, see Fregoso and Bejarano (2010, 1–42).

In terms of definition, the local histories of the term feminicide add layers to the concept that can be helpful in other contexts. Here the South-North interaction of scholars comes to fruition.

“Building on the generic definition of *femicide* as the “murder of women and girls *because* they are female” (Russell, 2001), we define *feminicide* as the murders of women and girls grounded on a gender power structure. Second, feminicide is gender-based violence that is both public and private, implicating both the state (directly or indirectly) and individual perpetrators (private or state actors); it thus encompasses systematic, widespread, and everyday interpersonal violence. Third, feminicide is systemic violence rooted in social, political, economic, and cultural inequalities. In this sense, the focus of our analysis is not just on gender but also on the intersection of gender dynamics with the cruelties of racism and economic injustices in local as well as global contexts. Finally, our framing of the concept follows Lagarde’s critical human rights formulation of feminicide as a “crime against humanity”” (Fregoso and Bejarano 2010, 5).¹²

In this section, I wanted to give space to the scholars who have made the term feminicide the striking and still evolving concept of today. In citing their words instead of reformulating them, I am giving the space and credit to the scholars before me, who contributed to making feminicides visible in academia and on the international agenda. Their work brought global attention to the atrocities in the Ciudad Juárez and made feminicide a viable category in criminological and sociological research (Oliviera 2010; Fregoso 2010; Domínguez-Ruvalcaba and Ravelo Blancas 2010; Iturralde 2010; Simmons and Coplan 2010; García-Del Moral 2016).

In this thesis, while giving space and credit to the scholars who informed the definition and concept of *feminicidio*, I will henceforth use the term *femicide* as described in section 2.1, Figure I, Definitions Femicide, as the focus of this thesis are high-income countries where the female homicide victimization rate is higher than the male one, the historical and local realities of the Americas apply to a lesser extent. Therefore, I have decided to use the term *femicide*, which is further spread in the global North’s academic discourse and will contribute better in describing the phenomena, which are the focus of this thesis.

¹² original emphasis by the authors.

2.4 Why not all murders are the same.

Attempts at defining the structures of killing women.

Homicide is not equal to homicide. The multiplicity of factors that influence the killing of another human are complex and often not re-constructible. Homicide, nevertheless, is defined narrowly and takes the male victim as default. However, the way women are being killed differs significantly from the way men are killed. The majority of murder victims in absolute terms worldwide are men.

“Globally, 79 per cent of all homicide victims are male and the global average male homicide rate is at 9.7 per 100,000, almost four times the global average female rate (2.7 per 100,000).” (UNODC 2014, 13).

The UNODC attributes this mainly to organised crime, gang violence, and drug-related violence (UNODC 2013, 2019). Unlike most male homicide victims, the majority of female murder victims are killed by someone they know, either a (former) intimate partner or a family member. As the UNODC states in the 2013 Homicide Report,

“Unlike the rates of other forms of homicide, which can vary significantly from year to year, intimate partner/family-related homicide is, on average, remarkably stable at the global level, though more significant differences are visible at the regional level. In the 32 countries with available trend data, the average rate of intimate partner/family-related homicide remained constant from 2006 to 2011, whereas the total homicide rate in the same group of countries decreased by 15 per cent.” (UNODC 2013, 49).

The average rate of intimate partner/family-related homicide remains constant or is even on the rise when looking at more recent data. As the majority of victims of intimate partner/family-related homicide are women, this is indicating that the homicide rate of men and women is progressing differently.

Omitted in research regarding homicide thus far, are the growing numbers of countries defying the worldwide trend in the male/female homicide victimisation ratio. According to UNODC data, there are several industrialised, high-income countries, with a female victimisation rate consistently above 45%. This fact seems to be overlooked when studying the overall trend in homicides. The UN Deputy Secretary-General Amina Mohammed acknowledged the issue in September 2019, *“We are increasingly seeing a rise in femicide, and even in countries where the overall number of murders is decreasing, the proportion of women being killed is increasing.”*¹³ The 2012 report of the Special Rapporteur on VAW also mentions the structural differences between homicides and femicides,

¹³ DSG/SM/1349-WOM/2190: Amid Rising Femicide, Proportion of Women Killed Grows as Overall Murder Rates Fall, Deputy Secretary-General Tells Spotlight Initiative Event. online: <https://www.un.org/press/en/2019/dsgsm1349.doc.htm> (retrieved 20.05.2020)

„The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime studies also confirm that in many countries, intimate partner/family-related homicide is the major cause of female homicides, and that female homicide rates are much more likely to be driven by this type of violence than by the organized crime-related homicide typology that so affects men. As with all forms of intimate-partner violence, intimate-partner femicide is likely to be significantly underreported. Studies have shown that in some countries between 40 and 70 per cent of female murder victims are killed by an intimate partner. In many countries the home is the place where a woman is most likely to be murdered, whereas men are more likely to be murdered in the street.“ (Human Rights Council 2012, 8).

Next to the statistical differences, there are definitional distinctions, as described in section two. In the next chapters, I will first expand on state of the art, introduce the methodology and theoretical framework used and then go on to show the structural difference between femicides and homicides using official UNODC homicide data. I will then underly the statistical data with a theoretical framework, which aims at detecting and explaining the structural differences of homicide and femicide.

3 State of the Art

Until relatively recently, femicide research was oblivious of the growing number of high-income countries, which are defying the 80:20 male to female victimization ratio. As the worldwide proportion of killed men by far outweighs murders committed against women, female murder victims were mentioned and investigated as a minority. In global and absolute terms, this claim still holds true. However, looking at regional and socio-economic differences, the 80:20 pattern does not cover the predominant pattern of murders in high-income countries like several European countries, including Austria, Finland and countries like New Zealand and Japan. The UNODC firstly mentioned these developments in its yearly Global Homicide Study in 2019 (UNODC 2019c), but researchers pointed them out before. Jane Poore and Elaine Gunnison addressed the increased victimization of women in *The Encyclopaedia of Women and Crime* in 2019, with an article titled, “Female Victimization by Violent Crime”(Poore and Gunnison 2019). Another article by Posick and Felix in the same publication deals with the decline in homicide and violent crime in Northern and Western Europe, which benefits men more than women (Posick and Felix 2019).

The fact that most female homicide victims fall victim to either family members or intimate partners is often mentioned; however, there are few if any structural investigations on this topic. Structural analysis of the differences between male and female homicide victims is rare. The situation regarding femicide in Europe is under-researched, except a recent publication by Weil et al. (Weil, Corradi, and Naudi 2018). The authors attempted to establish “*an articulated and common theoretical and interdisciplinary framework about femicide*” while also “*establishing preliminary conditions for comparisons of European data on femicide, both qualitative and quantitative*”, informing prevention of femicide across Europe, as well as monitor femicide, connect stakeholders and publish their findings (Weil, Corradi, and Naudi 2018, 3).

In the most recent Global Homicide Study by the UNODC, there is a short while visible section on appearing structural differences when looking at the sex-disaggregated homicide data (UNODC 2019c, 6). Walby, Towers et al. provide in chapter two of their work “The concept and measurement of violence against women and men” an exhaustive overview of legal and policy developments combatting violence on an international and regional level, next to contributing to the question of how and if femicides are counted (Walby et al. 2017, chap. 2). A comprehensive overview of IPV, IPH and VAW can be found in the Routledge handbook of gender and violence

edited by Lombard (Lombard 2018). Significant in this volume was especially the chapter on femicide by Karen Ingala Smith (K. I. Smith 2018).

Concerning a feminist lens on data analysis, Walklate, Fitz-Gibbon, McCulloch and Maher published a pioneering work in 2020, “Towards a Global Femicide Index” (Walklate et al. 2020). Another influential survey was published earlier, in 2013 by Stöckl et al., systematically reviewing the global prevalence of intimate partner homicide (IPH), further amplified by their before-mentioned publication with Walby et al. in 2017 (Stöckl et al. 2013; Walby et al. 2017). Stöckl and Corradi also published a 2014 article on IPH in the European context (Corradi and Stöckl 2014). In terms of theories of intimate partner homicides and femicide studies, Walby et al. called for a combination of different approaches to understand femicides in a 2014 article, “Mainstreaming domestic and gender-based violence into sociology and the criminology of violence” (Walby, Towers, and Francis 2014). The ideas in this article then led to the publication of a comprehensive volume on violence against women and men, published in 2017 (Walby et al. 2017). Another review on theories of femicide was published in 2016 by Corradi et al. (Corradi et al. 2016).

Shalva Weil noted the relative absence of sociological literature on femicide in 2016 (Weil 2016) and since published regularly on the topic (Corradi et al. 2016; Weil 2016; Marcuello-Servós et al. 2016; Weil, Corradi, and Naudi 2018). Weil was also involved in the creation and formation of COST Action IS1206 on "Femicide across Europe" which she is also chairing.¹⁴ COST Action IS1206 is an initiative by the European Cooperation in Science and Technology, committed to establishing a European Observatory on Femicide.¹⁵

In criminology, there exists a division between general criminological studies and gendered criminological studies. This division is methodically and normatively challenged by Walby et al. (Walby, Towers, and Francis 2014). A review of recent criminological publications on IPH are discussed in chapter six of this thesis.

Criminologist Jane Monckton Smith published an eight-stage model, tracking the different stages a perpetrator goes through before committing femicide in “Intimate Partner Femicide: Using Foucauldian Analysis to Track an Eight Stage Progression to Homicide”. She developed a training system for law enforcement based on her model (Monckton Smith 2019).

¹⁴ Shalva Weil on EuroGender, online: <https://eurogender.eige.europa.eu/users/shalva-weil> (retrieved May 2020)

¹⁵ COST Action IS1206, online: <https://www.cost.eu/actions/IS1206/#tabs|Name:overview> (retrieved May 2020)

Studies at the intersection between psychology and criminology dominate the field but are often highly specialised. Eriksson and Mazerolle developed a general strain theory of intimate partner homicide, and Fulu et al. investigated the prevalence of and factors associated with the perpetration of IPV (Fulu et al. 2013; Eriksson and Mazerolle 2013).

Sociological studies investigating the ameliorative hypothesis and the backlash hypothesis were conducted, e.g. by Heirigs and Moore, or Heise and Kotsadam (Heirigs and Moore 2019; Heise and Kotsadam 2015). The backlash hypothesis was introduced by Dugan, Rosenfeld and Nagin in 2003 with their publication of “Exposure Reduction or Retaliation?” (Dugan, Rosenfeld, and Nagin 2003).

Extensive research on intimate partner violence and homicide has been conducted since the 1990s by Dobash and Dobash. Their publications include criminological, sociological and feminist investigations of femicide while using a mix of quantitative and qualitative methods (R. E. Dobash et al. 2007, 2004; R. P. Dobash and Emerson Dobash 2017). Dobash and Dobash distinguished different perpetrator profiles and debunked the myth of the violent career criminals being the only threat to the lives of women. Their in-depth investigations of perpetrator socialisation in combination with interviews about their motifs, are insightful and provide a further step in understanding femicides. Dobash and Dobash also provide a comprehensive overview of male-on-female homicide research in their publication “When Men Murder Women” (R. P. Dobash and Dobash 2015).

For a historical review on interventions for intimate partner violence look at Barner and Mohr Carney (Barner and Carney 2011). Eisner provides in his impressive historical study an overview of the homicide trends in Europe since the 1840s, although without a focus on gender (Eisner 2008).

There are few but constant voices criticising the feminist paradigm in femicide and VAW research. Bandelli and Porcelli are examples of this strand of voices in, i.e. Italy (Bandelli and Porcelli 2016), speaking out against a feminist bias in media. Another researcher calling for a differentiated look on the VAW paradigm is Dutton with widely cited works like “The abusive personality” (Dutton 2006), “Rethinking domestic violence” (Dutton 2011), and “The case against the role of gender in intimate partner violence” (Dutton 2012). Dutton criticises the “feminist paradigm” and claims that men and women are at least equally victimised by intimate partner violence, a claim that is contested by numerous scholars and statistical data (Johnson 2011). While these voices exist, they are a minority in femicide research. “Gender critical” and the more extremist “men’s rights”

scholarship, which also is associated with far-right political ideology is widely criticised in academic research. However, the works by, i.e. Dutton remain widely cited and discussed. Cannon et al. provide a more differentiated lens in their 2015 article on “Re-theorizing intimate partner violence through post-structural feminism, queer theory, and the sociology of gender” (Cannon, Lauve-Moon, and Buttell 2015). Cannon et al. are approaching the topic of intimate partner violence/murder with an intersectional and in-depth analysis, which can enrich femicide research and seems to be missing in the majority of papers so far.

Moreover, there seem to be regionally segregated discourses on femicide in academia. One bulk of research is dealing with femicide in Latin America, more specifically Central America, with a focus on Mexico, El Salvador and Colombia (Fregoso and Bejarano 2010; Oliviera 2010; Simmons and Coplan 2010; Fregoso et al. 2010). The discourse in Latin America informed much of the research done in other parts of the world (Fregoso et al. 2010; García-Del Moral 2016). However, femicides are still treated as isolated phenomena and often referred to as only happening in the global South or a (post-)war context. Therefore, a geographic alteration is achieved, externalising the crimes against women and girls that are also happening in the global North.

Regionality is fundamental in understanding the different structural implications of femicide in different parts of the world; however, the underlying gender-power dynamic informs femicides globally. My research is situated in this context.

The majority of studies on high-income countries are conducted about the United States of America (Allen, Salari, and Buckner 2020), Canada and a few on Finland and Sweden (Verkko 1951; Fulu et al. 2013; Caman et al. 2017). As mentioned above, until recently, femicide in Europe was under-researched. Analysing specific countries is essential and has an important place in research. However, the lack of drawing lines between countries or regions with similar structural factors remains a problem.

3.1 Lack of data, lack of structural analysis

The cited references and statistical sources examined in this thesis show a general lack of consistency and comparability. Coherence is not given in data on intimate partner and familial homicides, not in the data provided by the UNODC nor in data provided by EUROSTAT (UNODC 2020; EIGE 2019, 4). EIGE states in its 2019 report on the state of gender equality in the European Union that at least 11 Member States do not provide any data on the relational

context of homicides. Therefore, no complete conclusions on femicide can be drawn from these sources. In these cases, information from non-profit organisations can fill in the gaps. However, the lack of data shows the significant shortcomings regarding femicide elucidation from the side of law enforcement. Without substantial data regarding the context of the crime, especially relational factors between perpetrator and victim, femicides cannot be detected as such and therefore also not recorded by law enforcement and statistic agencies. For a more detailed critique on how femicides are recorded and what improvements could be made, see chapter five.

The Historical Violence Database is another example of the invisibility of data on women. The researchers at the Criminal Justice Research Centre are providing the infrastructure to research and upload research of criminal records.¹⁶ Still, there is no comprehensible data available detailing the murder rates according to gender. This data, however, could be instrumental in showing the structural bias as well as the structural difference between victimisation of men and women.

Providing gender-disaggregated data in criminology can be described as a relatively recent phenomenon. Even if nowadays almost all statistics are disaggregated by gender, the question remains of *how* the counting is done. Moreover, when the factor gender is missing from the analysis or interpretation, the fact that the data is gender-disaggregated does not improve the visibility of female victimisation. The main problems I faced during the collection for this thesis therefore were:

- I. Lack of data on femicide,
- II. Gaps in data (missing data for some years, discontinuity of statistics, etc.),
- III. Lack of coherence (what exactly is counted – female homicide victimisation, IPFM femicide, IPF, etc.)
- IV. Problems in nuance and shared terminology in femicide research.

In accumulation, these issues led to a general problem with coherence and comparability. I will further explain the obstacles in data collection in chapter four and five of this thesis.

¹⁶ The Historical Violence Database, online: <https://cjrc.osu.edu/research/interdisciplinary/hvd> (retrieved 20.07.2020)

4 Methodology & Theory

In this thesis, I am applying a qualitative approach that is also informed by quantitative data. It is a text analysis, which also considers quantitative methods to support qualitative claims made in this thesis. Firstly, I will shortly present the data I am working with (section 4.1), before moving on to the theoretical foundation of this thesis (sections 4.2 and 4.3) as the basis for developing a new approach to femicide analysis. Then, in chapter five, I will continue with the quantitative aspects of the work, exploring and structuring the data I am working with. In chapter six, I am reviewing the current literature regarding femicide research, and cluster it in different approaches. While doing so, I am investigating the strengths and weaknesses of the examined approaches, intending to arrive at an interdisciplinary, multi-level approach that is capable of detecting structures that remained invisible before. I aim at uncovering structural factors influencing female homicide and ultimately femicide numbers and describing them better. The results of my analysis can be found in chapter seven.

I am working with a set of four main hypotheses which I am answering during the course of this thesis:

- I. Female homicides are structurally different from the majority of male homicides;
- II. Intimate partner femicides are stable or increasing in numbers whereas the general trend in total homicide rates (even though fluctuating) is decreasing,
 - a. while female homicide rates are either very stable or even increasing,
 - b. indicating that female and male homicide rates are progressing differently;
- III. Better categorization is required as well as an improved and uniform data collection, gender-disaggregated data, recording of victim-offender relationships, to correctly identify femicides and design fitting policy responses;
- IV. Higher female victimisation rates seem to have little correlation to the dominant religion or the geographic area of the country in question; however, the lowest common denominator detectable so far, is the belonging to the group of high-income nations and having low overall homicide rates.

The hypotheses will be discussed throughout this work but will be answered in detail in chapter seven of this thesis. In the section to follow (4.1), I first outline the data and methods I used to analyse the available data on femicide, to give an overview of the sources I worked with in this thesis. The quantitative results will be extensively discussed in chapter five “counting dead women”. In sections 4.2 and 4.3, I first define the theories and concepts of violence I am working

with in this thesis, before outlining how structural violence can be expressed as sexual violence and its historical foundation.

4.1 Data & methods used for analysis

The data used in this thesis comprises primarily data provided by the UNODC. The main source of information are data sheets available on the UNODC website.¹⁷ Furthermore, I relied on the UNODC Global Study on Homicide mainly of the years 2013 and 2019 (UNODC 2014, 2019d). More specific data and information on the killing of women and girls as well as gender related violence was available in the UNODC publications on “Gender-related killings of women and girls” and “Understanding homicide” (UNODC 2019a, 2018; UNODC CCPCJ 2014; UNODC 2019c). Numerical data predominantly was taken from UNODC Global Study on Homicide datasheets which are disaggregated by sex, specify the number of victims per 100.000 inhabitants and provide data over time (from 1990 until 2018) (UNODC 2020). The UNODC also provides data on intimate partner homicide, again disaggregated by sex and over time. However, this data is limited as it only covers a number of states and the reliability of data is questionable due to differences in data collection and definition of intimate partner homicide in the different countries. Additionally to UNODC data, I used reports by various civil-society organisations like WAVE and the Violence Policy Center (WAVE 2019; Violence Policy Center 2019). EUROSTAT data was less helpful as the European Union has data collection recommendations implemented, but no enforced unified data collection system (EIGE 2016). Therefore, EUROSTAT data was only marginally used. When looking at intimate partner homicide/femicide rates, the study by Stöckl et al. was very helpful. It allowed me to compute estimates for intimate partner homicide/femicide rates for the high-income countries analysed in this thesis (Stöckl et al. 2013). Stöckl et al. provided regional data on IPH rates, derived from a large literature review, incorporating also national crime data. The survey is in its extent outstanding and provides a comprehensive completion to UNODC homicide data.

The main obstacles in data collection and analysis were as described earlier in this thesis, the lack of disaggregation between sexes, the lack of classification, incomplete data, and the lack of national data. The basis of my analysis therefore was available homicide data provided by UNODC,

¹⁷ see DataUNODC, Homicide rate by sex, online:
<https://dataunodc.un.org/data/homicide/Homicide%20rate%20by%20sex> (retrieved May 2020).

completed and augmented by civil-society organisation reports, academic studies and cited data in journal articles.

This thesis is a qualitative text analysis which also considers quantitative data. It is a mixed method and is best suited to,

- I. explore and collect the data available;
- II. show structural particularities, namely the group of high-income countries with murder rates of women higher than 45% of total homicides;
- III. compare existing approaches to analyse femicides;
- IV. analyse the homicide data of the countries in question;
- V. develop an intersectional, multilevel approach, to make the underlying structures of femicide visible.

I will use visual and graphic representation of the data in order to make the structural differences between male and female homicide victimisation visible and support my hypotheses.

4.1.1 List of countries with female victimisation over 45%

In my analysis I include a list of countries which according to the latest UNODC homicide data have had one or more times a female homicide victimisation rate of over 45% of total homicides. While few countries consistently have a higher female than male homicide victim count, there are a greater number of countries with female victimization rates sometimes higher than 45%. This number was chosen as it accounts for the fluctuations in the homicide victimisation rate per annum. The majority of countries within this group have female homicide victimisation rates consistently above 40% and are therefore statistically relevant, as their female homicide rate is nearly the double of the worldwide average. Choosing only countries with a female homicide victimisation over 50% would have made the sample size very small. Moreover, similar trends can be observed in the countries with a female homicide victimisation over 45% - therefore the threshold of 45% was more meaningful for this thesis.

The list of countries with a female homicide victimisation of more than 45% of all homicides according to the latest UNODC homicide data includes:

Andorra, Anguilla, Antigua and Barbuda, Aruba, Austria, Belgium, Bermuda, British Virgin Islands, Brunei Darussalam, Cayman Islands, China, Hong Kong Special Administrative Region, China, Macao Special Administrative Region, Croatia, Cyprus, Czechia, Denmark, Dominica, Finland, Georgia, Germany, Hungary, Iceland, Japan, Latvia, Luxembourg, Malta, Montenegro, Montserrat, New Zealand, Norway, Oman, Portugal, Qatar, Republic of Korea, San Marino,

Singapore, Slovakia, Slovenia, Switzerland, Turks and Caicos Islands (UNODC 2020). Some of the countries in the above list were omitted from the analysis due to either missing data, or too little case numbers which render them statistically irrelevant.

The data was filtered by calculating the female homicide count divided by the total homicide count in each country over the period of time data was available. In the most cases this is the time span between 1990 and 2017. The reviewed list of countries, screened for too low case numbers and missing data is: Austria, Belgium, Hong Kong (China), Croatia, Cyprus, Czechia, Denmark, Finland, Georgia, Germany, Hungary, Japan, Latvia, Luxembourg, Montenegro, New Zealand, Norway, Oman, Portugal, Republic of Korea, Singapore, Slovakia, Slovenia, Switzerland (UNODC homicide database, retrieved April 2020). These countries are referred to as “high female homicide countries” or HFHC in short, henceforth, for better readability. A more detailed account of the data will be given in chapter five as well as in the analysis, in chapter seven.

In the next sections, I give an overview of the theories I am working with in this thesis. It includes Johan Galtung’s theory of violence, a feminist expansion of it by Catia Confortini, as well a historical inspection of sexuality and violence that are necessary to define before moving on. Michel Foucault’s “Discipline and Punish” (Foucault 1977) was published after Galtung’s influential work “Violence, Peace and Peace Research” (1969). Both can be instrumental in analysing specifically the violence occurring in an intimate partner context. In section 4.3 I expand these theories of violence and power with a feminist reading, especially drawing upon the analyses of Chloe Taylor (C. Taylor 2019, 2017).

4.2 Revisiting Galtung's theory of violence

In Violence, Peace and Peace Research (1969) Johan Galtung developed a theory of violence, which combined both personal and structural levels. His theory of violence includes direct or personal violence (the act of violence inflicted by one individual upon another), structural or indirect violence (including poverty and oppression), and cultural violence (like media glorification of violence). “*Galtung conceives of peace as both negative (absence of direct violence) and positive (presence of social justice)*” (Confortini 2006, 335).

“Whereas personal violence is violence *with* a subject, structural violence is violence *without* a subject, and cultural violence serves as legitimization of both personal and structural violence.” (Confortini 2006, 336)

Galtung describes structural violence as something that is „built in the structure” and is expressed as unequal life chances, unequal distribution of resources and unequal power of decision making over life chances or resources. Resources can be material and immaterial, examples ranging from economic resources to education or safety. Cultural violence, then, “*highlights the way in which the act of direct violence and the fact of structural violence are legitimized and thus rendered acceptable in society.*” (Galtung 1990, 292).

Galtung distinguishes the forms as follows, “Direct violence is an *event*; structural violence is a *process* with ups and downs; cultural violence is an *invariant*, a ‘permanence’, remaining essentially the same for long periods” (ibid., 294). He sees the three dimensions interact in a hierarchical and linear way – identifying a causal flow from cultural to structural to direct violence (ibid., 295). He goes on to construct dichotomies that justify the distinction between the Self and the Other.

“When Other is not only dehumanized but has been successfully converted into an ‘it’, deprived of humanhood, the stage is set for any type of direct violence, which is then blamed on the victim.” (ibid., 298)

Galtung, as Confortini (2006) explained in detail a few decades later, provides a comprehensive lens to analyse femicides without going the last necessary step: he argues in his 1969 article,

“we conceive of structural violence as something that shows us a certain stability, whereas personal violence (...) shows tremendous fluctuations over time.” (Galtung 1969, 173).

Taking this definition of structural violence is useful in explaining the stability of intimate partner femicides over time. Moreover, the reduction of incidents of IPV and IPF to extreme forms of gendered personal violence, obscures the view on the structural grounds on which male partners hurt or kill their female (ex-) partners. In Galtung’s reasoning, one can deduct why the focus of analysis in violence and homicide studies in the decades prior was on personal violence rather than on structural violence:

“personal violence shows. The object of personal violence perceives the violence, usually, and may complain – the object of structural violence may be persuaded not to perceive this at all.” (Galtung 1969, 173).

At this point, Galtung misses out to go one step further in his analysis. The realization that structural violence must not necessarily but certainly *can* and often *is* expressed in personal violence is missing in his 1969 text. Confortini notices the applicability of Galtung’s theory of violence as a “*framework within which violence against women can be seen in the larger context of societal violence.*” (Confortini 2006, 356).

Another researcher trying to expand Galtung's theory through a feminist poststructuralism lens is Wooldridge. In his 2015 article he shows that,

“violence, as defined by using Galtung’s theory as a point of departure, is not an intrinsic part of an objective reality, but rather that violence exists because it is legitimated and normalized through the valorization of a hegemonic masculinity, of which violence is an intrinsic part; and that crucially this hegemonic masculinity is constructed through discourses related to gender.”(Wooldridge 2015, 2)

Wooldridge argues that violence is much like gender a performative act of hegemonic masculinity – therefore violence and gender are constituting each other. This link is what Confortini hints at in her text and Wooldridge fully formulates:

“Violence is both made possible by the existence of power/gender relations, and power/gender relations rely on violence for their (re)production: violence and gender are involved in a relationship of mutual constitution.” (Wooldridge 2015, 12)¹⁸

Wooldridge states how society is fundamentally gendered through hegemonial masculinity; making the masculine view a constitutional element of society. He furthermore understands violence as a constitutive part of masculinity – it is an intrinsic performance and process of hegemonic masculinity. Violence therefore is not a social, inherently inscribed part of human nature, but a process which is valued and legitimized through hegemonic masculinity (Wooldridge 2015, 12). If direct IPV is now perceived in this framework, we can understand direct violence in an intimate partner context as expression of hegemonic masculinity in society.

“For given that direct violence is legitimated by cultural forms of violence, specifically the gendered (re)production of violence, we can perceive direct violence to be a gendered and gendering aspect of hegemonic masculinity; and indeed that we can understand direct violence through its valorization, normalization and legitimization within societal institutions and practices.”(Wooldridge 2015, 13)

What feminist poststructuralism can then help to uncover, are the “layers of power previously unrecognized”; through this process the analysis can move beyond male and female binaries and avoid essentialization in the theoretical production (Wooldridge 2015, 2). Therefore, moving away from the simplistic understanding of ‘woman - victim’ vs. ‘man - oppressor’ dichotomy is critical in adding complexity to the research of violence.

„If language constructs reality, and reality is constructed through the experiences of men and masculinities, then violence does not necessarily exist as an objective reality but is rather naturalized as a subjective societal

¹⁸ original emphasis by the author.

process through it's (sic!) legitimization, normalization and even valorization as a characteristic of 'hegemonic masculinity'. Indeed, it is through an analysis of gender and the discourses that construct it, that we can begin to unpick violence as both constitutive of and constituting hegemonic masculinity. (...) It is, importantly, these gender divisions, and the construction of gender generally, as based on difference and hierarchy, that work to legitimate, valorize and normalize violence within society" (Wooldridge 2015, 2).

Confortini equally states in the four improvements to be included in Galtung's theory on violence that

- (1) it "needs to incorporate gender as a social construct embodying relations of power";
 - (2) the dichotomous, mutually exclusive categories are constitutive of the (re-)production of violence and the gendered understanding of our world;
 - (3) violence like any other social process can be constituted through language, therefore defining (im-)possibilities of a different social reality;
 - (4) "violence produces and defines gender identities and, in turn, is produced by them"
- (Confortini 2006, 333).

With these four additions or changes to Galtung's theory, it can provide a uniquely useful tool to analyse and further understand the structural causes of femicide.

The works of Confortini and Wooldridge show how feminist analysis can help to deepen and broaden the highly influential framework of violence, Galtung has created. It can provide a useful tool to analyse the interplay of personal, structural and cultural factors – which are intertwined and constituting as well as reproducing each other. Understanding gender as a discursive category, makes it possible to uncover the power relations written in societal norms. Galtung notes this in his first publication on violence,

"That structural violence often breeds structural violence, and personal violence often breeds personal violence nobody would dispute – but the point here would be the cross-breeding between the two. In other words: pure cases are only pure as long as the pre-history of the case or even the structural context are conveniently forgotten." (Galtung 1969, 178)

With the example of pathologizing perpetrators, this can be illustrated. The problem of pathologizing of male perpetrators – there is a kind of voyeuristic scandalisation, just waiting for the next horrific act to happen – is to make the violence into something external, something exceptional. This process helps to hide and obscure the fact that this violence is deeply rooted in the gendered structure of society. It is not the stranger in the alley who raped and then beat his

victim to death, it is a systemically founded structure that often is expressed as violence. What this scandalisation moreover does, is to deflect the public attention from the structural violence at hand towards purely the personal violence on display. Galtung describes how structural violence is upheld by personal violence:

“... gross social injustice is maintained *by means of* highly manifest personal violence. The regime usually tries to maintain a *status quo*, whether it means forceful maintenance of traditional social injustice that may have lasted for generations, or the forceful maintenance of some new type of injustice brought in by an attempt to overthrow the old system” (Galtung 1969, 184).¹⁹

As Allen et al. showed, the tale of the stranger raping and murdering women is largely a tale which deflects from the majority of the threat of violence and especially femicide by (ex-) partners of the victims (Allen, Salari, and Buckner 2020, 171). Dobash and Dobash highlight this fact in their work as well,

“[Violence] is set within the more general framework of wider social values, beliefs, and institutional policies and practices that, despite numerous important changes, continue to be deeply gendered and problematic” (R. P. Dobash and Dobash 2015, 2).

Intimate partner violence is grounded in historical foundations. It is grounded in the sexual contract, in deeply held beliefs about female inferiority and executed in various ways: may it be the wage gap, the thousands of hours of unrecognised and unpaid care work, lower social status, numbers of rapes vs. the numbers of rapists convicted, and in an extreme case: intimate partner femicide (Pateman 1988).

The pattern is also confirmed by the many discourse analyses done on femicide reporting. Mostly, femicide is seen as an isolated incident. An incident where the perpetrator ‘lost control’; an ‘understandable reaction to a former provocation by the victim’; or a ‘passion crime’; rarely if ever are they characterized as hate crime (Bouzerdan and Whitten-Woodring 2018, 221). Characterizing femicide as hate crime, would position it in the context of a human rights violation and highlight the structural character of femicides.

¹⁹ original emphasis by the author.

4.3 Revisiting Foucault – uncovering the structural pervasiveness of sexual violence

While in section 4.2 the meaning of structural violence was at focus, as well how femicide relates to this context, now the analysis will be expanded in depth and reach. I will explore the historical foundations of (sexual) violence and how they are institutionalised in society, drawing upon Foucault and Taylor's interpretation of the latter.

As Taylor laid out in her works *Foucault, Feminism and Sex Crimes* (C. Taylor 2019) and Foucault's *The History of Sexuality* (C. Taylor 2017) crimes are sociologically and historically much more complicated than in popular belief. Although it would exceed the framework of this thesis to investigate the question if sexual violence is rooted in deviant sexual drives or just a sexual expression of power, there are indications that the latter is more likely. Sexual violence is closely tied to femicides, when acknowledging the fact that many victims have endured a history of abuse and trauma, although underreported (Allen, Salari, and Buckner 2020, 165; Monckton Smith 2019). The ultimate expression of the perpetrator's power over the victim is killing her. Many individual criminological studies show that victims of femicide are victims of strangulation, gun or stabbing wounds predominantly in the head and neck (Zara et al. 2019, 1303). Moreover, in a study of Zara et al. over 40% of femicide victims were victims of "overkill", meaning there are wounds and injuries inflicted on the bodies that are proof of excessive violence by the perpetrator, more than enough to kill the victim and completely disfigure her body (Zara and Gino 2018, 6; Zara et al. 2019, 1300).

Taylor states that sex offenders, a category which largely overlaps with femicide perpetrators (R. P. Dobash and Dobash 2015), are viewed as incorrigible (C. Taylor 2019, 6). As a result, if convicted, they receive long prison sentences with very little therapeutic treatment in prison, in the United States (Wacquant 2014). There exist little efforts to reintegrate sex offenders, rehabilitate them and make them viable members of society; instead there are attempts to neutralize and eliminate them. This trend is visible in communication about rapists and paedophiles, with public calls to reintroduce the death penalty in order to punish these crimes (Wacquant 2014, 1694). Moreover, (sex) crimes are often conflated with racist undertones; claiming that "foreign rapists" and "refugees" are threatening women and children in

communities.²⁰ This goes hand in hand with an over-incarceration of postcolonial immigrants in the European Union, which is discussed very little, if at all in comparison to the discourse on Black incarceration numbers in the USA (Wacquant 2014, 1696).

‘Foucault’s argument that such intensifications of disciplinary tactics and expansions of the prison in fact create rather than rehabilitate delinquents is supported by studies of recidivism among sex offenders. Sex offenders who serve prison terms are more likely to reoffend than those who do not serve prison terms, and the more intense the conditions of parole and probation, the higher the probability of recidivism. ‘(C. Taylor 2019, 7)

Taylor affirms that sex offenders as a category appear to be among the least likely criminals to reoffend. She indicates that sex offenders are less likely than nonsexual offenders to commit a new crime of any sort, based on data from the US. In fact, rapists and murderers are the ones least likely to reoffend in the crimes they have previously committed, as only 1.2% of formerly imprisoned rapists and murderers commit this crime again (C. Taylor 2019, 7). These observations and the findings regarding reoffending are interesting especially paired with Jane Monckton Smiths eight stage model of femicide (Monckton Smith 2019). The eight stages of femicide (1. Established violence patterns pre-relationship, 2. Fast and possessive stages in the early relationship, 3. Coercive control in the relationship, 4. Triggers like a threat of separation, 5. Escalation, 6. A change in thinking or the decision to commit femicide, 7. Planning of the crime, 8. Femicide) are a comprehensible scheme that should be tested for applicability, and in the best-case scenario can be an instruction for intervention (Monckton Smith 2019). Monckton Smith argues that many of the femicide perpetrators are likely to have had relationship(s) in the past where they exercised coercive control over their partner. Here it has to be noted that the reported cases of coercive violence are extremely low, conviction rates are even lower.

If re-offensive rates are universally as low as Taylor suggests, what exactly is it that prompts reoffending in the areas of domestic violence, coercive control and sexual violence between intimate partners? Legislation and punishment may play a substantial role, as Taylor suggests. She states that sex crime legislation is disconnected from empirical research; rather it is informed by

²⁰ Drury, Ian (5.1.2020) More than 2.000 foreign killers, paedophiles and rapists are waved into the UK without criminal record checks..., the Daily Mail Online, online: <https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-7854471/Over-2-000-foreign-killers-paedophiles-rapists-waved-UK-without-criminal-records-checks.html> (retrieved August 2020) A well-documented example is the media reaction to the 2015-16 New Year assaults in Germany, mainly in Cologne, see #ausnahmslos, online: <https://ausnahmslos.org/english> (retrieved August 2020).

largely emotional responses to media reports and constituent's views, which do not correspond with research findings (C. Taylor 2019, 11).

"The media and politicians cover and exploit sensational stranger danger cases of sexual crime that are statistically unusual, deflecting attention away from the politically sacrosanct family as the primary site of sex crimes." (C. Taylor 2019, 11).

This is largely overlapping with the findings of discourse analyses that have been performed across different countries, showing that the framing of sexual and intimate partner violence is largely along the lines of gender stereotypes, often suggesting the fault of the victim, so called victim-blaming (van der Bruggen and Grubb 2014, 20; Grubb and Turner 2012, 29; Ullman 2010). Here, the scandalization of sex offenders is just a different side of the same coin: if sex offenders are discursively constructed as unknown monsters that are lurking in dark alleys and preying on their unknowing victims, the fact that most offenders of sex crimes and then femicide actually know their victim and often were in some sort of intimate relationship with her, is simply ignored. The draconian measures the, e.g. American government implemented (sex offender registry) therefore do not prevent the large majority of sexual assaults, incest, IP sexual violence or femicide.²¹ They just shift the focus from the family to an imaginary target, leaving victims further alone and at risk. Taylor moreover states that the dramatic increase in the number of incarcerated sex offenders is not directly connected to rising instances of sexual crime (C. Taylor 2019, 16).

"(...), from a feminist perspective, it is significant that convictions for rape are the exception to the rule, while from a Foucauldian perspective, we might ask whether the focus on sexual offenders is not, rather, related to the biopolitical investment in sex that has characterized the modern West." (C. Taylor 2019, 17)

The way sex offenders are currently punished, as well as the prison system in general, *"perpetuate a culture of rape and gender oppression"* (C. Taylor 2019, 21). Taylor moreover argues that only when sex became fused with identity that certain murders came to be seen as the acts of individuals with sexual disorders. *"[I]t is only when sex became linked to identity that the repetition of this kind of crime was necessitated as an expression of who sex killers are."* (C. Taylor 2019, 21) The conflation of sex crimes with identity is what masks the structural nature of sex crimes, but also femicides. As many femicide victims are also victims of sexual abuse, Taylor's analysis can be fittingly extended to the field of femicide research.

²¹ National Sex Offender Registry, online: <https://www.nsopw.gov> ; FBI Sex Offender Registry Websites, online: <https://www.fbi.gov/scams-and-safety/sex-offender-registry> (both retrieved 08.07.2020)

4.3.1 Sexual violence and identity – a historical investigation

The pairing of sexuality and identity according to Taylor is a recent phenomenon. Up to the early modern period, sexual crimes were considered a consequence of passion; they were rarely prosecuted. Court documents detail that there were less than three rape trials every ten years during the Renaissance in Paris and merely 18 such trials in Flanders during the entire eighteenth century (Vigarello, 1998 in Chloë Taylor 2019, 78). Vigarello argues that during the early modern period, violence was widely accepted due to its pervasiveness, however property crimes were prosecuted as they were believed to endanger the social order (Vigarello 1998). Taylor states, widely quoting Vigarello's work that it was common for men in Renaissance Italy to rape lower class women, however mostly refraining from these behaviours as they were married. Still, most wedding nights can be considered to entail rapes with many brides being adolescent virgins with no sexual education (C. Taylor 2019, 79).

“The myth-based marriage-rape identification is important because it closely associated rape with a normalized role of most men and presented rape-marriage as an iteration of glorious deeds. Rape was common, permissible and even socially utile so long as the woman raped was either the man's future or present bride or poor and so long as no transgression of blood (incest and rape “up” the social scale) or excessive bloodshed was involved.” (C. Taylor 2019, 80)

She further suggests that today rape and marriage are seen as incompatible. Until recently marital rape has not been legally recognized – the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) was only established in 1993 (although initiated in 1979), calling for a criminalization of marital rape (UN General Assembly 1979).²² The European Union only outlawed marital rape or rape of a partner with a legally binding document in 2014, although national legislation was widely in place since the 1980s.²³ Once, rape was a common activity which could forge family ties and secure alliances (C. Taylor 2019, 85). Arguably, it still is a common occurrence, although perceived widely differently in public and personal accounts. Still, the European Sourcebook includes these crimes as “violent intra-marital sexual intercourse” and does not explicitly state them as “rape” (Walby et al. 2017, 79).

²² United Nations Officer for Human Rights, online: (retrieved 07.07.2020) <https://www.ohchr.org/EN/HRBodies/CEDAW/Pages/CEDAWIndex.aspx>

²³ Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence. Online: <https://www.coe.int/en/web/conventions/full-list/-/conventions/treaty/210> (retrieved 07.07.2020)

Historically, rape can be described as an integral part of the institution of marriage. Vigarello and Taylor's work show how pervasive and little if ever prosecuted sexual violence was in the early modern period in Europe. Looking at the number of rape reports versus the convictions today, I would argue it still is (Lovett and Kelly 2009).²⁴ Instead of questioning the institutionalisation of sexual violence through the institution of marriage, the problem is externalised to a "deviant male psychology" and then to the prison system. It is not publicly acknowledged that most sexual abuse as well as the danger of femicide is not lurking in dark alleys, but rather in the victims' own homes. Marking the heteronormative, nuclear family as the core of the problem is questioning the very foundation of modern society as well as the gendered production versus reproduction divide (Cutas and Smajdor 2017, 10). When perpetrators then are externalized into prisons, they are to a large extent not "reformed", as research has shown (Iffland, Berner, and Briken 2016; R. P. Dobash and Dobash 2015, 69;154). Rather, they have been subjected to a highly hierarchical and gendered institution – which has a history of normalizing violence and rape (C. Taylor 2019, 17).

„Prison is a hyper-misogynist space in which LGBTQ prisoners and sex offenders are particularly targeted for rape and in which sexual violence is structural and mundane in the form of nonconsensual pat-downs, frisks, mandatory strip searches and body cavity searches. Prison is moreover a space that normalizes rape and thus produces rapists in a population that will, for the most part, return to the outside world. Given these facts, it is arguable that anyone concerned with preventing sexual crimes such as rape should be engaged not so much in putting sex offenders *in* prisons as in keeping them *out* of prisons, since prison is one of the most likely places for rape to occur and for a culture of rape to be normalized.“ (C. Taylor 2019, 17)²⁵

Through the institution of marriage rape has been institutionalised. The way sexual violence is prosecuted, however, is masquerading the pervasiveness and the inbuilt nature of sexual violence into society. Just recently marital rape has been outlawed – showing what a central part it played in upholding the existing system of hegemonic masculinity. Moreover, pathologizing perpetrators of sexual violence and femicide helps in individualising the problem and puts individual offenders in the spotlight. This further helps in hiding the structural nature of the committed crimes.

²⁴ Daphne Toolkit, European Commission, online: Project Reference Number: 2006-1/141, https://ec.europa.eu/justice/grants/results/daphne-toolkit/content/different-systems-similar-outcomes-tracking-attribution-reported-rape-cases-eleven-countries_en (retrieved 07.07.2020);

²⁵ original emphasis by the author.

This chapter aims to show the pervasive power of a hegemonic masculine system, which is grounded in historical realities and helps legitimising sexual violence and in extreme cases even femicide. It would exceed the frame of this thesis to further go into depth of the theoretical implications, however they should be explored in future work. I am ending this chapter with a quote of prison abolitionist Angela Davis,

„If we do not comprehend the nature of sexual violence as it is mediated by racial, class, and governmental violence and power, we cannot hope to develop strategies that will allow us eventually to purge our society of oppressive misogynist violence. In our attempt to understand the structure of rape, it would be a grievous mistake to limit our analysis to individual cases or even to conduct our analysis in terms of male psychology. The only logical strategies for the elimination of rape that would follow from this type of analysis would be a reliance on repression to punish and deter rapists. But as the use of the repressive paraphernalia of the state has generally demonstrated, further crimes are seldom deterred by punishment meted out to those who have been caught committing them.“ (Davis 1989 in Taylor 2019, 96)

5 Counting dead women

Counting deaths is a delicate subject. There is epistemic power involved in deciding what is counted, what is left out, who counts, what is included in certain categories and who defines all of these factors. Counting deaths is also always a reduction, former richly lived lives are reduced to a numeric value, represented in statistics never able to hint at the complexity of the story the life once told. Still, not counting lost lives at all, renders them invisible, of no memory and hence no agency. For a long time, criminological data was not gender disaggregated, homicides of men and women were counted together. The assumption remains that homicide equals homicide; rendering the structural differences between homicides and femicides invisible. Moreover, it prevents intersectional inequalities to persist and leaves vulnerable and marginalised groups at greater risk. Critical counting, therefore, can be a powerful tool to make gendered, racial and other discriminatory structures visible, in a first step to start preventing them.

Walklate et al. acknowledge the extensive problems regarding the measurement of VAW, IPV and especially intimate partner femicide. Still, *“we do need to consider what can be achieved by counting, for whom, in what context, and how such counting practices facilitate or fail to facilitate any preventive agenda”* (Walklate et al. 2020, 13). Critically counting is the first step in accumulating data and ensuring comparability, which at the moment is not given. Recently, calls for a standardised system of counting arose by i.e. EIGE and the European Fundamental Rights Agency (European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights 2017, 24; EIGE 2017b, 21). However, there still does not exist a regional nor a global standard for counting femicides, let alone a standardised definition of the term itself (Walklate et al. 2020, 19f). In the European Union, numbers on female victims of intentional homicide were available for 18 Member States only in 2013 (EIGE 2017b, 23). Walby et al. fittingly stressed the role and importance of statistics,

“[They] entrench or contest existing social relations. Statistical systems embed concepts and definitions oriented towards theories and policy goals developed in previous eras” (Walby et al. 2017, 5).

One of the reasons counting femicides is such a difficult endeavour, is the largely missing qualitative data; some countries even missing quantitative data. The context of the killings is essential is determining if a killing qualifies as a femicide. Femicides are significantly harder to evaluate than male-on-male homicides, because they mostly happen in a private context where the primary witness is the victim. The private sphere of the nuclear family is a space that has been historically and culturally protected and is central to upholding the existing gender-power hierarchy

which is a decisive factor in femicide. With the exception of homicide, the recorded violence in any juridical system from various sources including criminal justice and health care is significantly lower than the actual rate of experienced violence in a population (Walby et al. 2017, 13).

There exist numerous examples where the killing of particular groups of women was not recognised as femicide, or not recognised at all. Examples include the disappearance of women in Ciudad Juárez, killing of indigenous women in Canada, as well as the increased targeting of trans women (Walklate et al. 2020, 63). In citing True (2015, 561) Walklate et al. state,

„these gaps in recording are not incidental; rather, the social and cultural preconditions that hide intimate femicides, and femicides more broadly, along with other forms of gendered violence, are the same preconditions that create them. In other words, the causes of (historical and continued) underreporting are linked to the causes of sexual and gender-based violence”(Walklate et al. 2020, 63).

Another issue is the invisibility of non-binary and trans people in the context of homicide. As mentioned in chapter two, gender non-conforming people are numerically included but rendered invisible in a binary counting system and a general lack of data (European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights 2017, 20). What is needed is a critical approach to data, terminology and assumptions in homicide research, next to constant re-evaluation of approaches and prevention strategies (Walklate et al. 2020, 63). If to put it in economic terms, the cost of VAW is estimated to amount up to 1.5 trillion USD per year globally (Walklate et al. 2020, 11). But the true cost of VAW and femicide can hardly be measured in currency. It is a threat to the social fabric of communities and should be tackled as a serious safety and health issue within societies.

In this chapter I will shine a light on the scarcity of data on femicide (section 5.1), before exploring the data available to me, dividing it into key indicators like age and historical homicide rates. In section 5.3 I will discuss the countries of interest in this thesis, namely high-income countries with higher female than male victimisation rates, before addressing the need for a structural and systematic analysis of data.

5.1 Scarcity of gendered data

Reliable and consistent data in the field of VAW, IPV and femicide does not exist at the current stage. Countries, agencies, international organisations as well as civil society organisations are using different counting practices, reducing comparability and making cross-national comparative research close to impossible (Walby et al. 2017, 41). Stöckl et al. found that usable data on intimate

partner femicide/homicide was only available for 66 out of 195 countries, most of them being high-income countries (Stöckl et al. 2013). However, invisibility is just the first problem to overcome. Just counting is not enough – there is a need for a systematic analysis which renders previously invisible structures visible. The main issues to overcome are therefore scarcity of data next to gender insensitivity of statistical methods, data collection and data analysis, paired with poor comparability. Walby et al. identified a number of issues where homogenisation of counting could improve results and comparability:

“The date attributed to the crime; the measurement (or counting) unit; whether an event is classified by its principal offence or all offences are counted; how offences by multiple perpetrators are counted; how offences by the same perpetrator against multiple victims are counted; and how multiple offences against the same victim continuing in time are counted”(Walby et al. 2017, 41).

Moreover, they identify five main dimensions which ideally are required to understand the dimensions of violence involved in a crime and are defining of the event. This process of *gendering statistics* entails far more than the inclusion of gender as a variable. Rather it should include information about “*gender-saturated dimensions of the violence*” (Walby et al. 2017, 52). These *gender-saturated dimensions* are the following:

- (1) the sex of the victim(s) and;
- (2) the sex of the perpetrator(s), which are both essential in gender-disaggregating data and understanding the extent of the gender-based violence;
- (3) the domestic, or the relationship between victim and offender, if it was spousal, familial, acquainted etc. and how these relationships are exactly defined;
- (4) whether and how there was a sexual aspect to the violence, which overlaps with the domestic indicator but also includes non-partners and moreover is relevant to identify and bring into visibility LGBTQTI lesbian, gay, bisexual, queer, transgender and intersex relations;
- (5) the motivation for committing the crime, difficult to extract, but of high importance in identifying femicides and understanding their context (Walby et al. 2017, 54).

In agreement with Walby et al., there is a necessity to further gender disaggregate existing categories but also include gender-saturated dimensions when investigating and counting femicides. Without changing existing indicators, including sex of the perpetrator and victim, relationship between victim and perpetrator and establishing whether violence has a sexual aspect and if it is gender-motivated, statistical data on femicide will fail to represent the true extent of the

problem. Law enforcement will fail to prevent a further increase in VAW and IPF if the systems of counting and recording are not reformed to grasp the full scope of the problem. As Walklate et al. note,

“better counting and reporting of femicides can also be seen as a form of memory justice and carried out for the purposes of memorialization” (Walklate et al. 2020, 26).

Counting victims through a gendered approach to data can be part of the memory work needed to bring about justice; where remembering is a part of doing justice combatting the invisibility of injustice inherent in forgetting.

5.2 Exploring the data available

The global rate of murders shows that 80% of homicide victims worldwide are men, roughly 20% are women (UNODC 2019d, 15). This makes men much more likely victims of lethal violence than women in absolute terms. However, the UN estimates that 1 in 3 women suffers from sexual or/and physical violence in her lifetime, mostly at the hands of an (ex-) intimate partner or a family member (UNODC 2018, 41). These numbers, next to the general undermeasurement of intimate partner and domestic violence, shows how violence against women is a global health epidemic (Walklate et al. 2020, 46). Certain groups of women like disabled women, trans women or queer women have an even higher risk of being victims of violence (Lombard 2018, 7). Here, I focus on the most extreme form of violence: murder. The killing of women mostly occurs in an intimate partner or family context. According to the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), around 58% of the total number of women killed worldwide (50.000 of 87.000 victims in 2017) died following lethal violence perpetrated against them by a family member or by an (ex-) intimate partner. The estimated number of women killed by intimate partners or family members in 2012 worldwide was 48.000 (47% of all female homicide victims). The annual number of female deaths worldwide resulting from intimate partner/family-related homicide therefore seems to be on the rise (UNODC 2018, 13).

Most male homicide victims are killed in a context of organized crime, only about 36% of men killed, died on the hands of family members or intimate partners, and the majority of these deaths are family and not partner related. 90% of perpetrators of murder are male (UNODC 2019d, 23). Of all recorded female homicide victims, the percentage of women killed by an (ex-) intimate partner or a family member is as high as 69% (in Africa), although the percentage varies greatly between continents. Still, of all murders committed in an intimate partner context, 82% of victims are female (UNODC 2018, 11). According to criminologist Monckton Smith, these intimate

partner murders of women are definable and detectable through a comprehensive eight stage model of escalating coercive control (Monckton Smith 2019). Contrasting to their male counterparts, the vast majority of female murder victims are killed by someone in their close environment, mostly by an (ex-) intimate partner or a family member. Most men die related to drug or gang violence, and the vast majority of murder victims did not know their killer intimately (UNODC 2019d, 24). This shows that the murder of men and women is fundamentally different.

Furthermore, there seems to be an emerging trend in high-income countries with generally low homicide and crime rates in which there are equal or higher female homicide victimisation rates than male victimisation rates. This trend defies the global 80:20 – male:female homicide victimisation trend and can help in uncovering the structural causes for the relative stability in femicide rates, globally.

There are different drivers and explanatory variables in homicide studies including age, socioeconomic prosperity, political stability, violent conflicts, educational level and a variety of psycho-social factors. I will explore the most important of these factors in the following subsections (5.2.1-5.2.3) and explore if they suffice in explaining the trend of higher female than male victimisation rates.

5.2.1 The influence of age on homicide/femicide rates

Studies by the UNODC suggest that age composition can strongly influence homicide trends (UNODC 2019c, 15). Age is one of the strongest predictors of criminal offending and victimization on an individual level (ibid.). These effects can only be observed, if other factors that contribute to rising homicide numbers are absent. If a country shows high levels of overall crime, high drug abuse levels, low education and high political instability, homicide numbers tend to rise even when an increasingly old population is present. Therefore, *“other factors seem to outweigh the influence of population ageing”* especially in the Americas (UNODC 2019c, 15). In the UNODC GSH, Mateus Rennó Santos states,

“it is estimated that each increase of 1 per cent in the proportion of the population aged 15 to 29 years translates, on average, into a 4.6 per cent increase in the homicide rate (if macro-level socioeconomic factors, such as economic development, inequality and urbanization are taken into consideration). The effect of age, however, maybe tempered by the presence of destabilizing social, economic and governance dynamics, which can, at times, have a much greater influence on homicide trends than demographic forces. In this context, an ageing population can act as a protective factor against homicide, although social unrest, instability and other macro-level events can also nullify this benefit” (UNODC 2019c, 15).

Countries like Austria and Japan show a very stable trend of declining homicide rates with an increasingly ageing population and therefore a reduction of people in the 15 to 29 years cohort. What remains interesting, is why the female homicide victimisation rate seems to be stable below a certain point, when the male victimisation rate further declines. Seemingly, the femicide rate is influenced by other factors than the ones present in the above cited UNODC study. This is also suggested by Dobash and Dobash, describing particular femicides on old female victims in Europe, meaning women over the age of 60 (R. P. Dobash and Emerson Dobash 2017, 132). Even in the cases of another crime like robbery involved in the femicide, 60% of the victims in Dobash and Dobashes study knew the perpetrator. These findings hint at the core hypothesis of this thesis – that female homicide victimisation rates are to a lesser extent influenced by macro factors like prosperity and age demographics, but rather are dependent on the men in the lives of the victims and other not yet explained structural factors. Female victimisation runs until old ages and is perpetrated by men of a large age spectrum but mostly by perpetrators in their close environment. This argument will be further developed in the next sections.

5.2.2 Historical trends in homicide/femicide rates

There is a well-documented and described consensus among researchers that homicide rates saw a general downward trend in the last centuries. With the exception of the twentieth century, especially the period between 1960 and 1990, which saw a drastic increase of homicide and violent crime rates in many countries that has since again declined considerably (Eisner 2008, 296; UNODC 2019c). Eisner finds three periods of significance in European homicide trends: (1) 1850s-1950s “decline and convergence”, (2) 1960s-1990s the upward trend, (3) 1990s until 2010 a declining trend in most European countries (Eisner 2008, 298). However, he finds that these trends mainly are due to the respective decline or increase of male-on-male crimes. In period (1) from the 1880s to the 1950s the male to female victimisation ratio dropped from 2:1 to 1:1 in Switzerland, 3:1 to 1:1 in Sweden and England (Eisner 2008, 301). This is startling as the historical data already shows a surprising stability in female homicide victimisation rates without being noted as worthy of investigation. Eisner finds in conjunction with Wiener (2004) that the overall decline in murder cases in England from 1860 to 1900 is due to the disproportionate decrease in cases of men killing men, while the rate of wife murder remained stable over this period (Eisner 2008, 301; Wiener 2004). Eisner further suggests that the decline in male-on-male homicides has little to do with increased state control such as policing or increased imprisonment (Eisner 2008, 303), an argument which converges with the previously provided theoretical reflections in chapter four. Eisner, however, attributes the decline in male-on-male public violence then on “increased levels

of self-control” in the Victorian age. This new public self-control is founded on three principles: the new “emphasis on *self-control* as an ideal of personality; *domesticity and familialism* as guidelines for private life; as *respectability* as the yardstick for public appearance”(Eisner 2008, 303).

While giving valuable insight into European homicide trends of the past centuries, Eisner fails to account for gender in his analysis. He states that changes in homicide trends are only dependent on male-on-male crime in public spaces and leaves out the always present but stable factor of male-on-female homicides. If *self-control and domesticity* are relevant factors in homicide trends, then why do these virtues not extend into the private but are only effective in the public sphere? The stability of intimate partner homicide/femicide rates together with familial homicide rates is striking; as is the fact of them being left out of the argument in a century long European homicide statistic. The UNODC in its 2019 report argues along similar lines, with referring to Verkko (Verkko 1951),

“Verkko’s dynamic law’ states that changes in lethal violence can be explained in terms of male-to-male homicide, rather than homicide involving women as perpetrators or victims. These trends may be observed in historical data spanning the period from the Middle Ages to the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. (...) Homicides between men are affected by volatile factors such as sociopolitical circumstances and crime to a greater extent than homicides involving women. The female rate is determined, rather, by less volatile drivers and is subject to slower and less pronounced changes”(UNODC 2019c, 29).

5.2.3 Structural differences in homicide and femicide

What is the reason for the little interest in the difference of male and female homicide victimisation rates? As explored in the previous section, the category of gender is little regarded in criminological generalisations on homicide trends. This can also be shown with the following quote from the UNODC’s Global Study on Homicide from 2019:

“The dynamics behind female homicide rates are largely influenced by structural factors, such as sociocultural and gender biases, which change very little over long periods of time. When seeking to explain high female homicide rates, previous studies have pointed to such general predictors of violent crime as income equality, unemployment ethnic heterogeneity, material deprivation, weak social integration and exposure to violence by the State. The premise is that high levels of female homicide victimization can be explained in the same way as overall homicide levels. Therefore, factors related to general prosperity and social equality can influence the overall levels of both male and female homicide. This situation is encountered in several Latin American countries, where social crises have increased homicide rates among both men and women.”(UNODC 2019c, 7)

This quote exemplifies the issues in disregarding gendered structural differences. If the premise holds true that high levels of female homicide victimisation can be explained in the same way as male homicide victimisation rates, then why would gender biases be of importance? The claims in the UNODC GSH are contradictory in this quote: first claims arise that female homicide rates are influenced by structural factors like sociocultural and gender biases, followed by the statement that the female victimisation rate follows the same trends as male victimisation. A claim that was found to be untrue, with reference to the historical data provided by i.e. Eisner (Eisner 2008; UNODC 2019c). The statement, *“factors related to general prosperity and social equality can influence the overall levels of both male and female homicide”*(UNODC 2019c, 7), is so generic that it fails to account for the different structures that male and female victims respectively have to suffer.

There moreover exists a media bias in covering femicide, which has been demonstrated in multiple studies (R. Taylor 2009; Grubb and Turner 2012; Gillespie et al. 2013; van der Bruggen and Grubb 2014). Gillespie et al. find in their media analysis that *“many femicides continue to be explained away as commonplace or their magnitude is obscured by placing blame on the victim, failing to hold the perpetrator fully responsible, or by diverting attention to more easily championed issues (e.g., caretaker stress)”*(Gillespie et al. 2013, 19). Also Taylor found in a 2009 study tactics of direct and indirect victim blaming, minimizing the perpetrators’ actions and suggesting the victims’ involvement in her own death (R. Taylor 2009, 34). These findings largely overlap with Bouzerdan et al., who summarized their findings,

- “(1) when news media cover femicide, the story is generally outlined as an isolated incident, not as a part of a bigger problem of violence against women,*
- (2) the reporters rely mainly on the police and the legislation to formulate the story,*
- (3) the crafting of the story is culturally specific, and*
- (4) the newsworthiness of a story is decided based on the actors involved, in particular their race, gender, education, and economic status.”* (Bouzerdan and Whitten-Woodring 2018, 215).

Bouzerdan and Whitten-Woodring therefore conclude that reporting on female homicides is inherently biased and influenced by the race, gender and economic status of the people involved. They come to the conclusion that femicides are framed as isolated crimes, which makes it hard to detect structural factors that facilitate especially intimate partner femicides (Bouzerdan and Whitten-Woodring 2018, 218).

As will be detailed in the next section (section 5.3), male and female homicide victimisation rates follow starkly different patterns. The majority of female homicide victims are in fact victims of

femicide, as the nature and context of their deaths is an explicitly gendered one. Most of the female victims were targeted by (ex-)intimate partners or family members, the majority of the perpetrators being men. The rate of female victimisation by intimate partner or family members shows a striking stability, which has yet to be explained by theoretically and analytically sound analysis. To lead my argument further, I will first inspect the countries at the focus of this thesis, namely the group of high-income countries with equal to higher female than male homicide victimisation rates.

5.3 Countries with higher murder rates of women

Despite the majority of homicide victims worldwide being male, there is a growing number of countries that defy the general 80:20 ratio. Worldwide homicide numbers have been in a downward trend in the past years, corresponding with a general downward trend in crimes (UNODC 2019c, 13). A section of homicides, i.e. homicides in a familial or intimate partner context have remained stable or even increased in the past 15 years as the UNODC states in the 2013 Homicide Report (UNODC 2014, 49). Analysing the latest UNODC homicide data, countries like Austria, Hong Kong, Japan, Switzerland, Norway, Latvia, Czechia, Denmark and the Republic of Korea are consistently scoring higher than 45% of female homicide victims since in some cases the 1990s or the early 2000s. Georgia reached a sad record of over 87% of female homicide victims in 2016. While a few countries consistently have a higher female than male homicide victim count, there are a greater number of countries with female victimization rates higher than 45%. This list according to the latest UNODC homicide data includes: Austria, Belgium, Hong Kong (China), Croatia, Cyprus, Czechia, Denmark, Finland, Georgia, Germany, Hungary, Japan, Latvia, Luxembourg, Montenegro, New Zealand, Norway, Oman, Portugal, Republic of Korea, Singapore, Slovakia, Slovenia, Switzerland (UNODC homicide database, retrieved April 2020). These countries are here referred to as “high female homicide countries” or HFHC in short, for better readability. These countries are statistically interesting because they defer significantly from the worldwide homicide trend, some with a female homicide victimization rate of more than double of the worldwide average.

Putting the numbers in graphic terms, it becomes clear that the countries selected and analysed in this thesis, defer from the worldwide average considerably. Illustrated in Figure II, the average worldwide female homicide rate lies at 20%. The average of the countries I am discussing in this thesis, however, lies with 39.4% (see Figure II, Average HFHC) at nearly double the worldwide average. If I were to remove the two countries closest to the worldwide average, namely Georgia

and Montenegro, the average number of female homicides in HFHC would even rise to 40.9%. Considering that these are averages it becomes clear how much HFHC defer the worldwide trend.

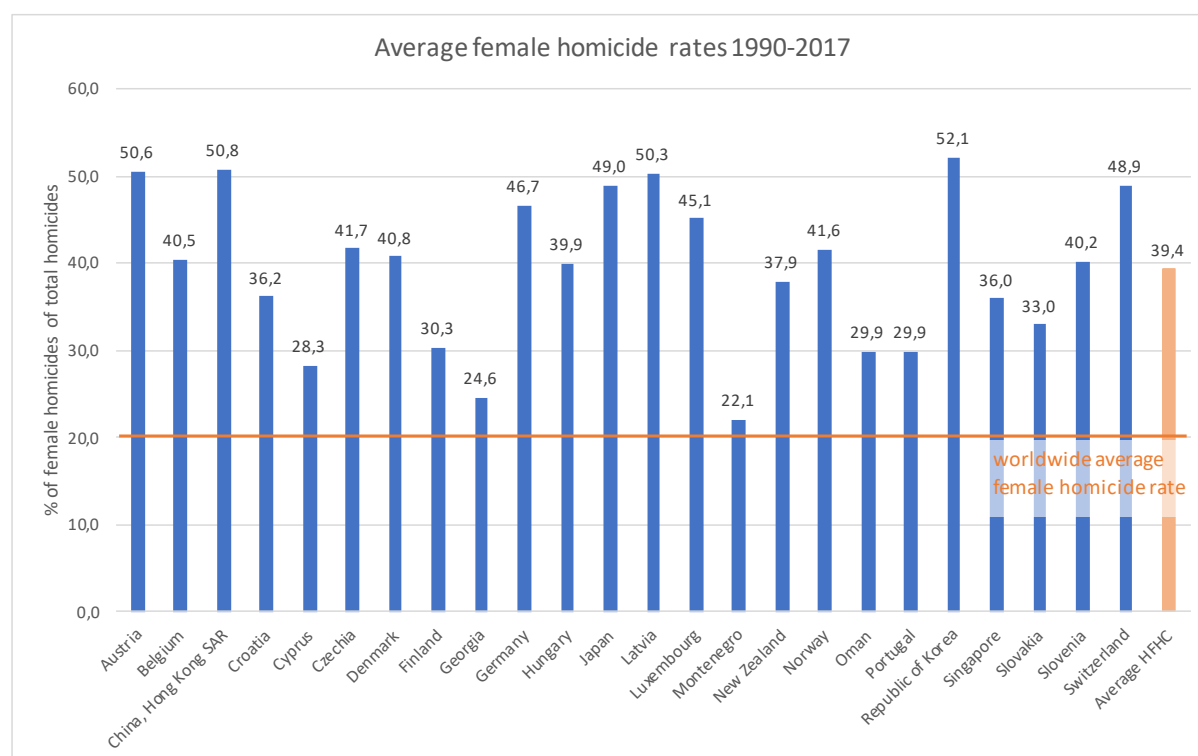


Figure II, Average Female Homicide Rates 1990-2017, 2020; Data source: UNODC global homicide database

For illustrative purposes, contrasting the average female homicide rate from 1990 to 2017, I provide a table with the highest recorded female homicide rate per country since the beginning of the UNODC statistic in 1990 (see Table III, Highest Recorded Fem. Homicide %; Data source: UNODC global homicide database). Depending on how recent the highest recorded female homicide rate is, we can draw conclusions if the rate since then has likely increased or decreased.

Country	Highest recorded % of female homicides/ total homicides	Year of highest % recorded
Denmark	63,2	1991
Austria	65,9	2000
Qatar	66,7	2005
Norway	63,6	2006
Switzerland	63,3	2006
China, Hong Kong SAR	69,4	2008
New Zealand	53,5	2010
Croatia	51,6	2010
Germany	49,6	2010
Montenegro	46,7	2010
Cyprus	66,7	2011
Singapore	54,5	2012
Hungary	46,8	2012
Finland	45,5	2012
Czechia	56,7	2013
Belgium	48,3	2013
Netherlands	44,8	2013
Latvia	57,8	2014
Portugal	52,2	2014
Oman	50	2014
Luxembourg	50	2014
Slovakia	47,8	2014
Japan	60,1	2015
Slovenia	55	2015
Georgia	87,2	2016
Republic of Korea	54,3	2016

Table III, Highest Recorded Fem. Homicide %; Data source: UNODC global homicide database

We can also observe that countries like Georgia – which has a quite ordinary average female homicide rate with 24.6% of all homicides, recorded statistical outliers like the female homicide rate of 87% in 2016. This is the reason it is included in the list of countries I am analysing in this thesis. Moreover, it has to be noted that sex disaggregated homicide statistics do not exist for all countries for each year. In some cases, the records just start in 2000, in some cases the records do not exceed the year 2014 and some single years might be missing.²⁶

²⁶ Detailed spreadsheets, accounting for which numbers are available for which year, can be provided by the author if required.

“The difference between the shares of male and female homicide victims is striking in countries with high national rates of lethal violence. Generally speaking, the higher the overall homicide rate within a country, the higher the proportion of male victims out of all recorded homicide victims.”(UNODC 2019c, 6)

5.3.1 HFHC and intimate partner and familial femicide

While the HFH countries mentioned before have generally low homicide rates, measured according to their size of population, the number of women killed by intimate partner or familial violence (IPFMV) are consistently higher than the number of men killed by IPFMV in the same country and the same year. The percentage of women killed by IPFM violence is in a range of double to five times the percentage of males killed by IPFMV.

Looking at the numbers of Austria, which has female victimisation rates consistently higher than 45%, the average rate of women killed through IPFMV between 2005 and 2011 was at 47,1%. The average male IPFM homicide rate measured 15,3% in the same time period. The female rate has a standard deviation of 6,9%, the male rate only 3,8% - indicating a higher fluctuation in the female IPFM homicide rate. This trend is widely consistent within the sample of countries with a female homicide rate exceeding 45%. This example of Austria is to show the generally much higher IPFM homicide rates in female victims. The data is consistent in this regard. According to the UNODC homicide data of 2013 there is no country registered which has a higher IPFM homicide rate in males than in females.²⁷

Heidi Stöckl et al. published an influential study in 2013 titled “The global prevalence of intimate partner homicide: a systematic review”. The widely cited review, which screened over 2.000 abstracts and then included 163 full text articles and studies as well as data from 169 countries. Stöckl et al. obtained detailed data for 66 countries and then conservatively estimated that 13.5% of all homicides were committed by an intimate partner. This number was six times higher for female homicides than male homicides with 38.6% vs. 6.3% (Stöckl et al. 2013, 857). Here the importance of gender disaggregated data becomes apparent. In their review, the authors included conservative estimates, where the cases with missing information on victim-perpetrator relationship were regarded as non-partner homicides; mid-level estimates, where the missing cases

²⁷ Countries with statistical insignificance are purposefully left out of this statement and of my statistical evaluation in general. This applies to countries with a total homicide count lower than 10 deaths per annum.

were distributed like the known case distribution; and high-level estimates, where they restricted the analysis to only the cases with a known victim-perpetrator relationship. The mid-level estimates are even more indicative of the structural differences between male and female homicides: where the general number of IP homicides regardless of gender is 14.05%. The IP femicide rate of the mid-level estimate lies at 42.71% and the male IP homicide rate at 6.47%. The IP femicide rate is 6.6 times the rate of male IPH (Stöckl et al. 2013, 862).

All of the countries examined in this thesis are classified by the World Bank as high-income countries.²⁸ Apart from a few exceptions of small island states which will be excluded because the case number is too low to be statistically relevant. The mentioned countries consistently have female homicide victimisation rates higher than 40% of total homicides. When including the estimated mid-level prevalence of intimate partner femicides by Stöckl et al. of 44.95% in high-income countries (HIC), the structural attributes become even more clear. The mid-level prevalence of male intimate partner homicides in these high-income countries ranges at 6.59%, in comparison. The intimate partner victimisation rate of women in high-income countries lies therefore at 6.82 times the victimisation rate of men (Stöckl et al. 2013, 862).

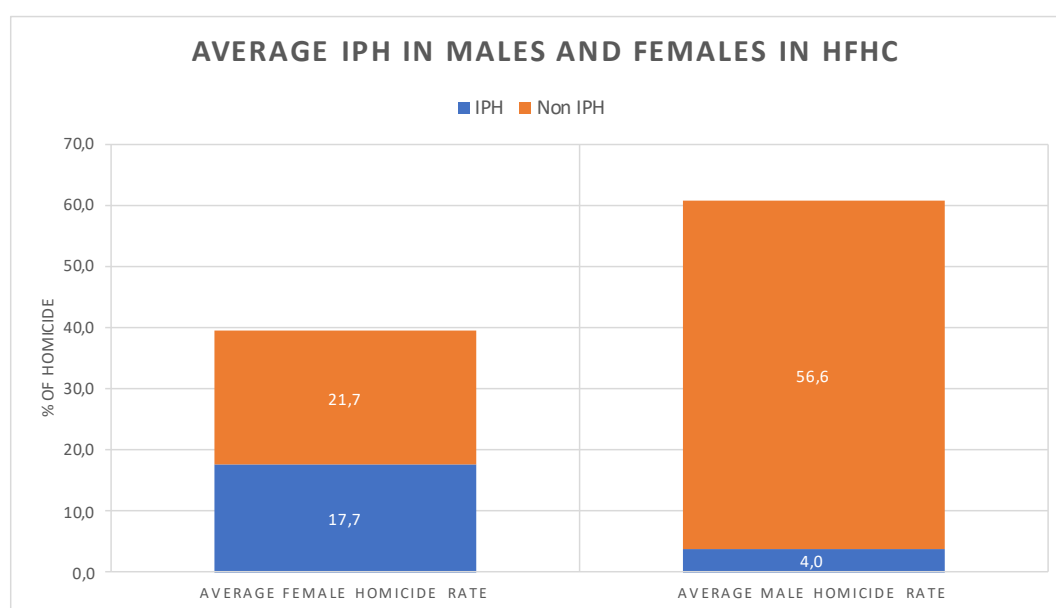


Figure IV, Average IPH in Males and Females in HFHC; Data source: UNODC global homicide database

²⁸ World Bank, list of high income countries, online: <https://datahelpdesk.worldbank.org/knowledgebase/articles/906519-world-bank-country-and-lending-groups> (retrieved May 2020)

In Figure IV we can see the intimate partner homicide distribution, computed with the average female and male homicide number and the average intimate partner homicide rate for the HFH countries. It shows that on average 39.4% of homicide victims in any given year between 1990 and 2017 are female. Of these 39.4% female homicide victims, 44.95% are killed by an intimate partner; whereas only 6.6% of men are victims of an IPH. in total percentages therefore, we can see the female and male victims of intimate partner homicide/femicide in blue and the non-intimate partner killings in orange in the figure above. We can deduct that more than 81% of intimate partner killings in HFHC are committed on women, 17.7% of the overall killings in these countries, more than 4 times the value for male IPH (4%). The structural difference in male and female victimisation becomes apparent in the graphic representation of statistics. If looking at absolute numbers, the structural difference becomes even more apparent, the analysis will be taken further in chapter seven. It is this structural difference that I aim to describe and analyse in this thesis.

6 Towards a structural analysis of femicide

Before approaching the goal of developing a more structurally inclusive and intersectional approach to femicide research, I will briefly revisit the main approaches that are dealing with femicide. In this chapter, the main approaches to femicide research are outlined, and their strengths and weaknesses examined. In a second step, I am combining the strengths of the variety of approaches to form a theoretically informed, interdisciplinary approach to better analyse and understand femicides.

The field of femicide research shows limited interdisciplinary, which is one of its main weaknesses and possibly a reason for the lack of structural research on the topic itself. Criminology, psychology, sociology are becoming more specialised, a process described by Brunner as “fragmentation of knowing, to mask un-knowing”, a process helping to sustain and maintain epistemic violence (Brunner 2020, 103). This fragmentation of expertise is, on the one hand, necessary, as we realise the complexity of the social world. However, it also presents barriers that are difficult to breach, even for researchers in the same field. In this process, interdisciplinarity is at risk and at the same time the answer to the issues arising with the fragmentation through specialisation.

In femicide research, the main approaches can be categorised in 5 main strands. Consuelo Corradi, Shalva Weil et al. (2016) have published a comprehensive review of the different approaches to femicide research.

In the article “Theories of femicide and their significance for social research”, they distinguish between,

1. Feminist approaches: focusing on the patriarchal domination present in all societies;
2. Sociological approaches: focusing on the features of killing women, making it a social phenomenon;
3. Criminological approaches: making femicide a unique section of homicide studies, often focusing on psychological factors and perpetrator pathologies;
4. Human rights approaches: extending the concept to include extreme forms of violence against women, including violence and neglect by the state;
5. Decolonial approaches: focusing on the (post)colonial context of femicides and investigating “honour crimes” (Corradi et al. 2016, 979).

In this chapter, I will look at the most common approaches, namely the criminological approach, the sociological approach, and normative approaches, which entail feminist theories, and the human rights approach. The most widely used approaches in recent femicide research are feminist approaches, criminological or psychological approaches. Many comprehensive femicide studies are published in criminological journals, merely drawing inspiration from the field of feminist theory. There are a variety of reasons why femicide research is sparse and poorly generalisable. Firstly, most studies are national studies. They usually include legal and executive agencies in the nation-state in question.

Moreover, these studies depend largely on NGOs or research centres, investigating these crimes independently from the state. If there exists no civil society engagement to investigate femicides, it is seldomly done. Examples are Great Britain and Italy, where civil society organisations initiated research and data collection. This practice leads to individualised data collection. Secondly, as there exists no universal nor regional standard definition of what counts as femicide, this data is often lacking (EIGE 2019, 4). Many states fail to provide gender-disaggregated homicide data, which makes femicide investigation a task of investigative journalism. In these cases, researchers or activists have to approximate femicide numbers through media monitoring (Walklate et al. 2020, 25).

From the scarce and unreliable data, the multiplicity of research methods used to investigate femicides in different states, generalisations are difficult to obtain. However, with intimate partner femicides on the rise, and continuous omission of female homicide victims in “global homicide studies”, this topic needs a stronger theoretical foundation and advocacy. Examples are Marktanner and Noiset and Schmidt et al., who entirely leave out the category of gender in their research (Marktanner and Noiset 2013; Schmidt et al. 2005). In the case of Schmidt et al. it is especially surprising, given that the majority of victims in their sample were female and the majority of perpetrators male, with most of the crimes taking place in a domestic setting (Schmidt et al. 2005, 169).

In this chapter, I will explore how different disciplines take the complex realities of femicide into account and how we can begin to think a new framework of understanding femicide. Then I will outline in section 6.4, which main features need to be present to develop a theoretically sound, interdisciplinary, structural analysis of femicide.

6.1 Examining criminological & psychological approaches to femicide

Looking at criminological investigations of femicide, it becomes apparent that the use of terminology is not coherent. Femicide is sometimes used as a term to describe *all* female homicide victims, sometimes to describe intimate partner femicide and in some cases for even more specific groups, like murdered wives. This heterogeneity of terminology is one of the main problems of comparability and coherence, which I already discussed in chapter five (5. Counting dead women).

Most examined publications refer to one or more of the following hypotheses, which therefore can be described as state-of-the-art theories in criminology. The theories are listed here as described in Caman et al. (2017, 15):

Exposure reduction theory: assumes that reduced exposure between intimate partners (due to more time apart through education, employment and the possibility of divorce, but also police intervention) reduces violence between intimate partners and therefore reduces IPH risk (Dugan, Rosenfeld, and Nagin 2003, 170).

Ameliorative theory: assumes that increased gender equality will lead to lower rates of male perpetrated IPH. Greater equality should lead to increased opportunities and resources for women, reducing their dependence on violent partners (Dawson 2009, 278; Eriksson and Mazerolle 2013, 463).

Backlash/retaliation theory: assumes of the presence of a retaliation effect. In this case, men who perceive a loss of control over their intimate partner may perpetrate higher numbers of IPH (Dugan, Rosenfeld, and Nagin 2003, 191).

The hypotheses described above originally were conceptualised in a very narrow manner, describing dynamics *within* the violent relationship. Dugan et al. theorise that exposure reduction between intimates where prior IPV was present, leads to a reduction in IP homicides. However, the findings have been generalised in many later studies, assuming that a general decreased exposure between partners in daily life will lead to decreasing IPH incidents (Walklate et al. 2020, 68). Also, the backlash theory has been applied to a broader societal area than initially intended: in some studies, authors are mentioning “backlash of conservative men towards emancipated women” (Heirigs and Moore 2019) as a cause for IPH. Whereas it initially described the backlash faced by female victims of IPV being murdered by former partners as a “retaliation” for leaving the relationship (Dugan, Rosenfeld, and Nagin 2003, 191). These limitations have to be considered.

6.1.1 Risk factors and contextual data

Studies like Campbell et al. identify a set of risk factors associated with IP femicide, including access to a gun, a previous threat with a weapon, estrangement, and significantly increased risk if the victim has left for another partner. For bivariate-level risks, they cite forced sex, abuse during pregnancy and stalking in their 2003 study based on US data (Campbell et al. 2003, 1089). 70% of the victims in their sample were previously abused by the perpetrator, supporting the widely agreed-upon hypothesis that physical abuse is the leading risk factor of femicide (Campbell et al. 2003, 1091). These findings, supported by a theoretical outline, can support a *gender-saturated* femicide analysis as suggested by Walby et al. (see section 5.1).

Smith et al. instead investigate the specifics of intimate partner homicide and corollary victims in their 2014 study; finding that 77% of IPH victims are female and 81% of the incidents took place in a domestic residence in the US (S. G. Smith, Fowler, and Niolon 2014, 463); making the joint home one of the most dangerous places for women in a heterosexual relationship. Moreover, they found that nearly three-quarters of corollary death victims in the examined incidents were new partners of the victim or family members; suggesting the impact these crimes can have on the whole family system (S. G. Smith, Fowler, and Niolon 2014, 464). Of the casualties involved, over 48% of corollary victims were 17 years or younger, indicating the high comorbidity-risk of children present in femicide incidents (ibid.).

Research by Koppa and Messing suggests that later femicide victims in Houston (USA) had been in contact with the police at least once in the three years prior to the femicide in 91% of cases; in average the victims were visited by law enforcement officers over six times in the three years before their death due to reporting of domestic violence (Koppa and Messing 2019, 17). They also examined bi-directional domestic violence which increases the data on male victims of IPV and IPH (Koppa and Messing 2019, 15).

The only global study on intimate partner homicide was provided by Matias et al. in 2020. The authors investigated the risk factors present in a meta-analysis of studies on IPH while supporting the central hypothesis of this thesis that there exist significant differences between IPH and other homicides (Matias et al. 2020, 2). The authors found that the majority of research is done on US data. They moreover found that IPH victims are more likely to have a foreign nationality than other homicide victims and that abuse was predictive of IPH, a finding supported by the majority

of research (Matias et al. 2020, 6). The study by Matias et al. is one of the few considering structural factors like foreign nationality, which might leave the victim at greater vulnerability in terms of protecting themselves or seeking help (2020, 10). It moreover considers the higher predictive power of risk assessment tools for Caucasian victims than any other race, a bias in femicide research that should be examined. Regarding perpetrator characteristics, the authors argue that IPH offenders seem to be better socially integrated than other homicide offenders, with being more likely to be employed, higher levels of education and married (Matias et al. 2020, 10).

“These results also show that the prevention of a higher number of IPH incidents is possible if policies and practices are coordinated by ensuring that the risk assessment tools reflect a gender-competent approach, an intersection of the multiple identities of victims and offenders, and standardized approaches, where practices are monitored and consistent across different sectors.”(Matias et al. 2020, 10).

6.1.2 Time series, detecting trends in homicide/femicide

A recent publication by Allen et al. examines homicide across the ages in an extensive time series, looking at aggregated FBI Supplementary Homicide Reports (SHR) spanning 34 years (1980-2013) (Allen, Salari, and Buckner 2020, 163). Allen et al. find that IPV is a predictor of escalation to death, as well as leaving a partner is particularly dangerous for women.

“Male-on-female homicides, particularly in young IP relationships, are associated with motives of isolation, competition, jealousy, and entitlement.” (Allen, Salari, and Buckner 2020, 165) How does this statement correlate to the high femicide numbers in the examined HFHC in this thesis? Motives of isolation, competition, jealousy and entitlement are feelings that are normalised and justified in the societal context. I will relate to this statement later in chapter seven (7) of this thesis when examining the correlation of femicide to Gender Social Norms. Allen et al. provide for basis in their research, for further structural analysis of femicides in the United States (Allen, Salari, and Buckner 2020, 169).

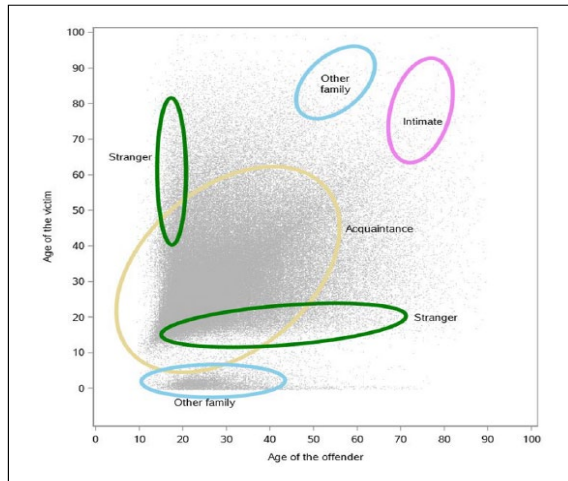


Figure 5. Deviation ellipses of 90%, for male victims only, showing the locations of the highest percent of homicides for each major social group.

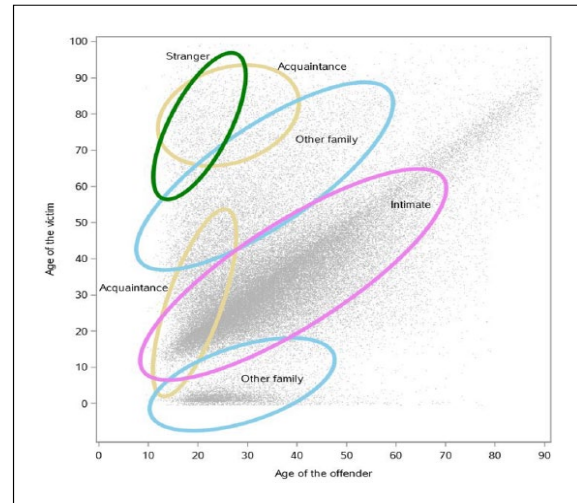


Figure 6. Deviation ellipses of 90%, for female victims only, showing the locations of the highest percent of homicides for each major social group.

Figure V, Deviation ellipses of 90% for male and female victims, Allen et al. (2020, 169).

In Figure V by Allen et al. (2020, 169), the structural differences between male and female homicide victims across all ages becomes apparent. Intimate partner and other family perpetrated femicides are the vast majority in female victimisation. In contrast, most male victims were killed by acquaintances, a minority by strangers. The smallest group of men fell victim to intimate partner violence or familial violence. It is studies like these that help in distinguishing between male and female homicide victimisation; however, they fail to take the next step in analysing the causes for the structural differences. The graphic representation of the perpetrator groups across age groups are valuable insights into the structural differences that are currently not accounted for in femicide prevention.

Caman et al. confirm in their study of Swedish homicides from 1990 to 2013, the dominant trends of the majority of perpetrators being male, while the majority of female victims falling victim to intimate partner femicide. The authors state in their 2017 publication that most of the homicide trends over time concern the United States. They also criticise the established tradition of “treating homicide as a homogenous construct” (Caman et al. 2017, 14). Caman et al. furthermore address the lack of homicide type and gender disaggregation in studies over time, within the already scarce research (ibid., 15). The decrease of IPH perpetrated by women is also mentioned, this is believed to be due to the availability of domestic violence resources, permitting women to exit a violent relationship before she sees no other option than killing her abusive partner (ibid.).

Moreover, they support the hypothesis that non-IPHs have declined steadily, while IPHs have remained stable until 2006. Only since then, there has been a slight decline in IPH in Sweden (Caman et al. 2017, 16). In the United States, in contrast, Cooper et al. found an increase in IP femicides of 5%, whereas the male IPH victimisation rate declined by 53% in the same period, between 1980 to 2008 (Cooper and Smith 2011, 18).

6.1.3 Limitations - The need for differentiated approaches

While some of the above-cited and described works are valuable contributions to the criminological field, it is surprising to see that many are working with controversial theories or are not taking gender as a variable seriously beyond including sex-disaggregated data. My review also included several publications with significant shortcomings in considering differentiated points of view: A recent study on wound patterns in urban versus rural femicide victims could not find conclusive results (Reckdenwald, Szalewski, and Yohros 2019, 670). Their assumptions seemed to be disconnected from the mainstream body of work in the field. The same applies to investigations of the exposure and backlash theory, while not accounting for risk factors like divorce, or theorising them contrary to other main studies (Reckdenwald and Parker 2012, 179). Other studies do not account for gender-specific victimisation rates. They argue “that male and female victimisation rates follow the same trend” (Heirigs and Moore 2019, 5), which is highly unlikely due to their inherently different structure but also contested in other publications (Cooper and Smith 2011, 17; Burba 2017). The main finding of Heirigs and Moore was that “Gender inequality is a significant predictor of [overall] homicide”(2019, 9) and therefore support the amelioration hypothesis, while simultaneously supporting the backlash theory, which they extended significantly beyond the original definition.

There is a need for the disaggregation of data along different lines next to using different variables. Global studies per se cannot help in uncovering structures, the regionality, as well as factors like income per capita, gender social norms, educational level, and fertility age of women, are of great importance. Investigating countries with similar structural factors, like the HFH countries identified in this thesis, can help in examining trends better and obtaining higher analytical results. I did not find and therefore review any studies that identified groups of countries with similar structural factors, like a higher female than male homicide victimisation rate. This finding represents a research gap that should be closed. Groups of countries like the HFHC are homogenous in their characteristic, being high-income-countries and having overall low crime as

well as homicide rates. Comparing and analysing trends in this context will likely bring greater enlightenment than national studies, contributing to the structural investigation of femicides.

As the 80:20 ratio of male to female murder victims becomes less generalisable, there is a need for more differentiated explanations. Research of Sylvia Walby et al. (2014) shows that violence (against women specifically) is under-measured and ubiquitous, and the malpractice in recording crimes renders the majority of violence against women invisible. They argue that the division into general criminology and criminology that deals with gendered violence is flawed. In this division, the field fails to account for structural factors in leaving out gender as a category. Moreover, the broader definition of violence (see section 4.2, 4.3), including abuse of power as well as recording the victim-offender relationship is mostly unaccounted for.

“Our hypothesis is that there is sufficient evidence of the large-scale extent of domestic and gendered violence to require the modification of mainstream sociological and criminological theory” (Walby, Towers, and Francis 2014, 198).

Walby, Towers and Francis therefore call for an adaption of the field of criminology and sociology to the latest findings, e.g. including gender-saturated variables. In their study of official crime data in England and Wales (including official statistics and results of the Crime Survey for England and Wales CSEW), they found nearly as many violent offences against women as against men; women being the victims in 45% of the cases, men in 55%. *“This challenges the assumption that ‘violence’ is primarily a matter of men being violent to other men.”* (Walby, Towers, and Francis 2014, 206). Walby, Towers, and Francis were able to come to the illustrated conclusion because they counted all the violent incidents and did not “cap” them, meaning leaving out multiple repeated offences of the same crime under the same circumstances, while also applying gender-sensitive statistical methods (Walby et al., 2014, 201 ff).

Homicide data is, in most cases, more straightforward; however, the findings can be applied to IP homicides. Caman et al. found that murder-suicides were not counted in the group of IPH, although a profound percentage of IPH perpetrators commit suicide after the femicide (Caman et al. 2017, 19). These examples are impactful, considering the implications for sociological and criminological theory. Belief systems in research dealing with crime are as omnipresent as belief systems in any area humans are present. However, the fact that interpretations of statistical data can vary significantly is at least worrisome, if not undermining the actions of law enforcement. The problem in dealing with quantitative data is the belief in objective truth the data supposedly

tells. As Walby et al. demonstrated, and other research confirms (Walklate et al. 2020) it is a concept to be critically examined. The epistemic systems, as well as the societies we live in, are not a white sheet of paper, but complex scenes shaped by historical realities, dominant discourses and hegemonic power dynamics.

6.2 Review of sociological approaches

In her 2016 publication, Weil examines the quasi-invisibility of femicide in sociological literature (Weil 2016, 1133). She states seven hypotheses why sociological femicide research is so sparse and calls for a broader representation and analysis of the topic. The 2018 publication “Femicide across Europe” can be described as an outcome of the effort to provide more sociological research on the topic (Weil, Corradi, and Naudi 2018). This publication is one of the first comprehensible volumes on femicide in Europe, a field which has expanded since then.

The 2018 “Routledge Handbook of Gender and Violence” edited by Nancy Lombard is a valuable contribution, highlighting the chapter by Karen Ingala Smith on “Femicide”(K. I. Smith 2018; Lombard 2018). “Towards a Global Femicide Index” by Walklate et al. (eds.) is another example of a recent increase in sociological femicide research. The arguments presented in the publication are informed by feminist theory but aim at a sociological investigation of the phenomenon (Walklate et al. 2020).

Walby, Towers et al. published “The concept and measurement of violence against women and men”, which can be counted as a contribution to sociology, however, it mainly focuses on definitions and measurements, as in ways of counting (2017). The authors are calling for coordination efforts in order to “*ensure the development of the coherent measurement framework for violence against women and men, including indicators and the collection of consistent quality data*” (Walby et al. 2017, 145). According to the authors, improvements are needed on an institutional level; in terms of indicators; data collection, -processing, -linkage, -protection, -availability; and the establishment of research programmes (Walby et al. 2017, 146).

Sanz-Barbero, Corradi et al. found in their 2018 study on 28 European countries that having suffered abuse before the age of 15 was the strongest indicator for increased probability for women of suffering IPV later in life (Sanz-Barbero et al. 2018).

“Interpersonal Violence“ by Husso, Virkki et al. (eds.) provides a heterogeneous but insightful account of different forms of IP investigation (Husso et al. 2017). It also includes an article by Dobash and Dobash who are pioneering the field of IPH (R. P. Dobash and Emerson Dobash 2017). The vast body of work provided by Dobash and Dobash can be considered to be at the borders of sociological and criminological research. They mostly deal with the British and more specifically, the English context (R. E. Dobash et al. 2004, 2007; R. P. Dobash and Dobash 2015). There exist many studies on intimate partner violence (Heise and Kotsadam 2015; Fulu et al. 2013); however, the study of femicide was sparse before 2015.

6.3 Review of normative approaches

Another class of approaches to femicide are what I call here *normative approaches*. They include feminist, human rights, and decolonial approaches to femicide. It has to be mentioned that feminist and therefore normative theories of violence widely influence a majority of sociological approaches, hence could also be classified as normative. However, I chose to differentiate because sociological contributions present a mostly different research focus and are examining quantitative factors. Qualitative research in the field of femicide is a challenging endeavour, mostly because the subjects in question – the femicide victims – cannot be interviewed (Weil 2016, 1130). There exists, however, a strand of research investigating perpetrator motifs (R. P. Dobash and Dobash 2015) and interviews with the victims’ proxies (Campbell et al. 2003). Taylor and Jasinsky argue in their 2011 publication for the efficacy of using feminist approaches for analysis while providing a comprehensive overview of criticisms of this paradigm (R. Taylor and Jasinski 2011, 343).

A section of feminist research is dealing with media representation of IPV and femicide. Multiple studies claim an existing media bias in covering femicide (R. Taylor 2009; Grubb and Turner 2012; Gillespie et al. 2013; van der Bruggen and Grubb 2014).

Gillespie et al. investigated media frames of deadly domestic violence in the US (Gillespie et al. 2013). They found that many incidents of femicide are explained as “commonplace”, or their “magnitude is obscured by placing blame on the victim”; while they also found that about 25% framed “femicides in the context of domestic violence as a greater social problem”(Gillespie et al. 2013, 240).

In a more recent study, Bouzerdan and Whitten-Woodring conclude that reporting on female homicides is inherently biased and influenced by the race, gender and economic status of the people involved. They come to the conclusion that femicides are framed as isolated crimes, which

makes it hard to detect structural factors that facilitate uniquely intimate partner femicides (Bouzerdan and Whitten-Woodring 2018, 218).

Taylor found in her 2009 study on Florida media that frames of victim-blaming are used in describing femicide incidents (R. Taylor 2009). She details the victim blame tactics present in media reporting (2009, 34) and finds significant bias.

Grubb and Turner, as well as van der Bruggen and Grubb, all find bias in the context of rape victim-blaming in the examined media (Grubb and Turner 2012; van der Bruggen and Grubb 2014). Their findings also relate to bias regarding femicide in the media.

6.3.1 Radical feminist approaches

There exists a long and well documented radical feminist strand of theory in femicide research, initiated by Russell in the late 1970s. It is sustained and propagated by feminists from mainly the Global North, although it is facing more and more criticism by scholars from the Global South and other researchers in the field (Caman et al. 2017, 669). An example of the radical feminist approach is the publication “Femicide in Global Perspective”, edited by Russell and Harmes (Russell and Harmes 2001).

Radical feminist approaches mostly criticise men’s power over women as a genus, whereby they define women as a biologically homogenous group. Russell’s definition of femicide has slightly changed since the introduction of the term in 1976; however, the claim that men are the oppressors and women the victims also remained in recent publications (Russell 2001). Critics of this approach cite blanket statements as problematic; the radical feminist approach does not leave room for a nuanced analysis of IPV. Recent research found that bi-directional IPV is more likely to be the norm than the exception, moreover violence in same-sex couples remains invisible using radical feminist approaches (Caman et al. 2017, 671). Many male children and new partners also become corollary victims in femicides as studies proved (S. G. Smith, Fowler, and Nolon 2014), making claims of radical feminist theorists as all men being oppressors and only women victims questionable. Radical feminist approaches are mainly situated in the Global North, and some present a limited understanding of contexts outside of this region. They are also the most widely criticised approaches inside and outside the feminist discourse.

6.3.2 Human rights & decolonial approaches

The diverse United Nations Organisations mostly use the human rights approach to describe and analyse femicide. In the Report of the Special Rapporteur on Violence Against Women, human

rights arguments can be distinguished. Still, the report also draws upon feminist arguments, while also detailing the history of bringing femicide on the global agenda (Human Rights Council 2012, 6).

Some theorists conceptualise femicide along with the human rights argument, arguing that “*IPV is a mass harm against women which is state-sanctified*” (Rose 2015, 31). Rose argues that IPV needs to be classified as a crime against humanity and punished through international legal efforts (2015, 34).

“IPV does not involve random acts of violence perpetrated by errant, pathological individuals. Nor are IPV’s victims random. This violence is a systematic, sex-based harm: a form of persecution which is intrinsic to the patriarchal state’s system-wide oppression of women. (...) I propose that systematic IPV against women be understood as a crime against humanity and a state crime: a mass harm of international significance for which not only individual perpetrators, but also states and institutions, are liable.”(Rose 2015, 38).

An example of a decolonial approach is Ryen with “Categories and orthodoxies in studies on culture and femicide” (2018). Also, Shalhoub-Kevorkian falls into this category with an in-depth examination of femicide in Palestine (Shalhoub-Kevorkian 2003).

The tradition of Latin American feminists mentioned in section 2.3 of this thesis can also be counted to be at the intersection of a human rights and decolonial approach to femicide (Fregoso et al. 2010; Fregoso and Bejarano 2010; Domínguez-Ruvalcaba and Ravelo Blancas 2010). Notable is Moral who investigated how the frame of feminicidio operated domestically and transnationally and therefore helped to amplify the issue on a national and international level (García-Del Moral 2016, 1024).

6.3.3 Critiques of gendered theories of violence against women

A group of scholars is dedicated to criticising the so-called “gender paradigm” in research; they accuse gendered theories of violence against women as being sexist and lacking nuance. While criticism is essential in the academic discourse to advance the field and improve works, some of the scholars at the forefront of the gender-critical group are tapping into men’s rights discourses and are questioning the concept of VAW as a whole. A familiar name in this discourse is Dutton (Dutton 2006, 2011, 2012). He mainly argues that most IPV is bi-directional and questions the statistics detailing the victimisation of women. Dutton’s views have been criticised widely, and he is accused of propagating sexist stereotypes and misogynistic views (Johnson 2011, 290).

Another example is Bandelli and Porcelli that are criticising the feminist gender discourse on femicide as well as “*a cultural understanding of the human being as a self-determined artificially constructed identity*” (Bandelli and Porcelli 2016, 1071). The authors are using theoretical tools very similar to the ones used in this thesis but arrive at widely different results.

“Therefore, by borrowing from Foucault’s theory of biopolitics and Habermas’s theory of public sphere we suggest looking at ‘femminicidio’ as a technology of power that colonizes contemporary domains of life.”(Bandelli and Porcelli 2016, 1073)

Bandelli and Porcelli’s critique is mainly a critique of “postmodernist constructivism”, in which they question the reality and even existence of transgender people and emphasise the importance of biological sex (Bandelli and Porcelli 2016, 1081). According to the authors, the concept of femicide (*femminicidio* in Italian) is becoming hegemonic in the public discourse in Italy and advances the feminist postmodernist agenda. This view can be defused when looking at studies on media representation of femicide (see section 6.3) and the substantial legal and representative issues still existing in Europe and around the world (see chapter 2).

While there needs to be more advocacy for men as victims of domestic violence, and there still exists a research desiderate in studying the causes and effects of male victimisation; it remains true that the majority of perpetrators also in these cases are men. There is a lack of research on violence in same-sex couples, as well as a lack of research on female perpetrators. These are essential issues to address and should not remain unnoticed. However, I would argue that feminist approaches especially are aware of the detrimental effects of violent patriarchal culture on men and women, respectively. Moreover, it would be essential to work with multipolar understandings of power and introduce “classical European political theory” in the analysis of femicide, like I am aiming to do in this thesis. However, these theories need to be expanded to account for the complex social realities they are trying to analyse and not applied in their narrowest reading to exclude realities of suffering and intersectional discrimination, like the ones of trans people (Cannon, Lauve-Moon, and Buttell 2015). In the next section, I will detail how a more inclusive and nuanced approach to femicide analysis can be achieved.

6.4 Towards a new framework

Gartner states in a 1990 article, “*According to Verkko’s (1951) “universal static and dynamic laws of homicide,” homicide rates for females are relatively invariant over time and place*” (Gartner 1990, 98). It is a

statement which is not easily generalizable – as with a total increase of homicides, also the female victimization rate increases. However, it is found true concerning intimate partner homicide in most examined studies and across different fields and especially in countries with generally low homicide rates. It is also a statement, which has been given no importance in homicide research and therefore is a little-explored truth. Why are female homicide rates so invariant or stable over time? What causes this stability, and does this stability hold across national and cultural borders? The structural particularities of female homicide victimization have been considered only marginally in research; which does the importance of the topic no justice.

Corradi et al. (2016) conclude “that [femicide] is a *complex social phenomenon*, requiring macro, meso and micro theories, as well as multifaceted explanations, that are sensitive to socio-historical contexts and structures of interaction among individuals.” (Corradi et al. 2016, 983). Corradi and Stöckl, in their 2014 study of ten European countries, found no evident link between rates of intimate partner violence/homicide and government policies to address IPH (Corradi and Stöckl 2014, 613). A finding which amplifies the need for structural responses to gender discrimination. The findings suggest that current policies are too focused on criminal justice and individual perpetrator behaviour, without accounting for the structured nature of violence women face. It suggests gender blindness of governments, which do not account for gender social norms in their countries but favour individualizing the symptoms in blaming individual perpetrator pathologies instead of structural inequality.

There is a recent increase in studies taking qualitative and quantitative data into account. An example is Monckton Smith with her 8-stage model to prevent femicide, which is informed through Foucauldian discourse analysis while taking criminological data as a basis (Monckton Smith 2019, 2). The author contests that “*violence alone is the most significant predictive risk marker and also that IPF is spontaneous and situational*” therefore contesting the “passion crime discourse” (Monckton Smith 2019, 16). The eight stages of femicide (1. Established violence patterns pre-relationship, 2. Fast and possessive stages in the early relationship, 3. Coercive control in the relationship, 4. Triggers like a threat of separation, 5. Escalation, 6. A change in thinking or the decision to commit femicide, 7. Planning of the crime, 8. Femicide) are a comprehensible scheme that should be tested for applicability, and in the best-case scenario can be an instruction for intervention (Monckton Smith 2019).

Femicide is an occurrence so pervasive and common, cutting across cultural, ethnic and economic barriers. The way a society thinks, talks and includes or excludes a topic into its discourse can be characterised as epistemic violence (Brunner 2020, 96). Understanding femicide in a framework of epistemic violence can help in unravelling how deeply it is embedded and how little it is problematised. As Ryen states,

“Women do not get killed at the structural level, and variables do not themselves kill, but classic variable-use may prevent us from seeing how institutions are regularly enacted” (Ryen 2018, 10).

As most European victims have no contact with the police or other agencies before their killing, or if they do the murder is not prevented, the institutional failure to protect their citizens becomes apparent (Walklate et al. 2020, 84).

„The important thing is to avoid reductionism and ideological assumptions based on external concepts and theories, in addition to normative assumptions perceived as universal, including a misperception of the strengths of women, although in unanticipated ways.“ (Ryen 2018, 13).

In agreement with Ryen, reductionism and ideological assumptions should be avoided, while keeping in mind that each hypothesis also in quantitative studies is inherently normative. Acknowledging this might help in moving towards a more comprehensive analysis of femicide.

“(...) all forms of research are inherently normative, the challenge may be to keep reflecting on the tools of social change that we are engaging with, changing our questions and our processes and approach to measurement to make sure what we are counting and the way we are counting are focused on what it is we want to change. We also need to recognize that counting alone is not enough (...)“ (Walklate et al. 2020, 72).

Femicide is indeed a multifaceted problem that needs a multifaceted approach and understanding of violence to find explanations and preventions. A disaggregation along different variables is needed; just providing gender-disaggregated data is not enough to fully account for the reasons behind femicide perpetration. Cannon et al. postulate,

„Different from the conventional individualist approach to theorizing IPV, which understands IPV as the result of gender, the framework of “doing gender” allows for the theorization of gender as both an outcome and cause of IPV. (...) [G]ender both acts as a predictor of IPV and is created through the perpetration of IPV (i.e., an act of masculinity). As a result of how hegemonic masculinity is constructed, power is attained through “doing gender”, or more specifically “doing masculinity”, and is a result of gender” (Cannon, Lauve-Moon, and Buttell 2015, 678).

Global studies can be relevant in some instances (cf. Matias et al. 2020), but they often fail to detect regional structures. Regionality could provide more valuable insight into the structural particularities of victimization. The group of HFHC identified in this thesis, is quite homogenous in their characteristics, making it an interesting case study. Therefore, more research along these lines is needed in order to move away from national studies which fail to account for universal or at least regional structural factors in femicide victimization. I will close this chapter with a quote by Walklate et al.,

“If we are to take gender seriously, our measurements need to be focused on perpetration and individual responsibility as well as visibility and accuracy” (Walklate et al. 2020, 70).

In the next chapter, I apply the methodological and theoretical considerations of chapter four on the data presented in chapter five. I will, therefore, analyse the structural particularities of HFHC countries and attempt to perform a structurally sensitive, intersectional analysis of femicide in these countries.

7 Analysis

In this chapter I, will provide the results of my theoretical and statistical analysis of the HFHC mentioned in chapter five of this thesis. What interests me is

- (1) the apparent stability of intimate partner femicides in HFHC,
- (2) the equal to higher number of female homicide victims than male victims in certain HIC – contrasting the global trend,
- (3) the structural difference between male and female homicide victimisation,
- (4) the lack of description and analysis of these observations in the presented literature, and therefore,
- (5) a lack of policy response to the structural differences of male and female homicide victimisation.

In chapter six, I detailed the lack of description and analysis of differences in male and female homicide victimisation, present in the reviewed literature. I conclude consequently that current policies do not account for the gendered nature of female homicide victimisation and fail to prevent it. This chapter is structured along the four main hypotheses introduced in chapter four (4 Methodology & Theory). The hypotheses are discussed before moving on to a summary of the findings.

I. Female homicides are structurally different from the majority of male homicides.

The majority of female homicides are intimate partner or familial homicides and can be classified as femicides. This hypothesis can be confirmed for the HFHC in question. The classification of female IPFM homicides as femicides is useful because it provides a category that is *gender-saturated* and does more than disaggregate into binary categories. Thinking the structural implications while examining risks, causes and structural particularities of female victimisation is essential in grasping and then preventing the phenomenon. There is a need for a regional if not universal standard of what counts as a femicide and which are the particular features that distinguish a femicide from a female homicide. As proposed in chapter two, I advocate for the use of the following definition of femicide:

Umbrella term describing the gender related killing of women and girls, it refers to personal as well as structural violence that lead to the death of women and girls. This definition includes the killing of women and girls based

on a gender power structure by private or state actors; it is characterised by systemic violence rooted in social, political, economic and cultural inequalities.

The above-cited definition includes femicides committed in the global North and the HFHC, as there exist significant institutional and executive shortcomings in preventing femicides. Dawson found in a 2016 Canadian study that stranger femicides are punished more harshly (more first-degree murder charges and longer prison sentences) than intimate partner femicides, although IPF makes up the majority of femicides (Dawson 2016, 1005). Also, looking at Austrian data provided by a study of Birgit Haller, proves that in over 56% of IP femicide cases in Austria between 2007 and 2010, a prior domestic violence accusation against the perpetrator was known by the police, however, in nearly all of the cases prior violence of the perpetrator was present (Haller 2014, 64). 36% of the Austrian femicide victims were in contact with violence prevention and intervention centres prior to their death, showing the seeming inefficiency of the measures in place (ibid.). Looking at the numbers, and the graphic representation in Figure VI, the structural difference between male and female homicide victimisation becomes apparent.

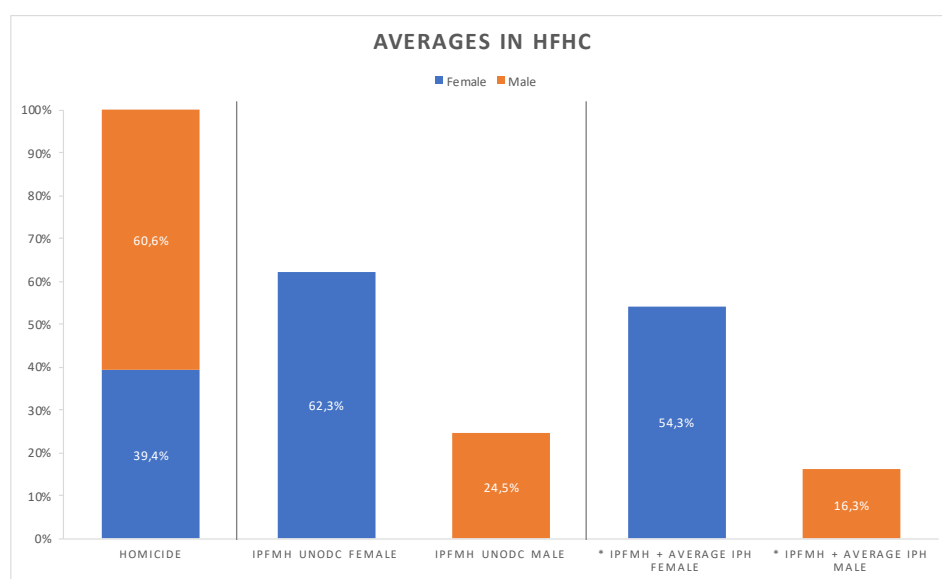


Figure VI, IPFMH Averages in HFHC; Data source: UNODC global homicide database

Computed with UNODC data on intimate partner and familial homicide per country from the years 2005-2012, the average IPFMH rate for women in HFHC lies at 62,3% of all female homicides. In comparison, the male IPFMH rate in the HFHC ranges at less than half of the female rate with an average of 24,5% of all male homicides. For reference, in the first column in the figure above are the average female and male homicide rates of the HFHC listed.

The third set of columns is computed including the average IPH rate for high-income countries provided by Stöckl et al. for the countries where the UNODC IPFM homicide rate was missing (Stöckl et al. 2013). The countries for which no UNODC IPFM homicide data were available are Belgium, Denmark, Georgia, Japan, Latvia, Norway, Oman, Portugal, Republic of Korea, Slovakia and Switzerland.²⁹ For these before-mentioned countries, I, therefore, substituted Stöckl et al.'s rate of IPH – this average does not include the homicides committed by family members and therefore is lower than the UNODC average. Still, for comparative purposes, it is included in Figure VI.

Country AVERAGES	Fem. Homicides %	IPFM femicides %	IPFM homicides %
Austria	50,6	47,1%	15,3%
Belgium	40,5	45,0%	6,6%
China, Hong Kong SAR	50,8	75,1%	35,5%
Croatia	36,2	52,7%	34,8%
Cyprus	28,3	63,4%	11,8%
Czechia	41,7	64,1%	49,9%
Denmark	40,8	45,0%	6,6%
Finland	30,3	73,5%	16,1%
Georgia	24,6	45,0%	6,6%
Germany	46,7	43,9%	23,2%
Hungary	39,9	62,4%	31,3%
Japan	49,0	45,0%	6,6%
Latvia	50,3	45,0%	6,6%
Luxembourg	45,1	71,1%	13,0%
Montenegro	22,1	100,0%	22,2%
New Zealand	37,9	61,0%	25,7%
Norway	41,6	45,0%	6,6%
Oman	29,9	45,0%	6,6%
Portugal	29,9	45,0%	6,6%
Republic of Korea	52,1	45,0%	6,6%
Singapore	36,0	33,7%	9,9%
Slovakia	33,0	45,0%	6,6%
Slovenia	40,2	61,5%	29,8%
Switzerland	48,9	45,0%	6,6%
Average HFHC	39,4	62,3%	24,5%
Average including Stöckl IPH data		54,3%	16,3%

Figure VII, Table of IPFM Homicides HFHC; Data source: UNODC global homicide database and Stöckl et al. 2013³⁰

²⁹ Georgia and Latvia had data for only one year of the time period and where therefore also excluded. For a detailed representation of data see

Figure VII, Table of IPFM Homicides HFHC.

³⁰ The light grey numbers in this table are the averages computed by Stöckl et al. (2013) and substitute for the missing UNODC IPFMH data, however, they only represent IPH and do not include familial homicides.

From Figure VI and

Figure VII, it becomes apparent that there exist significant structural differences in homicide victimisation of men and women in HFHC. There also seems to be less fluctuation of femicides in comparison with the male homicide rate. Due to the high prevalence of IPFM femicides, the female homicide rates seem to be influenced to a lesser extent by other criminal activity. The stability of the IPF rate also supports the theoretical implications (see chapter four, 4. Methodology & Theory). The importance and sanctity of the nuclear family remain unchallenged. The family is seen as the reign of the patriarch, and therefore, executive interventions within this sphere are sparse and ineffective. The private sphere as the most dangerous place for a woman to be is worth further investigation on a theoretical as well as a quantitative level. Hence, the first hypothesis is confirmed: ***Yes, female homicides are mostly femicides and are structurally different from male homicides in HFH countries.***

II. Intimate partner femicides are stable or increasing in numbers whereas the general trend in total homicide rates is decreasing.

Research suggests that male and female homicide rates are progressing differently. There seems to exist a general decline in male victimisation of IPH, whereas the female IPH victimisation is either stable or slightly declining. Generally, female IPFMV victimisation seems to be remarkably stable. Studies confirm that there is a different progression of male and female homicide rates (Caman et al. 2017, 16; Cooper and Smith 2011, 17). Also, in the 2013 Homicide Report UNODC notices that “*intimate partner/family-related homicide is, on average, remarkably stable at the global level, though more significant differences are visible at the regional level*” (UNODC 2014, 49). UNODC found no significant variability in the average rate of IPFM homicides from 2006 to 2011, whereas the total homicide rate decreased by 15 per cent in the examined countries (ibid.). Eisner confirms this stability in the historical study of European homicide data (Eisner 2008). Knowing that most IPFM homicide victims are women, a difference in progression of male and female victimisation rates can be inferred. However, there is no uniform study confirming the rise of IPF cases.

Taking the case of Japan, for example; the overall homicide count and therefore the homicide rate of the country has been decreasing steadily since 1994. However, as can be visualised in a chart – the male homicide count, so the absolute numbers of male victims, has declined more starkly than the female count, leading to a switch in the majority of homicide victimisation around the year 2005. Since then, the female homicide count has consistently exceeded the male one. Japan ranges in the top 20 of the Human Development Index, still 68,8% of its population hold at least one

significant bias against gender equality according to the Gender Social Norms Index. There exists no gender-disaggregated data on the intimate partner and familial homicide rate in Japan; therefore, only the rate of intimate partner homicides/femicides can be computed relying on data provided by Stöckl et al. The IPH rate shows the same trend as shown above: 45% of women on average are killed by intimate partners. In comparison, only 6,6% of male homicide victims are killed by IPV.

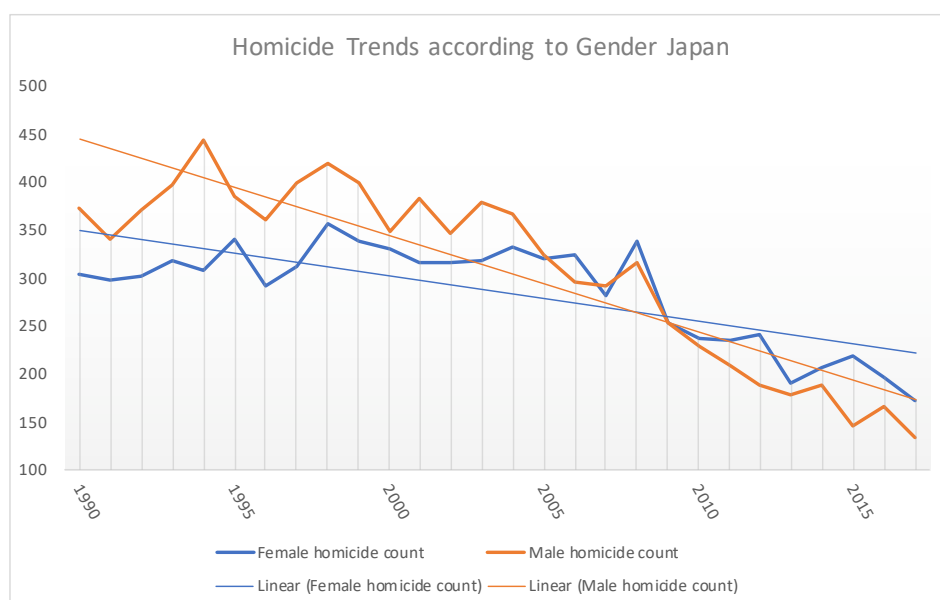


Figure VIII, Homicide Trends in Japan; Data source: UNODC global homicide database

In Figure VIII, we can see that although the male and the female homicide count are falling since 1994, the male homicide count is declining more starkly than the female one. In 2005 there was a trend reversal when the female homicide count exceeded the male one, the first time since the beginning of UNODC records. Looking at the linear trend line for the female and male homicide rate, the difference in progression becomes more apparent. If male and female homicide rates were influenced by the same factors, regardless of gender, these trends would not be so consistent and apparent. Therefore, I suggest that male and female homicide rates are structurally different and also progressing differently.

It is noteworthy that there seems to be relative stability in female IPH victimisation, across national borders. Analysing the mean homicide count as well as the mean homicide rate according to gender for the HFH countries – clear trends seem to emerge.

In Figure IX and Figure X, we can see the mean homicide count for the HFHC (so the mean absolute homicide numbers disaggregated by gender) and the mean homicide rate (homicides per 100.000 inhabitants disaggregated by gender). The general homicide count, as well as the rate, are

declining in the HFH countries. However, with this decline, the male and female rate seem to approach each other.

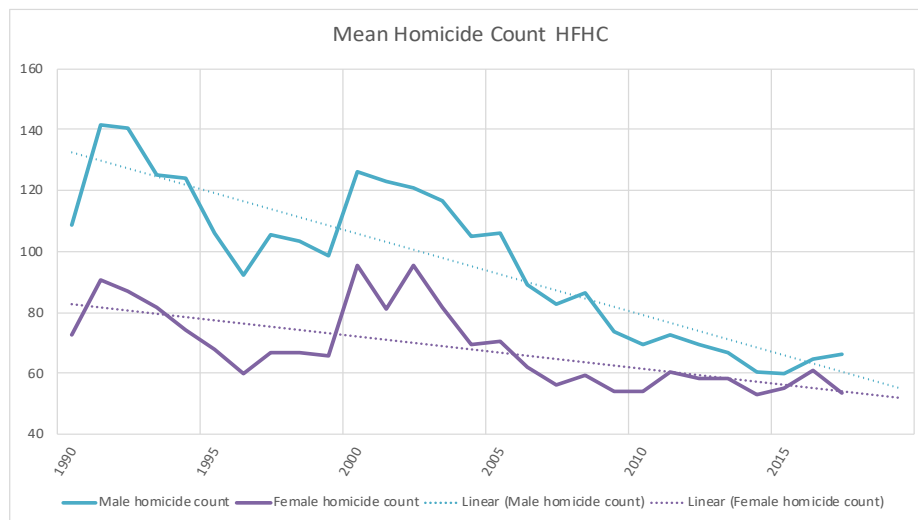


Figure IX, Mean Homicide Count HFHC; Data source: UNODC global homicide database

In Figure IX, we can see how the mean homicide count for females is declining less pronounced than the male count. When looking at the linear trends for the male and female count, respectively – the decline of a lesser extent of the female trend line is visible.

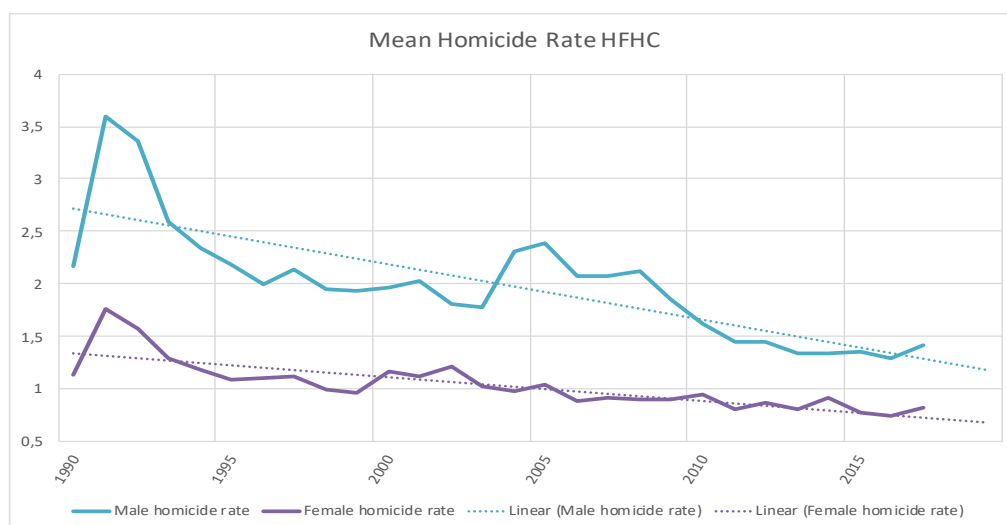


Figure X, Mean Homicide Rate HFHC; Data source: UNODC global homicide database

In Figure X, the stability of the female homicide rate becomes apparent. Looking at the trend line for the female homicide rate in HFHC, we can see that it has a smaller range than the male trend line. The smaller range is also represented in the standard deviation of the homicide rates. Even with low absolute case numbers of homicide victimisation, the standard deviation of female homicide victimisation in HFHC is lower compared to overall homicide data and compared to the male standard deviation (see Figure XI). This finding is important because it supports the

hypothesis for the relative stability of femicides in comparison to male homicides. A lower standard deviation in the female homicide rate in HFH countries, suggests higher stability, due to less fluctuation, in female victimisation rates.

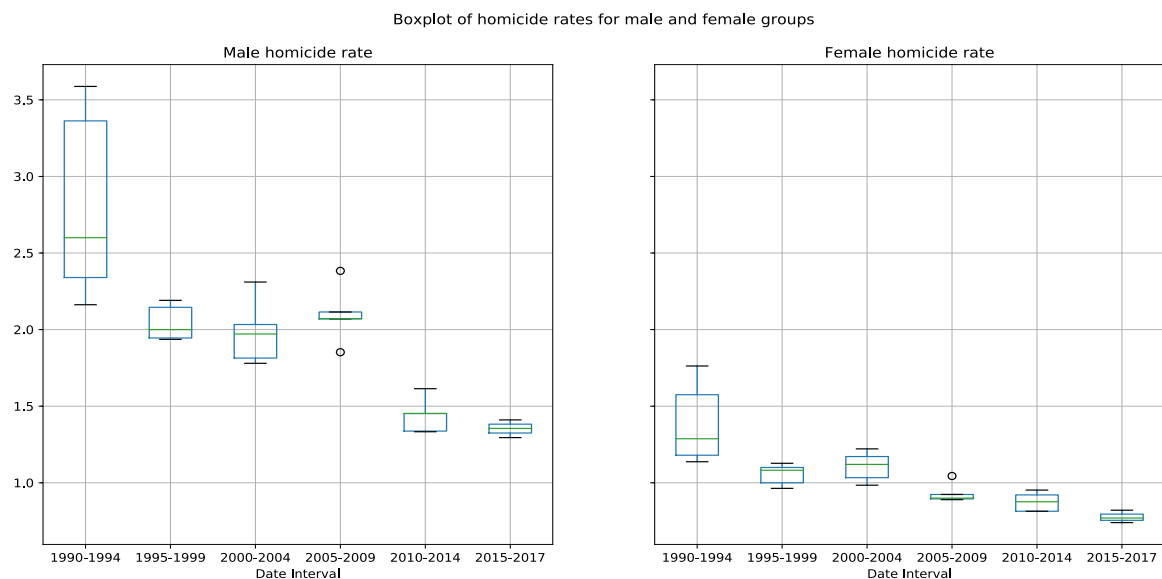


Figure XI, Boxplots, Male and Female Homicide Rate HFHC; Data source: UNODC global homicide database

Concerning the European Union, EIGE states in its 2019 Gender Equality Report that as many as 11 of EU Member States do not provide data on female victims of intentional homicide perpetrated by intimate partner or familial violence (EIGE 2019, 4). Therefore, these trends are difficult to determine. It is difficult to give definitive results with the current availability of data, and the hypothesis can, therefore, not be easily confirmed. More consistent and reliable data is needed, as well as data on more countries. What can be tentatively confirmed is that the male and female homicide rate is progressing differently, and their structural difference should be further investigated.

Even if there is a slight decline in the female homicide rate, the stability of femicides, especially IPF, is striking and worth investigating. Most reviewed publications in this thesis note the high rate of IPF but do not attempt to explain it. Why is the intimate partner femicide rate so high? Why is it so common for women to be killed by (ex-)partners and in their own homes? These are structural and therefore, fundamental questions that yet have to be answered.

The hypothesis cannot be clearly confirmed in the scope of this thesis; however, the data suggest that female and male homicide rates are structurally different. The difference becomes apparent in the different progression and trends of the mean male and female homicide rates in HFHC.

III. Better categorization is required, as well as an improved, and uniform data collection, gender-disaggregated data, and the recording of victim-offender relationships, to correctly identify femicides and design fitting policy responses.

As the discussion on hypothesis II shows, there is an acute need for uniform data collection, the recording of victim-offender relationships, and gender-saturated variables, in order to identify and prevent femicides. Recent publications by Walklate et al. as well as by the COST action group “Femicide across Europe” are calling for regional and worldwide femicide record and index to begin to understand the pervasiveness of the problem and start preventing it in the future (Walklate et al. 2020; Weil and Corradi 2017).

In order to achieve a femicide recording system there needs to be a way of recording *gender-saturated dimensions* of violence (Walby et al. 2017, 54). Data should be collected uniformly, by a non-governmental body that has the power to request missing data. The variables to be collected should include:

- (1) the sex of the victim(s),
- (2) the sex of the perpetrator(s),
- (3) the relationship between victim and offender (spousal, familial, acquainted),
- (4) whether and how there was a sexual aspect to the violence (including LGBTQ markers),
- (5) the motivation for committing the crime,
- (6) situational and contextual factors (prior domestic violence recorded, prior police involvement, prior DV interventions by other agencies, other victims).

These variables should be recorded and counted as femicide even when there was no conviction of the perpetrator due to his later suicide. Murder-suicide poses one major obstacle in data collection and representation of femicide numbers, as those femicide-suicide cases are often excluded from statistics or not counted, although very common (Caman et al. 2017, 19). A full representation cannot be achieved if certain cases are left out due to the suicide of the perpetrator.

The issues arising through variable data collection and variable definition of femicide are vast and need to be addressed. There seem to be structural particularities, especially in the examined HFHC, to confirm these, regional studies of countries with similar features are needed. However, these studies can only be achieved once the respective governments provide the data. The COST Action group led by Weil and Corradi tried to achieve a European femicide index. The initiative was

discontinued after 2017 (Weil and Corradi 2017). After the ending of the COST project on femicide, the European Observatory on Femicide was launched which aims to:

- “Monitor and supply data to policy makers and general public to promote prevention, social change and wellbeing of women.
- Support the effective implementation of legislation and policy n all levels (international, European, national).
- Contribute to the advancement of research.
- Improve data accessibility and quality.
- Promote comparability across states.
- Gain understanding of local contexts.
- Work in solidarity with relevant stakeholders in the field.”³¹

There are initiatives that call for uniformity, comparability and higher contextualisation of femicide data. Still, the efforts are regional and have not yet trickled through to policy makers.

Better and uniform data collection is needed, moreover, combatting femicide needs the recording of gender-saturated variables to understand the phenomenon better.

IV. Higher female victimisation rates seem to have little correlation to the cultural background of the country in question; however, the lowest common denominator detectable so far, is the belonging to the group of high-income nations and having low overall homicide rates.

The high female homicide countries identified in this thesis can be described as culturally heterogeneous. Currently, countries in Western Europe, but effectively all HFHC examined here, are experiencing the lowest rates of interpersonal killing ever recorded, according to the UNODC GSH (UNODC 2019b, 36). This trend of declining homicide rates is explicit since the mid-1990s and is attributed to a “*drop in property and violent crime across most affluent societies*” (UNODC 2019b, 36). The general decline in homicide rates in Europe has started in the thirteenth century and has been steady except for the world wars and a spike in violence from the 1950s until the beginning of the 1990s. The trend in declining interpersonal killing in Europe can be seen in the graph below (Figure XII) provided by Eisner for the UNODC GSH (UNODC 2019b, 36).

³¹ European Observatory on Femicides, online: <http://eof.cut.ac.cy/aims-and-objectives/> (retrieved 05.08.2020)

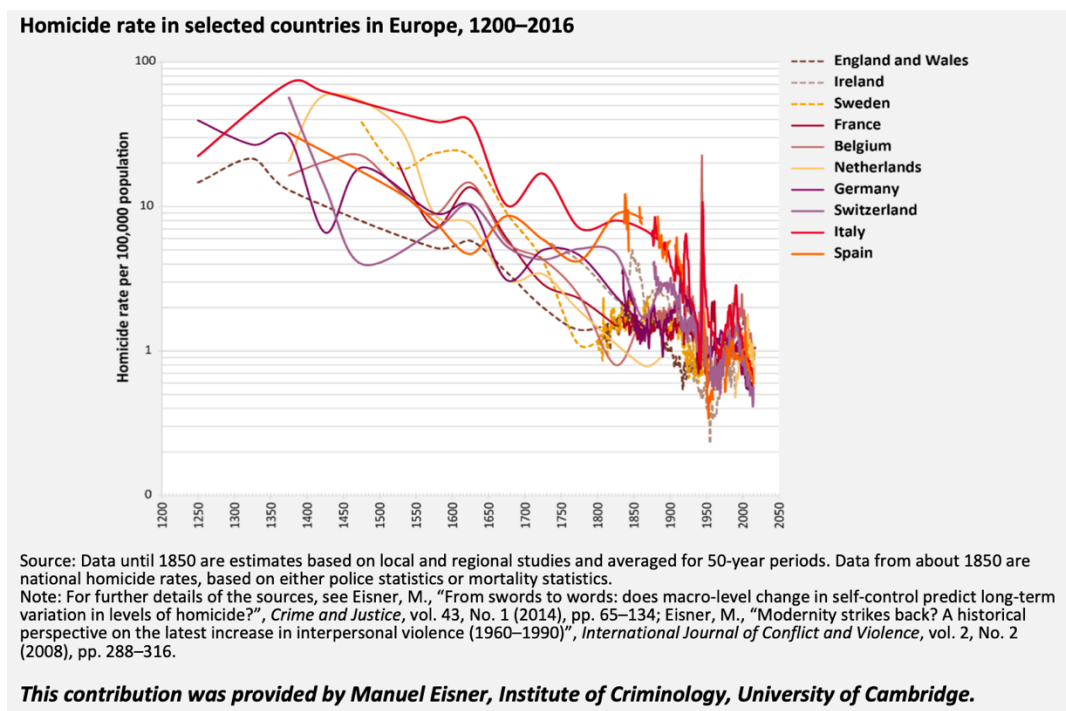


Figure XII, Decline in Homicide Rate, Eisner for UNODC GSH 2019

Possible causes for the long-term decline in the rate of interpersonal killings are diverse and can be at this moment in time not clearly confirmed. Explanations include the expansion of the State's monopoly on power, further reach of the law, a more individualistic way of thinking and therefore fewer collective obligations, improvements through education and literacy, as well as the promotion of self-discipline. The impact of social, political and economic factors cannot be understated; however, little is known on how exactly these variables interact (UNODC 2019b, 36).

According to UNODC, gender differences emerged in almost all regions after the 1950s (UNODC 2019b, 44). The trend of starkly higher male homicide rates only emerged after the Second World War; before there was the same risk of victimization regardless of gender (ibid.). However, I am wary of this statement as there was a general lack of gender-disaggregated homicide data in most parts of the world until the 1990s.

„Historical data from the United Kingdom suggest that the current pattern of a higher male than female homicide rate only began to emerge in the mid-1970s. This implies that males are now being disproportionately targeted by forms of lethal violence that previously had less of an impact on the population. The upward trend in the male homicide rate may be associated with forms of violence other than that of an interpersonal nature, such as gang- and organized crime-related homicide.“ (UNODC 2019b, 44).

The quote of the UNODC homicide report supports the case for the structural difference of male and female homicide victimisation. The causes of it have yet to be analysed. Previous studies suggest *“significant negative correlations between the rate of female [IPV] victimization by male partners and national level indicators of gender empowerment as well as gender-related development”* (Krahé 2019, 1). Looking at the lifetime prevalence rate of violence against women worldwide (provided by WHO), high-income countries including all of the HFHC show the lowest rate of physical or sexual IPV among women with 23.2% having experienced this type of violence (Krahé 2019, 2). Nonetheless, in these countries, the female homicide rate exceeds the male one, even when low in absolute terms.

Factors that might help in explaining the seeming stability of the femicide rate in the HFHC are Gender Social Norms. According to the 2019 Gender Social Norms Index (GSNI), *“91 percent of men and 86 percent of women show at least one clear bias against gender equality in areas such as politics, economic, education, intimate partner violence and women’s reproductive rights”* (United Nations Development Programme et al. 2020, 8). Around 30% of participants in the study believe that it is justified for a man to beat his partner (ibid., 9). Generally, the Gender Social Norms Report states that the bias against gender equality is on the rise in recent years, especially in high-income countries like Sweden and Germany (United Nations Development Programme et al. 2020, 9). The HFHC analysed here, are placed very highly on the Gender Social Norms Index, with an average of 25. Almost all HFHC are highly developed countries according to the Human Development Index 2018 (this includes countries with a score below 65), so all countries except for Georgia and Montenegro are classified as highly developed. Hong Kong has an HDI score of 4, whereas the Peoples Republic of China has a score of 85. Within the GSNI, most HFHC are in the top 20 of the index, Switzerland is even in the first place in terms of Gender Social Norms in 2018. The worst scores of the HFH countries have Georgia, Oman, Hungary – the score, of course, correlates with the high percentage of the population with at least one gender bias.

Country AVERAGES	Femicides % AVERAGE	GII 2018	HDI 2018	% of population with 1 gender bias	Difference in bias between men and women in %
<i>Republic of Korea</i>	52,1	10	22	87,1%	8,7%
<i>China, Hong Kong SAR</i>	50,8	39	85(4)	88,3%	10,5%
<i>Austria</i>	50,6	14	20	-	-
<i>Latvia</i>	50,3	40	39	-	-
<i>Japan</i>	49,0	23	19	68,8%	8,3%
<i>Switzerland</i>	48,9	1	2	56,3%	3,4%
<i>Germany</i>	46,7	19	4	62,6%	14,9%
<i>Luxembourg</i>	45,1	16	21	-	-
<i>Czechia</i>	41,7	35	26	-	-
<i>Norway</i>	41,6	5	1	41,3%	6,2%
<i>Denmark</i>	40,8	2	11	-	-
<i>Belgium</i>	40,5	6	17	-	-
<i>Slovenia</i>	40,2	12	24	59,2%	14,0%
<i>Hungary</i>	39,9	56	43	65,9%	17,8%
<i>New Zealand</i>	37,9	34	14	46,1%	7,2%
<i>Croatia</i>	36,2	31	46	-	-
<i>Singapore</i>	36,0	11	9	-	4,9%
<i>Slovakia</i>	33,0	43	36	-	-
<i>Finland</i>	30,3	7	12	51,2%	11,4%
<i>Portugal</i>	29,9	17	40	-	-
<i>Oman</i>	29,9	65	47	-	-
<i>Cyprus</i>	28,3	20	31	81,1%	15,3%
<i>Georgia</i>	24,6	75	70	94,1%	10,2%
<i>Montenegro</i>	22,1	27	52	-	-
				-	-
<i>Average HFHC</i>	39,4	25,33	25,42	64,3%	10,2%

Figure XIII, HFHC-HDI, GII, GSI; Data source: UNODC global homicide database and UNDP Gender Social Norms Report

The last column of the table above might be an indicator of friction between gender norms and actual equality. There might also exist friction between the belief systems of men and women, respectively, represented in Figure XIII in the differences in the bias of men and women. The Gender Social Norms Index shows a higher bias in male respondents than in female ones – this might correlate with possessiveness and susceptibility to patriarchal values and belief systems. When the perpetrator then feels like he is losing control, he might recurse to traditional social norms, leading to extreme outcomes, in the worst cases to femicide (United Nations Development Programme et al. 2020, 22).

Similarities in the HFHC in question are low overall homicide rates, a declining trend in homicide numbers, belonging to the high-income group, having a high Human Development Index. More research is needed in how other variables like gaps in gender bias between men and women, influence intimate partner violence and hence femicides.

7.1 Just numbers are not enough – the need for a theoretically informed, structural interpretation of available data

The provided analysis proves that next to national studies, regional investigations of femicide are needed. The trends and particularities for the HFHC in question show interesting trends that make the structural difference in female and male homicide victimisation apparent. According to my investigation, most female homicides are in fact femicides, and are structurally different from the majority of male homicides – this structural difference is currently not accounted for in law enforcement or prevention strategies. It seems that if the homicide count falls below a certain threshold like it is the case in the HFH countries, the structural difference between the male and female rate becomes even more apparent. A low overall homicide rate might show the stability of, especially intimate partner femicides.

Weil, Corradi and Naudi did not find a correlation of femicide numbers with the extent of violence against women in general or the extent of homicide in general in European countries (2018, 34).

“It could not be confirmed that the extent of violence against women in general, the extent of homicides in general, the state of gender equality in the country and the duration of active policies on violence against women have a direct correlation with the extent of femicides. (...) countries with high rates of violence against women reported in the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA) survey are not per se countries with high femicide rates.” (Weil, Corradi, and Naudi 2018, 34)

This finding in European countries is similar to the findings in this thesis: most of the HFHC score very high on both the Human Development Index and the Gender Social Norms Index; implying that the state of gender equality in the country does not have a direct effect on the femicide rate. This finding suggests that policies to prevent violence and especially homicide are unknowingly and inherently gendered. This gender bias does not acknowledge the structural difference of femicides and homicides and therefore fails to prevent femicides while helping to reduce the rate of homicides in a country.

In a next step, it should be investigated whether the before-mentioned variables (extent of violence against women, state of gender equality, duration of active policies) are statistically correlated to

the femicide numbers in the HFH countries. This, however, will only be possible if more consistent and qualitative data is available.

Arguing along the lines of feminist poststructuralist analysis, the data analysis in this thesis is detecting the previously unrecognised layers of power, inherent in femicide (Wooldridge 2015, 2). Further disaggregating data and looking at regional particularities, like the ones of the HFH countries, shows that there are in fact differentiated trends to detect in female and male homicide victimisation. What moreover should be investigated, is the killing of corollary victims, who are often new partners or children of the femicide victims. A theoretically informed analysis of the victimisation of bystanders and family members in femicide cases, could help unravel other layers of power relations. Supporting the hypothesis that the nuclear family and its withdrawal of the reach of law enforcement are key problems in femicide.

Following Confortini's suggestions (Confortini 2006, 333) in violence analysis, gender needs to be understood as a social construct embodying relations of power. Simple disaggregation along gender lines therefore is not enough to provide a sound analysis of femicide. Moreover, dichotomous, mutually exclusive categories are constitutive of the (re-)production of violence and the gendered understanding of our world. In this dichotomous view, violence in same-sex relationships cannot be explained, neither can female homicide perpetration. A thorough analysis is needed of bi-directional domestic violence which escalates in attempted murder. Also, including more categories than male and female is imperative, if we want to get a more inclusive picture on violence in today's societies. Transgender and non-binary identities are currently not represented at all, leaving them out of visibility and therefore without advocacy. Male victims of domestic violence should also be looked at in depth, here as well, same-sex perpetration is under-researched.

Violence, like any other social process, can be constituted through language, therefore defining (im-)possibilities of a different social reality (Confortini 2006, 333). The way we are currently talking about femicide, the hegemonic discourses on the topic, are highly biased and characterised by victim-blaming frames. Moreover, the historically grounded explanation of a "passion crime" remains a frequent media framing. Unless the way femicide is problematised in public discourse changes, little policy changes can be expected. Also, including the academic discourse, "gender critical" voices need to be countered and criticised, as long as they propagate ideologies incoherent with the data. If "*violence produces and defines gender identities and, in turn, is produced by them*" (ibid.) what

women *are* is also defined by the violence done to them. As long as violence is an intrinsic part of hegemonic masculinity, we will see no change in the perpetrator and victim gender ratio.

It would exceed the frame of this thesis to provide an in-depth analysis of the personal, structural, and cultural factors influencing the femicide rate in HFHC – however, the goal of this thesis was to provide a compelling argument for the further analysis of this question. Understanding gender as a discursive category and therefore intertwined with violence makes the uncovering of power relations written into societal norms possible.

8 Conclusion

In this thesis, I looked at the phenomenon of femicides in the group of HFHC – high female homicide countries, with the aim to uncover structural particularities to help to understand and prevent femicides better. After giving an overview of state of the art in terms of definitions, legal situations and research in a global context, I defined terms of femicide used in this thesis. Departing from the assumption that “woman” is a performative category, which is defined and continuously shaped by power relations, and grounded in cultural and historical realities; I looked at the influence of Latin American scholars on the concept of femicide. In an attempt to unite the strengths of quantitative and qualitative methods, I proposed mixed methods to uncover layers of structure inherent in femicide, which have been hidden before. In a theoretically informed literature review, supported by quantitative data, I analysed the homicide statistics of several countries where the female homicide victimisation rate exceeded the male one. I classified these countries according to their unifying structural particularities as high female homicide countries (HFHC). Before introducing the data, the theoretical assumptions were presented. Working with classics in violence and power theory, I relied on Galtung and Foucault, however, expanding them by a feminist reading of Confortini and C. Taylor. The theoretical assumptions on how violence is a multifaceted phenomenon with personal, structural and cultural components – are all shaping as well as shaped by gender. Gender roles are understood as articulations of a hegemonic power in society, which are manifesting violence in a gendered manner. Under this light, the homicide data were introduced and discussed with an emphasis on structural factors. The particularities of the HFHC were emphasised while considering previously identified influences like age and historical trends, as well as identifying gender as a relevant structural category. Before moving on to the analysis, I examined the dominant strands of approaches dealing with femicide. Examining research in criminology, sociology and normative approaches; the lack of comparability and structural analysis became apparent. In the following analysis, I examined the four main hypotheses of this thesis, while informing them with the research provided by the scholars introduced in the literature review before.

It can be confirmed that female homicides are mostly femicides and are structurally different from the majority of male homicides in HFH countries. The hypothesis that femicides are stable or increasing while male homicides are decreasing cannot be confirmed with the current availability of data and within the framework of this thesis. Still, the data suggest that female and male homicide rates are structurally different; hence, their different progression and differences in

trends of male and female homicide rates. If the trends progress like predicted, the female homicide rate in HFH countries will continuously exceed the male one. Only if gender-sensitive prevention strategies are applied, which can address multi-layered structures of oppression and marginalisation; will female homicide victimisation be adequately addressed. The hypothesis of a need for better data collection and categorisation can be confirmed. Better and uniform data collection is needed, moreover, combatting femicide needs the recording of gender-saturated variables to understand the phenomenon better. An improved categorisation is required, as well as uniform data collection, and the commitment to provide gender-disaggregated data to ensure comparability and unbiased data.

Moreover, the obligation to record victim-offender relationships should be introduced on an international level, to be able to correctly identify femicides and design fitting policy responses, which are currently lacking. Higher female victimisation rates seem to have little correlation to the cultural background of the country in question; however, the lowest common denominator detectable so far is the belonging to the group of high-income nations and having low overall homicide rates. Low homicide victimisation rates, however, do not absolve governments from improving policies and recognising the increased vulnerability of marginalised groups like immigrants, as well as the rampant victimisation of women and children.

An informed and complete strategy to effectively combat violence in domestic settings must recognise men and women as victims. A strategy as such must see the silent and often invisible victimisation of family members. It must take into account intricate power relations which are enacted in the privacy of the family home, and most often but not exclusively target women. Moreover, the victimisation of non-binary and trans persons needs to be accounted for. Without statistic representation, prevention is impossible on a legal level.

Policy making must acknowledge the complex realities of domestic and intimate partner violence. More than that, new policies must take into account the structurally different nature of male and female homicide victimisation before meaningful prevention strategies can be implemented.

9 Future research

The presented thesis is a vantage point for future research, as many questions were addressed, but not all could be answered within the scope of this thesis. The question of how inclusive statistics are of current gender identities and their corresponding social realities is still open. More research is needed in how social realities are depicted and represented in academic research but also in official statistics. The homicide victimisation of transgender persons, for example, should be statistically represented, in order to be able to give definitive information about the victimisation of trans persons, as well as design fitting prevention policies.

There moreover needs to be a historical investigation of female homicide victimisation trends. Gender insensitive historical accounts of homicide data help little in understanding structural differences in male and female victimisation. The data then should be contextualised regionally, to find trend patterns and better understand regional as well as global dynamics.

Another vantage point can be the comparison of prevention policies as well as a closer inspection of the legal implications of homicide perpetration in HFH countries. Moreover, a multivariate analysis inspecting gender mainstreaming measures as well as education levels, income levels and gender social norms should be conducted. In this realm, consistent research is lacking and could improve knowledge about preventive measures considerably. A focus should be the difference in social norms bias between men and women and if it has an effect on female homicide victimisation rates in the respective country.

A further point of inquiry should be the perceived separation of the private and the public, rendering the family a place outside of the rule of law. Prevention in the private home must start with calling into question the sanctity of the nuclear family as well as the institution of marriage – recurring to an old but still relevant claim: the personal is political.

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