

Dys-Femicide: Conceptualizing the Femicides of Women and Girls with Disabilities¹

Valérie Grand'Maison¹ and Edelweiss Murillo Lafuente²

1 Department of Sociology and Anthropology, University of Guelph, ON, Canada vgrandm@uoguelph.ca

2 Department of Sociology and Criminology University of Florida, Gainesville, FL, USA imurillolafuente@ufl.edu

Abstract

The murders of women and girls with disabilities worldwide are ignored by governments, media, and most femicide observatories. The COVID-19 pandemic made clear that the lives of disabled people, especially those marginalized based on gender, class, and race, are disposable. While the shadow pandemic of gendered violence gained attention during the pandemic, the experiences of women with disabilities remained invisible. Women and girls with disabilities are more likely to experience gendered violence than non-disabled women, yet they remain invisible in transnational antiviolence and antifemicide activism, research, and policies. This paper aims to challenge the invisibility of disability as a lived experience and analytical dimension in antifemicide efforts by examining the stories of women with disabilities killed in four countries: Bolivia, Canada, Mexico, and South Africa. We adopt Cecilia Menjivar's multi-sided violence framework to reveal how gender violence, gendered disability violence, everyday violence, structural violence, and symbolic violence come together to normalize the murders of women with disabilities. We propose the concept of dys-femicide, defined as the murders of women and girls with disabilities caused by their systemic disappearance as worthy individuals, by considering care, precarity, and invisibility as main gears that legitimize their disposability.

Keywords: Dys-Femicide, Gender violence, Disability, Structural violence, Transnational feminism

Publication Type: Review Article

Preferred Citation: Grand'Maison, Valérie and Edelweiss Murillo Lafuente. 2022. "Dys-Femicide: Conceptualizing the Femicides of Women and Girls with Disabilities." *Sociation*, 21(1), 129-146.



This work is licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial 2.0 Generic License](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/2.0/)

Introduction

Women and girls with disabilities are more likely to experience violence, and more types of violence, than non-disabled women internationally (Brownridge 2006; Curry, Hassouneh-Phillips, and Johnston-Silverberg 2001; Dowse, Frohmader, and Didi 2016; Shah, Tsitsou, and Woodin 2016). While academic research and feminist disability activists recognize and

document multiple forms of violence against women with disabilities, very little is known on the femicides of disabled women² globally. Femicide (or femicide)³ is becoming a publicly recognized word used by journalists, feminists, women's organizations, and international institutions to denounce the murders of women because they are women. However, the murders of women and girls with disabilities remain excluded from antifemicide activism and

¹ Acknowledgments: We are grateful to Heather Laube for providing insightful feedback and support. Also, the editors of the special issue greatly contributed to bring knowledges about disability. Finally, the SWS meeting where we received generous guidance in the conceptualization of this paper.

² We use the terms 'women with disabilities' and 'disabled women' interchangeably. Person-first language is used to emphasize the person rather than the disability in order to avoid defining this person by their disability. We understand that this language is important for some people with disabilities. VG prefers 'disabled woman' to define herself, recognizing that disability is lived and not only negative (see Titchkosky 2012).

³ We explain the conceptual difference between the femicides and femicides in the second section of this article. While we adopt the term femicide to emphasize the structural role of the State in these murders, we use the terms femicide when we refer to the ways the term is used in anglophone media or observatories.

scholarship, which further reinforces their erasure in public policy and legislative frameworks, exacerbating the conditions of vulnerability for diverse women and girls with disabilities.

This paper was imagined in a pandemic context, where violence against women and femicide rates heightened. Nonetheless, we could not find an academic scholarship or media pieces centered on these specific crimes before or during the pandemic. We know that violence against women has increased during the pandemic (Bardales Mendoza, Meza Díaz, and Carbajal 2021; Cetina 2021; Weil 2020) and affected black and poor populations the most (Pessoa and Nascimento 2020). Governments deliberately neglected attention to targeted populations through ableist, ageist, racist, and classist policies, such as militarized lockdowns in the global south (Collantes 2021; Molina and López 2021) and oblivion of care homes conditions (Gordon et al. 2020; Iacobucci 2020). During the COVID-19 pandemic, medical attention was prioritized for those categorized as productive, leaving behind those labeled as sick, old, or disabled (Cesari and Proietti 2020).

In this article, we propose the concept of *dys-femicide*, defined as the murders of women and girls with disabilities caused by their systemic disappearance as worthy individuals, by considering care, precarity, and invisibility as the main gears which legitimize their disposability, understood as a process through which lives and bodies are constructed as unworthy. Furthermore, we build upon the term '*femicide*' to signal the political nature of these murders, which result from the "unwillingness or inability of the state to provide prevention and response mechanisms" (Menjívar and Walsh 2017:222). In this sense, we situate *dys-femicides* in social, historical, political, economic, and cultural contexts. As a result, the lives of women and girls with disabilities are systematically devalued and made disposable.

This paper aims to challenge the invisibility of disability as a lived experience and analytical dimension in antifemicide efforts by examining the stories of women with disabilities killed in four countries: Bolivia, Canada, Mexico, and South Africa. We engage with critical and transnational disability studies and Latin American feminists' conceptualization of violence. We further articulate

how the killings of women, especially women with disabilities, result and further justify hierarchies of bodies that matter. We understand hierarchies of worth to refer to the differential access of social groups to the means to sustain life, including material resources, political and cultural participation, and self-determination (Erevelles 2011; Jackson and David Halifax 2018; Young 1990). By doing so, we intend to politicize the murder of women and girls with disabilities, as it is an issue long neglected. This preliminary examination is a first step in filling the gap left by femicide observatories,⁴ who have primarily ignored disability as a significant lens through which the oppression of women can be understood.

In the first part of this article, we examine the tensions in conceptualizing femicide and situate our approach as one that seeks to de-center gender as a primary variable to leave room for a nonadditive intersectional understanding of femicide as a structural process. In the second part of this article, we draw from Menjívar's multi-sided violence framework to show how gender violence, gendered disability violence, structural, symbolic, and everyday forms of violence coalesce in the lives of women with disabilities ways that normalize their murders. In the third and final part, we advance the concept of *dys-femicide* or the killings of women with disabilities made possible by their status as 'dysfunctional' within the colonial and capitalist projects. We argue that *dys-femicide* is made possible through the conditions of care, precarity, and invisibility that diverse women with disabilities live in, which sustain their status as disposable. Through our analysis, we urge antiviolence and antifemicide efforts to consider how multiple structures of domination come together to shape not only the conceptualization of violence but also responses to it.

Positionalities

We started working together to recognize women's transnational activism with disabilities yet their pervasive erasures in feminist spaces. We met in California during a sociology encounter, flustered by the lack of conversation around disability in feminist research. While this article looks at the femicide of women and girls with disabilities globally, we recognize that our perspectives are situated, partial,

⁴ The disability of the victim is not systematically reported in many femicide observatories and watches around the world. In the scope of this project, we searched for the femicide observatory or watch in 33 countries (based on the languages that we speak), and of these 33 countries, 19 had formal or informal femicide observatories or watches, and only one, the United Kingdom, reported on the disability status of the victim. Namely, Canada, Bolivia, Mexico, and South Africa all have publicly funded observatories but do not report on the disability of the victim.

and changing. We are anti ableist feminists, and we both understand disability, gender, and violence to be linked and socially constructed. Valérie is a Québécoise, white settler from French ancestry, middle-class, disabled cis-woman and a violence survivor, living between the provinces of Québec and Ontario, in Canada. Edelweiss is constantly questioning her positionality in the world due to her migratory status. She is a Paceña (Bolivian), self-identified *ch'ixi*⁵ non-disabled, cis-woman with cinnamon color skin, living between La Paz, Bolivia, and Gainesville, Florida, USA. Collaborative work provides unique perspectives and discussion that transcends hegemonic notions about disability and feminism entrenched in the global north. The encounter between researchers who have been raised under different circumstances (global South and North), influenced by citizenship and migratory status, that experience life as disabled and non-disabled women create an interesting basis for this work.

Conceptualizing Femicide

We begin by mapping out some definitional and analytical debates regarding femicide and femicide. Then, we explain that we use the term femicide to capture the structural and intersectional nature of the processes that lead to the killings of diverse women. The term 'femicide' was brought to the public sphere in 1976 by Diana Russell, an antiviolenza feminist activist and scholar at the International Tribunal on Crimes Against Women, to bring visibility to the fatal impacts of misogyny. At this event, she advocated for recognizing the "sexual politics of murder" to politicize the killings of women by men (Russell 2012). Feminists and women's organizations have mobilized and translated the word in various contexts, giving it more or less political meanings. Yet, there are two general positions in feminist scholarship regarding the term's meaning.

On the one hand, the term femicide, as defined by Russell and used in most anglophone mainstream media, femicide observatories, and international organizations, refers to the murder of women because they are women: it is seen as an *act* of misogynistic violence. In contrast, Latin American feminists, such as Marcela Lagarde (2006, 2010) and Julia Monáñez Frago (2012, 2018), have deployed the Spanish translation *feminicidio* to capture the structural processes undergirding the murder of women and the role of the state in these murders. In other words, the term *feminicidio* is used to bring attention to the

production and reproduction of the conditions that make this form of violence possible.

We follow the Latin American conceptualization of femicide because it adopts a nonadditive intersectional lens to understanding how multiple social structures enable the specific and heightened oppression of particular groups of women within a particular context. An intersectional approach is crucial to examine how some women are made particularly vulnerable to violence and femicides, face increased barriers to justice, and remain invisible in antiviolenza and antifemicide efforts. It provides the analytical space to understand that gender is necessarily constructed through other social structures, such as race, disability, class, geopolitical location, and citizenship status (García Del Moral 2018). This means that experiences of being a woman—and vulnerability to violence—depend on the woman's social position according to race, class, sexuality, disability, geopolitical, and other hierarchies. Because Russell's definition confers common oppression to all women, it neutralizes the historical, political, economic, and socio-cultural processes that shape patriarchal practices in a given context (García Del Moral 2018). In doing so, the term works to fix the nature, or essence, of gender, such that men have uncontrollable urges to be aggressive towards women, and women are made to be helpless (García Del Moral 2018; Marcus 1992). For Sharon Marcus (1992), this naturalization of "sexual difference along the lines of violence" (397) forecloses creative and effective strategies to end violence against women.

An examination of violence against women with disabilities reveals the shortcomings of a narrow framing of patriarchal violence, which fails to recognize disability, and other social structures, as a critical dimension of women's lives. Gender and disability interact in ways that erase disabled women's vulnerability to gendered disability violence because disability often disqualifies disabled women from womanhood, as they are stripped from their sexuality, agency, and legitimacy as women, intimate and sexual partners, and mothers. Lesley Chenoweth (1996) argues that the construction of disabled women as non-sexual can be a lack of deterrence and justification for committing sexual violence towards them. Social class also shapes experiences of disability and gender, such that women with disabilities are more likely than women without disabilities and men with disabilities to live in poverty and have barriers to accessing the necessities of life like food and housing (DAWN Canada 2014; Emmett and Alant 2006; Schwartz,

⁵ An Andean identity alternative that rejects imposed categories like *mestiza*, *latina* or *hispana* (see Pazzarelli 2017).

Buliung, and Wilson 2019). In this sense, gender, disability, and other structures interact in ways that create unique lived experiences and forms of oppression, shaping specific processes that lead to femicide. It is not just men who kill women that define femicide as a crime and deplorable act. Instead, we propose to look further into how patriarchy acts as the gearing machine that establishes multiple forms of violence, which in its extreme stage translates into femicide.

Multi-sided Violence

Femicide is made possible by other forms of inequity. Following the structural conceptualization of gender-based violence provided by Cecilia Menjívar (2011) and Verónica Gago (2020), we understand that acts of violence against women and girls with disabilities, including femicides, are enabled by, and further enable, gendered, structural, symbolic, and interactional forms of violence. In this sense, violence is a *process* rather than a measurable and finite act. We draw from Menjívar's multi-sided violence framework to make visible the forms of inequities that coalesce in the lives of women with disabilities and, in extreme forms, lead to their murder. We argue that, for diverse women with disabilities, structural, gender violence, gendered violence, symbolic, and everyday violence come together in care, precarity, and invisibility, producing their status as disposable. Weaving together structural, gendered, symbolic, and other forms of violence brings recognition to the political nature of violence against women and open up resistance sites.

Structural Violence

Structural violence captures the systemic patterns of exclusion, disadvantage, and exploitation in all areas of life, including the labor market, education, healthcare, culture, and more. It can be defined as being rooted in the uncertainty of everyday life caused by the insecurity of wages or income, a chronic deficit in food, dress, housing, and health care, and uncertainty about the future, which is translated into hunger and delinquency, and a barely conscious feeling of failure...

It is often referred to as structural violence because it is reproduced in the context of the market, in exploitative labor relations, when

income is precarious and it is concealed as underemployment, or is the result of educational segmentation and of multiple inequalities that block access to success (Torres-Rivas 1998, 49 cited in Menjívar 2011:29).

A structural lens to violence allows for connections between economic conditions and social, cultural, and political conditions that produce violence (True 2012). In this sense, violence is understood not as a physical injury but as a barrier to attaining human needs (Farmer et al. 2006; Galtung 1969; Rylko-Bauer and Farmer 2016). This is important because it discredits individualist models of 'victim/perpetrator,' focusing instead on how context-specific social hierarchies create the conditions for violence to flourish (Anglin 1998; Menjívar 2011; Schepers-Hughes 1992). Structural violence renders visible the slow, persistent, and collective process of suffering.

We include state violence as an integral and thus inseparable part of structural violence. State violence refers to the multiple forms of violence "that are caused by government (or government-funded) policies, actions, and inaction" (Maynard 2017:17–18) and includes segregation, surveillance, and control, among other mechanisms. State violence directly shapes the conditions of precarity in which people live and contributes to symbolic violence by framing certain groups of people, such as welfare recipients, as threats to the so-called progress of the state. The complicity of the state is particularly evident in the killings of women with disabilities, as overt and covert forms of eugenics are still pervasive globally, such as discriminatory critical care policies during the pandemic⁶ forced sterilization (Mykitiuk and Chadha 2011; UN General Assembly 2017), and overall state-sponsored segregation of people with disabilities in education, employment, and other areas of public life.

Gender Violence and Gendered Disability Violence

Violence against women with disabilities and their femicide is possible within gender and disability dynamics that place them at a disadvantage. Menjívar (2011) distinguishes between gender violence and gendered violence to examine the relationship between acts of interpersonal violence, or gendered violence, and the negative impacts of a gendered political economy on women, i.e., gender violence. She uses gender violence to refer to the gender ideology sustained by unequal production and

⁶ See ARCH Disability Law. 2020. *ARCH and AODA Alliance submit Open Letter to government on the need for a non-discriminatory Clinical Triage Protocol*. Toronto: ARCH Disability Law. Retrieved September 2, 2020 (<https://archdisabilitylaw.ca/resource/arch-and-aoda-alliance-submit-open-letter-to-government-on-the-need-for-a-non-discriminatory-clinical-triage-protocol/>).

reproduction relations (Menjívar 2011:46). Distinctively, gendered violence can be defined as gender-based violence, including physical, sexual, economic, and psychological harms at the interpersonal level (Menjívar 2011: 46).

In this article, we use the term *gendered disability violence* defined by Leanne Dowse and colleagues “as any form of forceful, injurious or demeaning treatment towards a woman with a disability as she is targeted as a woman with a disability, which includes the full scope of violence” (Dowse, Soldatic, et al. 2016:345–46). The forms of violence that women with disabilities experience include sexual, physical, financial, and psychological violence, as well as deliberate neglect, medical control, and institutional abuse (Ballan 2017; Brownridge 2006; Dowse, Soldatic, et al. 2016; Dowse, Frohmader, et al. 2016; Mays 2006; Shah et al. 2016; Thiara, Hague, and Mullender 2011). Following Menjívar’s distinction, *gender disability violence* refers to the hierarchies based on gender and disability created by the global political economy and cultural representations. Both gender disability violence and gendered disability violence are found in the everyday lives of disabled women, as acts of violence and exclusion become routine and normalized (Menjívar 2011).

In conjunction with other systems of oppression, sexism and ableism come together to determine how violence is conceptualized (Collins 1998) and how resources are distributed (Barile 2002). As a result, many forms of gendered disability violence and intersectional violence remain illegible as crimes, such as devaluation and neglect, and are often excluded from research and government reports because these narrowly focus on interpersonal acts of aggression (DAWN Canada 2019; Dowse, Soldatic, et al. 2016; Rajan 2011). Experiences of violence are further exacerbated by failed institutional responses, such as inadequate official measurement of violence and inaccessible women’s shelters and information. The connection between gender and gendered disability violence allows us to situate the devaluation of disabled women within transnational dynamics that create hierarchies based on productive and reproductive extraction (Erevelles 2011). In this sense, acts of violence on disabled women are made possible within macro-structures that enable and justify them. Women with disabilities who experience violence encounter the same logic of devaluation in the systems that seek support and justice.

Acts of Everyday Interpersonal Violence

This type of violence refers to the routine expressions of violence at the interactional level in the everyday lives of people in society (Bourgois 2004). The typical

nature of this violence normalizes these acts at the micro-level, meaning that they are taken for granted by people who experience them. This dimension of violence draws attention to the collective ethos – the general habits - of violence in communities and away from psychologizing and individualizing acts of violence (Bourgois 2004; Menjívar 2011). The link between poverty and crime is situated within historical, material, and symbolic processes that lead individuals to commit harm against others and themselves ((Bourgois 2004; Scheper-Hughes 1992).

Acts of everyday violence work to normalize violence against women with disabilities and their eventual murders. Women with disabilities come to expect violent victimization, especially those who live in post-conflict contexts and situations of systemic economic and political disenfranchisement. We also know that, in these contexts, experiences of disability are intrinsically linked to violence: impairments are often caused by the everyday crimes embedded in deprivation and exploitation caused by global dynamics of capitalism and colonialism (Grech 2012; Meekosha 2011; Soldatic and Grech 2014). Impairments, in other words, are often the externality of structural processes that facilitate everyday acts of violence (Soldatic 2013). Not only does violence cause impairments, but women with disabilities also face an increased likelihood of violent victimization, starting early in life. Therefore, people who acquired a disability through violence now face increased vulnerability to further victimization. Empirical research with women and girls with disabilities illustrates that they expect to experience violence in the future, whether they are survivors or not as if violent victimization is always looming for them (Owen 2010). In this sense, everyday acts of violence enable dys-femicides because they create increased conditions of vulnerability for disabled women and those acquiring a disability through violence and normalize the crimes committed against them.

Symbolic Violence

Symbolic violence is the invisible process assigning inferior value to different dispositions, values determined by historical dynamics of production, reproduction, and representation, and their contestations by marginalized groups (Skeggs 1997). It is invisible in the sense that systemic devaluation is taken-for-granted as natural by the dominant and dominated groups and works to justify, legitimize, and otherwise reinforce other forms of inequality. Rooted in medical categorizations of bodies and minds, disability is historically represented as a “deadly status” (Titchkosky 2007:108), positing disabled people as having no future. Tanya Titchkosky (2007)

argues that a medical understanding of disability marks the individualization of body problems, where any solution to correct it appears justifiable, even death. Notably, the category of disability has been used with the flexibility to exclude, segregate, and exploit individuals deemed as threats to the social order and white supremacy (Erevelles 2011).

The medical construction of disability, as taken-for-granted, continues to justify, on the one hand, constant medical interventions to 'fix' and 'cure' them, and, on the other hand, their segregation and institutionalization of people with disabilities. For disabled women, symbolic violence takes the form of the lack of recognition or misrecognition of women with disabilities in the public domain. Symbolic violence against women with disabilities is fueled by the interaction between the systemic devaluation of disabled bodies and women, further inflected according to race, indigeneity, class, sexuality, and citizenship status, among other social categories. They are often portrayed as dependent, passive, and absent from the economic and political spheres. These representations take roots in the historical and ongoing medicalization of disability as a 'deficit,' justifying the exclusion of disabled people from productive and reproductive activities. Current social assistance programs are embedded in this 'deficit' framing, sustaining recipients in poverty and dependency (Chouinard and Crooks 2005; Erevelles 2011; Jackson and David Halifax 2018; Spagnuolo and Bélanger 2018). As such, symbolic violence co-determines other forms of violence, including structural and interpersonal violence. Together, these dynamics render violence against women with disabilities more likely and invisible.

Dys-Femicide

Drawing from examples of femicides of women with disabilities, we illustrate how gender violence,

gendered disability violence, structural, symbolic, and everyday violence come together to create the conditions in which killing women with disabilities is possible, normalized, and often unpunished. We propose the concept of *dys-femicide* to refer to the disappearance of women with disabilities as worthy victims of femicides in the state, antiviolence, and antifemicide efforts and society because their murders are taken-for-granted due to the systemic devaluation of their lives. This devaluation results from multiple forms of violence embedded in the global dynamics of capitalism⁷ that create and sustain hierarchies of worth based on the perceived ability to contribute to the productive and reproductive activities of colonial capitalist powers. We use the prefix *dys* following Drew Leder (1990) and Kevin Paterson and Bill Hughes (1999) to refer to the disappearance of disabled bodies from public life who, at the same time, only appear in their *dys*function.

In what follows, we explain how the femicides of women with disabilities are made possible because of their status as 'disposable,' created as a result of intersecting dynamics of care, precarity, and invisibility. These three themes are mutually constituted, meaning that they inform, enable, and reinforce each other, and they are thus inseparable. We illustrate examples of *dys-femicides* in four countries: Bolivia, Canada, Mexico, and South Africa. We chose Bolivia and Canada because we have a deep familiarity with these countries' historical, political, economic, and cultural contexts as citizens, researchers, and activists. We chose South Africa and Mexico because of the high rates of femicides in those countries, pointing to specific and heightened forms of violence against women and providing a transnational perspective that transcends our contexts and the Americas. In 2020, femicide, as part of a cycle of violence, took the lives of 2,695 women in South Africa,⁸ 940 women in Mexico,⁹ 113 in Bolivia,¹⁰ and 160 women in Canada.¹¹ We do not

⁷ Capitalism is made possible, and further reinforces, processes of colonialism. Capitalism and colonialism are therefore co-constitutive and inseparable.

⁸ South African Police Service. 2021. "Crime Statistics." Retrieved June 30, 2021 (<https://www.saps.gov.za/services/crimestats.php>).

⁹ Rangel, Azucena. 2021. "Cierra el 2020 con 940 femicidios en el país; Edomex encabeza número de casos," *Mileno*, January 25. Retrieved June 8, 2021 (<https://www.milenio.com/policia/femicidios-mexico-cierra-2020-940-casos>).

¹⁰ Infobae. 2021. "Bolivia reportó dos femicidios al iniciar el año y 113 durante 2020." *Infobae*, January 2. Retrieved June 8, 2021 (<https://www.infobae.com/america/america-latina/2021/01/02/bolivia-reporto-dos-femicidios-al-iniciar-el-ano-y-113-durante-2020/>).

¹¹ Dawson, Myrna, Danielle Sutton, Angelika Zecha, Ciara Boyd, Anna Johnson, and Abigail Mitchell. 2021. *#CallItFemicide Understanding Sex/Gender-Related Killings of Women and Girls in Canada, 2020*. Guelph, Canada: Canadian Femicide Observatory on Justice and Accountability.

estimate the number of women and girls with disabilities killed annually. Still, given that empirical research shows that they are more likely to experience violence, we sought to understand the feminicides of women with disabilities by revealing the structural processes underlying their murders. In the following sections, we describe how the processes of care, precarity, and invisibility make the bodies of disabled women disposable. For each process, multiple forms of violence coalesce to shape disabled women's vulnerability and disposability.

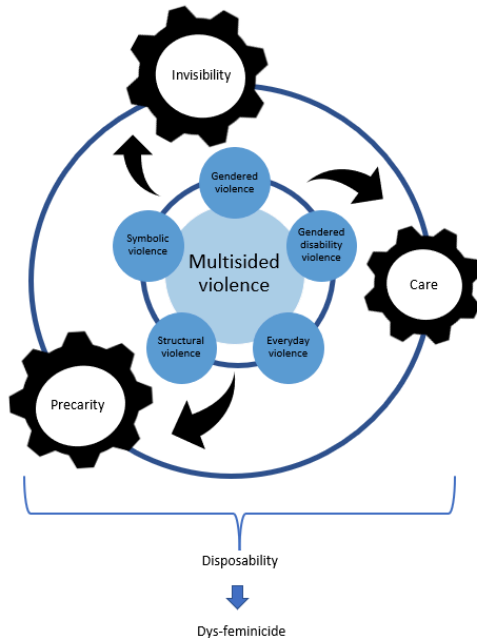


Figure 1: Processes leading the dys-femicide. At the core of the process is multisided violence, comprised of gender violence, gendered disability violence, everyday, violence, structural violence, and symbolic violence. For women with disabilities, these forms of violence translate into care, precarity, and invisibility, which are the gears that lead to their disposability, and in extreme cases, their dys-femicide.

Care

A common thread among examples of dys-femicide that we examined is that the murder of women and girls with disabilities is justified through care, or more specifically, the burden of care. Care as a 'dirty word' (Eales and Peers 2020:4) provides scope for reflection on the intrinsic connections between feminicide and care for women with disabilities. Violence in the name of care reveals the connections between symbolic, structural, gender violence, and gendered disability violence. The gendered nature of care work and the ideology of 'caring for' make caregivers and care

recipients undervalued, creating conditions of precarity and invisibility for diverse women with disabilities who receive and provide care, leading to their disposability and, in extreme cases, murder.

This section anchors ideologies of care in the legacy of eugenics and current neoliberal (a political ideology is emphasizing 'small' government, the reduction of social services, deregulation, and personal responsibility) agendas that construct disabled women as a drain to society and, thus, undeserving. We examine cases that illustrate that women with disabilities are often killed in the context of precarious care arrangements, which are embedded in neoliberal ideologies that undervalue care work and those who receive care in institutions and private homes. Dys-femicides also reveal that ideologies of care contribute to framing 'mercy killings' as acceptable because they are acts of care. Taken together, these dynamics of care show that the feminicide of women with disabilities is often a result of the symbolic and financially undervalued nature of care.

Care dynamics for people with disabilities are anchored in the legacy of eugenics. Eugenics refers to the false science that sought to 'improve' the human race by ensuring the reproduction of desirable traits (Dolmage 2018). Colonial discourses that justify exclusion, exploitation, and even extermination of bodies marked as 'unfit' and 'undesirable' based on their ability to contribute to capitalist notions of production and reproduction (Dolmage 2018; Erevelles 2011; Stern 2016) still shape symbolic and structural violence against women with disabilities, whose care is poorly valued and underresourced. Symbolic violence against diverse women with disabilities begins by the pervasive assumption that they do not (and should not) contribute to productive and reproductive activities of the state. Because neoliberalism is prone to individualism and self-reliance, those who fail to live by those values are framed as undeserving and subhuman (Chouinard and Crooks 2005; Spagnuolo and Bélanger 2018). This assumption reinforces the unilateral framing of care in the lives of disabled people, where the caregiver (especially a paid one) uniquely "controls the how, when, who, and what of delivering life-sustaining services, often without or despite the expressed desires of disabled and ill people" (Peers and Eales 2020: 8). This ideology of care effectively situates disabled people as the recipients of human and material resources and as a drain to society (Eales and Peers, 2020).

The symbolic violence of assuming that disabled people do not contribute to society justifies structural violence in the form of the historical and pervasive lack of resources allocated to caregiving, including

long-term care homes, resulting in under-trained, underpaid, and overworked staff members working in conditions leading to neglect and abuse of residents (Laucius 2020; Pederson et al. 2020). There were several examples of dys-femicides where paid and unpaid caregivers killed women with disabilities, either through physical aggression or neglect. For instance, in Vancouver, Canada, Florence Girard, a 54-year-old woman with Down Syndrome who lived in a care home, died of starvation under the care of Astrid Charlotte Dahl, 51, who was charged by criminal negligence causing death and failure to perform a legal duty to provide necessities.¹²

In some cases, care serves as a justification for dys-femicide. For instance, the murder of Jessica Hagan, a 19-year-old woman with Down Syndrome, is a clear example of the entanglement between care, disability, and dys-femicide. Jessica was killed by her mother, Christine Hagan, in Cranston, Alberta. She was found in her home with her mother, who was in medical distress, and taken to hospital, where she stayed in custody until her death two months later. Christine Hagan was not charged before her death. Christine Hagan took her daughter's life because she knew she only had a few weeks left to live and believed that no one else could care¹³ for her disabled daughter. In a news article from the Canadian Broadcasting Company (CBC), Christine Hagan is portrayed as a loving and caring mother who felt upset about killing her daughter. This framing suggests that Jessica was killed out of compassion, love, and care. This case also portrays how structural violence configures a context where disabled women's survival depends on state funding. The structural conditions in which care for disabled women are provided sometimes make their murder more feasible than long-term care.

Ideologies of care further enable gender and gendered disability violence. Looking at the historical patterns of murders deemed mercy killings,¹⁴

empirical research confirms that most men decide that they can no longer care for a person, often a daughter or intimate female partner with a disability (Canetto and Hollenshead 2001; Otlowski 1993). This was well illustrated in the murder of Jessica Hagan, explained above, and the murder of Dhunalutchmee Naidoo, 69, who lived with an unknown condition and was killed by her husband Nundkumaran Poonusamy Pillay, 64, in Durban, South Africa. He admitted to killing his wife "to end her suffering" and reportedly had increasing difficulty caring for her due to his frail state. He claimed that "she told me that she felt bad for everything that she has to put me through every day. She begged me to kill her",¹⁵ which exposes gendered dynamics of care, where women are assumed to be the caregiver, and internalize this position, worried about being a burden.

Murder-suicides of elderly people, often framed as mercy killings or suicide pacts, reveal similar gendered patterns, where a man kills his intimate female partner, or another close family member, to end both their suffering (Abrams et al. 2007; Rogers and Storey 2019). Yet, these types of 'mercy killings' are rarely consensual, as many of them take place when the woman is sleeping or without their knowledge (Cohen, Llorente, and Eisdorfer 1998). Even when they are consensual, it is vital to situate the decision to die within gendered, disability, and other dynamics of power that devalue the worth of disabled women in society. As such, ableism and sexism work together to degrade the life of women with disabilities to such an extent that their murder is justified. Mercy killings are seen as an extension of care dynamics entrenched in eugenic logic where murder is committed in the name of care.

Prearity

The precarity in which most women with disabilities live globally and that of entire populations provide the

¹² McIntyre, Gordon, Lora Grindlay and David Carrigg. 2020. "Three charges, including criminal negligence causing death, laid in 2018 alleged starvation of Florence Girard," *Vancouver Sun*, January 29. Retrieved April 12, 2021 (<https://vancouver.sun.com/news/local-news/poco-caregiver-charged-after-woman-dies-in-care>).

¹³ Rieger, Sarah. 2015. "Jessica Hagan's Death A Homicide: Calgary Police," *Huffington Post Canada*, December 31. Retrieved April 12, 2021 (https://www.huffingtonpost.ca/2015/12/31/jessica-hagan_n_8900506.html).; Grant, Meghan. 2015. "Jessica Hagan killed by her mother Christine, now deceased: police," *CBC News*, December 31. Retrieved April 12, 2021 (<https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/calgary/jessica-christine-hagan-homicide-cranston-ahs-1.3386060>).; Southwick, Reid. 2016. "Teen's Mom 'Took Her Life, Attempted to Take Her Own,'" *Calgary Herald*, January 2.

¹⁴ Mercy killings are defined as compassionate killings by a family member, intimate partner, or close friend (George 2007).

¹⁵ Somduth, Charlene. 2019. "Why I slit my bedridden wife's throat," *IOL News South Africa*, April 12. Retrieved May 2, 2021 (<https://www.iol.co.za/the-post/why-i-slit-my-bedridden-wifes-throat-21010897>).

conditions that make feminicides of disabled women possible. We draw from Lindsay Eales and Danielle Peers (2020) to define precarity as

the socially sanctioned removal or refusal of the basic life needs of certain kinds of people: the people we've learned not to care about, or perhaps more aggressively, those that we don't particularly care for (Butler 2016). ...it is those that the biopolitical and eugenic state has decided to "let die," given that they cannot or will not be made to live in normatively prescribed and productive ways. Precarity is letting people we've decided not to care about die or barely stay alive through minimal "care" that we then resent them for. Precarity makes sure that our hands don't get dirty and our budgets stay tidy. (P.11)

Precarity specifically reflects structural violence because it is sustained by policies and programs that hinder access to basic needs and everyday violence, such that the precarity of entire populations fosters acts of crimes between individuals.

For women with disabilities, structural violence is apparent in the systemic precarity that many live in due to underemployment, inadequate assistance throughout the life course, and cultural beliefs about dependency. The rise of neoliberalism brought austerity measures, cultural contempt for those in need, and a displacement of care responsibility to the informal sector and solidified hierarchies based on the ability to be productive (Chouinard and Crooks 2005; Erevelles 2011; Spagnuolo and Bélanger 2018). The relationship between gender, poverty, and disability is well documented and endures across time, global regions, and policy frameworks (Chouinard and Crooks 2005; Emmett 2006; Ingstad and Eide 2011; Jackson and david halifax 2018). Liza Kim Jackson and nancy david halifax (2018) argue that the precarity in which disabled women live "are laced through and threaded with a history of capitalism, in which some bodies thrive through the impoverishment of others" (123). In neoliberal times, social policies have addressed disability and poverty as individual problems related to one's inability to contribute to the labor market (Chouinard and Crooks 2005; Jackson and david halifax 2018). As such, the relationship between gender, poverty, and disability, as well as the

violence it causes, is taken-for-granted (Jackson and david halifax 2018).

Two cases of dys-femicides in South Africa and Mexico illustrate that violence is embedded in the precarity caused by a lack of financial and material resources. In line with empirical research (Owen 2010), the murder of Refiloe Rebecca Monamodi illustrates that disabled women often stay in violent relationships due to the lack of options. For instance, they usually have to choose one form of violence over another one, such that some women may stay in a physically abusive situation to avoid homelessness (structural violence). This is even more true of disabled women living in poverty. Refiloe Rebecca Monamodi, a 54-year-old woman with hemiparesis, was killed by her daughter, Lerato Hendrietta Monamodi, in Glen Marais, Gauteng, in March 2017. Refiloe had experienced pervasive abuse from her daughter, who requested access and control over the financial compensation that Refiloe received for her disability. Family members indicate that the abuse started when Refiloe started receiving disability benefits. However, Refiloe never pressed charges against her daughter, which may be situated in the relation of economic dependence.¹⁶

The barriers to access basic needs result from violence structured by the state. This is evident in the lack of emergency policies or access to accessible and adequate mobility devices, which leads to the murder of women with disabilities. An example of this is the murder of Thembisile Dlamini, who could not escape the violent attack of her granddaughter's former intimate partner due to inadequate mobility devices, which reflects the structural negligence of the state towards people with disabilities. A similar case took place in Mexico. A 26-year-old woman with a disability, Carla Itzel, died in a fire in her building in Xalapa, Veracruz. She lived with her mother, who explained that her daughter "suffered from her mental faculties."¹⁷ This example may seem like an isolated accident; however, the lack of emergency policies for disabled people has resulted in similar deaths of women in Australia in 2017 and 2020¹⁸; Colombia in

¹⁶ Mafokwane, Petunia. 2017. "Women Drowns Disabled Mom" *Sowetan*, March 7. Retrieved May 2, 2021 (<https://www.pressreader.com/south-africa/sowetan/20170307/281505046011221>).

¹⁷ Hernandez, Carlos. 2020. "Muere mujer con discapacidad por incendio de vivienda en El Porvenir," *La Jornada*, January 7. Retrieved April 12, 2021 (http://www.jornadaveracruz.com.mx/Post.aspx?id=200107_090354_784)

¹⁸ Chapman, Alex. 2020. "Zillmere unit fire proves fatal as firefighters make grim discovery," *7 News*, December 22. Retrieved May 2, 2021 (<https://7news.com.au/news/disaster-and-emergency/zillmere-unit-fire-proves-fatal-as-firefighters-make-grim-discovery-c-1814648>).

2013¹⁹, and Peru in 2019.²⁰ In these cases, disabled women were 'let to die' in circumstances where other people could escape. These are not inevitable deaths: they speak to the environmental and structural barriers, including the lack of policies and programs, that constraint disabled people's livelihoods, and in these cases, their lives.

Structural violence also fosters everyday violence as the entrenched precarity in which entire populations live may lead people to commit crimes for survival, normalizing them. The concept of everyday violence examines the dynamics of inequalities that underlie "routine practices and expressions of interpersonal aggression that serve to *normalize* violence at the micro-level" (Menjívar 2011: 39, emphasis is ours). It situates high crime rates not as individual acts of deviance but as rooted in the structural normalization of interpersonal acts of violence. It is within the process of everyday violence that feminicides take place. For example, scholars Bhorat and colleagues (2017) link South Africa's high crime rates to its historical and pervasive impacts of Apartheid, such as high unemployment rates, especially among youth, low-income levels, and ongoing income inequalities. Everyday violence becomes taken for granted in the context of historical and pervasive structural violence and contributes to the killings of women with disabilities, given dimensions of care and invisibility that frame them as disposable. In sum, the combination of sexist and ableist structures shape the devaluation of disabled women and legitimize the redistribution of resources that keeps them in poverty. These processes are exacerbated in contexts of historical and ongoing state conflicts that foster high poverty rates and everyday violence.

Invisibility

The lives and bodies of disabled women are confined to a hidden place in society given the physical, attitudinal, and structural barriers that hinder their full participation in all dimensions of life. Because their

lived experiences and dreams remain invisible, they are not provided with the means to sustain their lives and achieve their goals. The invisibility of violence against women with disabilities is configured through symbolic violence, gender violence, and gendered disability violence precisely because it erases the lived experiences, knowledge, skills, and needs of women with disabilities and further enables other forms of violence to make women with disabilities disposable. We identify two mechanisms through which the invisibility of women with disabilities contribute to their murders: first, in some cases, their deaths are not noticed for days or weeks, and second, their deaths are uncounted or not perceived as femicides/feminicides or even murders. These mechanisms will be illustrated from stories of diverse women and girls with disabilities from Bolivia, Mexico, and Canada. In addition, their deaths are made invisible through the lack of disaggregated data on disability status in feminicide observatories and a cynical depiction of their killings as sensationalist stories in media.

The murders of women with disabilities sometimes remained unnoticed due to their invisibility. For example, in Bolivia, a woman was found by the police in her home with signs of sexual abuse at least seven days after her murder. However, the newspapers did not follow up on this case after publishing about finding the dead body, with interviews of her neighbors, who were the ones who reported that she had an intellectual disability.²¹ This murder illustrates the isolation in which many women with disabilities live, making them particularly vulnerable to abuse (Crawford and Ostrove 2003; Hanna and Rogovsky 1991; Nosek et al. 2001). Another example is the killing of Elizabeth Siwicki, an 89-year-old with dementia who lived with her son Ron Siwicki, 66, in Winnipeg, Canada. In November 2014, she fell off her bed, and her son, unable to help her, let her die from bed sores and infections. She died four weeks after falling.²² Her isolation and complete

¹⁹ Vanguardia. 2013. "Muere incinerada mujer con discapacidad en La Belleza, Santander," *Vanguardia*, February 6. Retrieved April 12, 2021 (<https://www.vanguardia.com/judicial/muere-incinerada-mujer-con-discapacidad-en-la-belleza-santander-NSVL194823>).

²⁰ Peru21. 2019. "Chiclayo: Mujer con discapacidad falleció tras incendiarse su vivienda en La Victoria," *Peru21*, October 10. Retrieved May 28, 2021 (<https://peru21.pe/peru/chiclayo-mujer-con-discapacidad-fallecio-tras-incendiarse-su-vivienda-en-la-victoria-noticia/>).

²¹ La Voz. 2020. "Heladeros violan y asesinan a una mujer con discapacidad," *La Voz*, November 23. Retrieved April 12, 2021 (<https://lavozbolivia.com/heladeros-violan-y-asesinan-a-una-mujer-con-discapacidad/>).

²² CBC News. (January 22, 2018). "Ron Siwicki pleads guilty to causing mother's death through negligence," *CBC News*, January 22 (<https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/manitoba/ron-siwicki-mothers-death-1.4498189>).

reliance on her son made it possible to be killed. More expansive supports would have prevented this death. Moreover, the deaths of disabled women sometimes fail to be legible as femicides or femicides, and even as murders. For example, Jocelyne Lizotte was murdered by her husband Michel Cadotte on February 20, 2017, in Montréal, Canada. Jocelyne lived with Alzheimer's disease for a decade and resided in a long-term care home. Her husband, who had been experiencing depression, confessed to a nurse that he killed her because he could no longer bear seeing her in pain.²³ In 2019, Michel Cadotte was convicted of manslaughter with two years less than one day. When rendering the sentence, the judge labeled Lizotte's killing a 'quasi-murder,' saying that "[t]he motivation of the accused was, even if his mental state was altered, to end the suffering of Mrs. Lizotte,"²⁴ which symbolically justifies his decision. This case illustrates that murder is not as severe or essential when the victim does not 'function' within productivity standards. The message that the media and the justice system in Canada transmit to society is symbolically violent, making clear that the life of a disabled woman was disposable.

Another way the murders of women with disabilities are illegible as murders are when they are framed as inevitable. For instance, in the example from Mexico that we addressed earlier, Carla Itzel, a 26-year-old woman with a disability, died in a fire inside her building. She could not escape because of her disability, as the rest of her family did. Her mother deemed her death unavoidable due to Carla's 'inability' to escape.²⁵ There is an assumption that disability is an acceptable reason for death in emergency contexts. These dynamics were laid bare during the COVID-19 pandemic, where critical care triage policies and the lack of safety measures in public illustrated that people with disabilities were imagined as necessary fatalities of the crisis. This assumption reproduces hierarchies of bodies that matter. This example brings together factors to reflect structural conditions that shape how disabled people are not considered essential to emergency plans, making their bodies disposable.

Many of the stories of dys-femicides illustrated so far were invisible because they were not identified as a femicide (or femicide) in the media, even though this is a commonly used vocabulary in the countries we covered and in feminist antifemicide efforts. They are instead displayed as isolated events or as 'mercy killings,' ignoring the dynamics of disability and gender that come into play. Lack of representation is one of how symbolic violence functions. Not recognizing disability issues as part of the social and political agendas is a public denial of the existence of people who experience disability (Swartz et al. 2018). Such violence of representation is encompassed by a social erasure of their experiences or the creation of social disgust and judgment of deservedness promoted by neoliberal politics (Soldatic and Pini 2009).

We consider symbolic violence to be constitutive to dys-femicide because it presents a particular deployment in the case of women with disabilities, compared to the life experiences of non-disabled women. For example, the murder of women with disabilities remains invisible in media, and when it is addressed, media focuses on the women's dysfunction to justify the certainty of their deaths. As if disabled women were meant to die because of their disability. Symbolic violence is a silent mechanism that perpetuates prejudices around the existence of disabled people. To reproduce ideas that deem people with disabilities as 'already dead' or not fully alive (Erevelles 2011; Titchkosky 2007). Isolation, lack of representation, and the erasure of voices of disabled women by their caregivers, media, and ultimately, the state are also fundamental for exercising this type of violence.

The invisibility of women with disabilities as fully human translates into public policies that ignore the needs and experiences of diverse disabled women, such as inadequate emergency plans, care funding, and healthcare provision. Such social misrecognition of the existence of disabled women perpetuates the unjust governmental distribution of human and material resources allocated based on deservedness logic. Dys-femicides are geared and justified through symbolic violence that places the responsibility of the murders

²³ Cherry, Paul. 2019. "Crown closes its evidence in Michel Cadotte murder case," *The Montreal Gazette*, January 28. Retrieved April 12, 2021 (<https://montrealgazette.com/news/local-news/crown-closes-its-evidence-in-michel-cadotte-murder-case>)

²⁴ Schué, Romain. 2019. "Michel Cadotte condamné à deux ans moins un jour d'emprisonnement." *Ici Radio-Canada*, May 29. Retrieved April 12, 2021 (<https://ici.radio-canada.ca/nouvelle/1172245/michel-cadotte-peine-tribunal-homicide-involontaire>).

²⁵ Hernandez, Carlos. 2020. "Muere mujer con discapacidad por incendio de vivienda en El Porvenir," *La Jornada*, January 7. Retrieved May 2, 2021 (http://www.jornadaveracruz.com.mx/Post.aspx?id=200107_090354_784).

of women with disabilities on individual medical diagnoses.

Disposability created by care, precarity, and invisibility

Disposability, an ongoing process of violence through care, precarity, and invisibility mechanisms, is a central element to dys-femicides. In other words, we suggest that multiple forms of violence against women with disabilities work according to the mechanisms of care, precarity, and invisibility to normalize and justify the disposability of women with disabilities. Indeed, gender, gendered, structural, symbolic, and everyday violence lead to the disposability of the disabled women's bodies through configurations that justify who deserves care, access to basic needs, and recognition. Disabled women's bodies are made disposable through co-constitutive structural, symbolic, and gendered processes that deny them the necessary resources to survive.

The disposability of disabled women's bodies is situated in the eugenics legacy sustained by colonial and capitalist dynamics. Femicides are made possible and normalized through the hierarchies of worth created and maintained by the gendered processes of colonialism and global capitalism, which confers worth according to the perceived ability contributing to productive and reproductive activities that reinforce European supremacy (Erevelles 2011). This is evident in the history of sterilization of women with disabilities in most countries and ongoing barriers to reproductive, sexual health, and perinatal care, as well as ongoing underemployment and obstacles to education. These examples show violence structured by the state, as these are state decisions based on gendered and symbolic dynamics reflected in the ways disabled women are framed as unfit for productive and reproductive activities. Furthermore, the COVID-19 pandemic laid bare the process of disposability sanctioned by governments and society. The life of many people with disabilities was made disposable through state and state violence, such as inadequate and unsafe conditions in care homes (Béland and Marier 2020; Schöne-Seifert and Van Aken 2020; Stall et al. 2020; Thompson et al. 2020), critical care triage policies (Erasmus 2020; Lemmens and Mykitiuk 2020; Riva and Petrini 2021), hastened relief of public safety measures, and inaccessible work and public accommodations (Stienstra et al. 2021). In this way, the conditions of care, precarity, and invisibility in which diverse women with disabilities live reveal their unworthiness and location at the bottom of a hierarchy of bodies that matter.

The symbolic, structural, and gendered dynamics of care shape the recognition and allocation of resources of care recipients and caregivers, reinforcing

the status of diverse women with disabilities as disposable. Because people with disabilities are seen as a drain to society, and caregiving is seen as a natural resource of women, care provision is underserved and precarious. Diverse women with disabilities face structural and gender violence in increased barriers to education, employment, and social assistance. As such, many of them live in conditions of poverty and precarity that limit their options to live in violence-free environments. Inadequate policies and programs, such as emergency policies, further reinforce their barriers to safety. In sum, neoliberal policies of care entrench women with disabilities, and the entire population, in conditions of precarity that make survival difficult. Women with disabilities' symbolic disqualification from womanhood and productivity further reinforce their invisibility in advocacy and policy and limit their livelihood paths. Within this context of systemic symbolic, structural, and gendered devaluation, women with disabilities are made disposable.

The dys-femicides of women are depoliticized through the process of disposability. The value of disabled bodies in the hierarchy of worth is made clear when their murders are assumed to be inevitable, framed as 'quasi-murders.' Although, as Razack (2016) suggests, there is a pedagogical value to the murders of certain bodies, "they teach us the limits of the human" (291). Disability as 'deathly status' is reinforced for society when dys-femicides fail to be legible as femicides and murders. In the same token, non-disabled people come to know their status as worthy through their distinction from victims of dys-femicides.

Disability remains invisible as a lens of feminist antiviolence and antifemicide efforts. This is problematic given that women with disabilities experience systemic devaluation that justifies and renders invisible the multiple forms of violence in their lives. We identify three mechanisms specific to the murders of women with disabilities, or dys-femicides, that emphasize the interconnection between the socio-cultural devaluation of women with disabilities and the material conditions in which they live; these are care, precarity, and invisibility. Together, these processes justify and legitimize the status of women with a disability as 'already dead,' as disposable. Furthermore, discriminatory, ableist prejudices around disability render disabled women as always lacking or incomplete in their existence (Kafer 2013).

By tracing cultural meanings of disability, scholars argue that the disabled body cannot be conceived of as a viable mode of life, posited instead as without future (Kafer 2013; McBryde Johnson 2003; Titchkosky 2012). However, the cases of dys-femicide make clear that it is not the impairment that

makes life not viable. Still, the state is responsible for sustaining care conditions, precarity, invisibility for women with disabilities and seals their status as disposable. In this sense, the state's role in dys-femicides expands beyond the failure to recognize and address extreme forms of violence against women with disabilities, as it plays a determining role in legitimizing the precarity in which people with disabilities live.

Call to Action

Antifemicide movements are growing transnationally (Altınay 2014; García Del Moral 2018) and are positioned as one of the most important contemporary movements. As these feminist movements take online, legal, and public spaces, more women seem to be united for the same cause. However, as the movement is homogenized around its cause (murdered women), the complex identities of diverse women risk being erased. Exclusions of feminist antifemicide activism are fatal for women with disabilities because their murders are already ignored by the general society or framed as inevitable. Furthermore, the dominant framing of women with disabilities as recipients of care and not mothers, lovers, and partners render their lived experiences invisible in feminist antiviolence and antifemicide efforts and institutional responses to violence, sustaining the conditions of precarity in which they live. Finally, and most importantly, global feminisms risk replicating and reinforcing ableist notions of which lives are worthy of justice by erasing disability as one of the central elements of many women's lives. We urge feminists around the globe to reflect on the role of disability as an organizing principle that leads to the disposability and murder of women with disabilities. A tangible first step would be to systematically report the victim's disability status in femicide observatories around the world.

There was a lack of intersectional analyses in the observatories we examined and the media reports we read of the murders of disabled women. These sources thus reproduce the notion of femicide as patriarchal violence, gender as the primary organizing principle, and obscure the historical and structural processes that undergird this violence. Disability, and many other social identities, such as socioeconomic status, sexual identity, race, immigration, and citizenship status, are seldom reported in the news and thus not included in femicide observatories. Feminists and journalists must consider the multiple social locations of killed women to reveal the specific and heightened processes that lead to their deaths. A nonadditive intersectional analysis of femicides will allow more effective prevention strategies (García Del Moral 2018).

Protest and mobilization depend on the availability of resources and the ability to protest. Public protests are often spaces of exclusion for those who do not have the time, resources, or basic accommodations to ensure safe involvement. Participation in feminist movements is circumscribed on ableist notions of the 'ability' to protest. There is a disconnection between the needs of women and the needs of historically marginalized women, such as women with disabilities and other groups that may not be considered assets for the production of feminist movements. Disability activists bring in the creativity of resistance strategies they use, constantly adapting and imagining new strategies to challenge disability oppression.

Disability justice activists such as Leah Lakshmi Piepzna-Samarasinha, Alice Wong, and Stacy Milbern have shared the multitude of ways that disabled folks create and sustain social mobilizations by centering care and accessibility. They bring attention to the necessary 'home front' work, as Piepzna-Samarasinha (2020) calls it, done by disabled people who cannot march, such as organizing protests and creating safe houses for protestors, making sure protestors are well fed and hydrating, and babysitting. They do much of the invisible and necessary work, allowing others to protest in the streets. Indeed, disabled people imagine radical paths to liberation. Rather than dissipating the women's movement, bodies that are not on the roads bring attention to the creative ways in which disabled and non-conforming bodies mobilize, even in the context of poverty, political and social invisibility, and increased violence. Their efforts can push the political possibilities of the feminist movement and must be supported by it.

Conclusion and Discussion

We define dys-femicide as the killings of women with disabilities rendered normalized and invisible due to the systemic devaluation of their lives. We urge feminists and disability scholars to seriously take the murders of women with disabilities and their invisibility in antifemicide efforts. Their invisibility from activist, academic, and policy efforts has fatal implications for women with disabilities, who continue to experience unique and heightened forms of violence that lead to their deaths. While it is limited but quality research on violence against women with disabilities in many countries, little is known about the femicides of women with disabilities. Antifemicide scholars and activists must approach femicide/femicide as a provisional concept, one that requires ongoing reflection about the erasures and exclusions it produces. We argue that we must deploy categories of femicides, such as dys-femicide, to

capture the particular processes that subtract the murders of women in a given context.

We hope this paper raises academic inquiry to explore the production of impairment and disability in the process leading to femicides. Southern disability scholars have shown that global dynamics of capitalism and colonialism lead to impairments among entire populations (Grech and Soldatic 2015; Meekosha 2011; Soldatic 2013). We also know that gender-based violence is used as a technology of state domination in contexts of war, post-conflict, and settler colonialism (Razack 2000, 2016). Therefore, it is essential to understand if and how the production of impairment through violence may work as a mechanism of gendered, racial, sexual, and/or geopolitical devaluation in the processes leading to femicides. Limitations of our research include lack of reflection on race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, and other social categories due to lack of disaggregated data in media and femicide observatories.

Conducting this kind of research is emotionally and even physically draining due to the violent content. Because as researchers, we tried to continuously remind ourselves to keep a human perspective and not reduce the examples of femicide to numbers. This research serves respect to the disabled women that died as victims of invisible femicides. The almost total erasure of disability as a condition of women's lives reminded us that lives like ours, lives of the women we love, are not considered worthy. We conducted this research during the height of the COVID pandemic, where critical triage policies and the lack of safety policies, programs, and infrastructure increased the vulnerability of women with disabilities specifically.

Moreover, we are reminded by the COVID vaccines' patents that the drive for profits sustains geopolitical hierarchies of worth. Countries that could not afford the doses could not prevent the morbidity and mortality caused by COVID-19. This paper was written with urgency for the lives of disabled women and a sense of hopelessness, as the stories of lives taken were read in the context of lives not worth saving. However, this does not mean that our lives revolve around structural violence. We are victims and survivors; we share love, joy, and above all, community. Our grief fuels our quest for justice. We are humans, worth living, even if we know that the system victimizes us. We refuse individualized resilience.

References

- Abrams, Robert C., Andrew C. Leon, Kenneth Tardiff, Peter M. Marzuk, and Kari Sutherland. 2007. "'Gray Murder': Characteristics of Elderly Compared with Nonelderly Homicide Victims in New York City." *American Journal of Public Health* 97(9):1666–70.
- Altınay, Rüstem Ertuğ. 2014. "'There Is a Massacre of Women': Violence against Women, Feminist Activism, and Hashtags in Turkey." *Feminist Media Studies* 14(6):1102–3.
- Anglin, Mary K. 1998. "Feminist Perspectives on Structural Violence." *Identities* 5(2):145–51.
- Ballan, Michelle. 2017. "Intimate Partner Violence and Women with Disabilities: The Public Health Crisis." *Family & Intimate Partner Violence Quarterly* 10(2):65–69.
- Bardales Mendoza, Olga Teodora, Renán Meza Díaz, and María Carbajal. 2021. "Femicide Violence Before and During the COVID-19 Health Emergency." *Violence and Gender* ahead of print. doi: 10.1089/vio.2021.0032
- Barile, Maria. 2002. "Individual-Systemic Violence : Disabled Women ' s Standpoint." *Journal of International Women ' s Studies* 4(1):1–14.
- Béland, Daniel, and Patrik Marier. 2020. "COVID-19 and Long-Term Care Policy for Older People in Canada." *Journal of Aging & Social Policy* 32(4–5):358–64.
- Bourgeois, Philippe. 2004. "The Continuum of Violence in War and Peace: Post-Cold War Lessons from El Salvador." Pp. 425–34 in *Violence in War and Peace: An Anthology*, edited by N. Scheper-Hughes and P. Bourgeois. Malden, MA: Blackwell.
- Brownridge, Douglas A. 2006. "Partner Violence Against Women With Disabilities: Prevalence, Risk, and Explanations." *Violence Against Women* 12(9):805–22.
- Canetto, Silvia Sara, and Janet D. Hollenshead. 2001. "Older Women and Mercy Killing." *Omega* 42(3):83–99.
- Cesari, Matteo, and Marco Proietti. 2020. "COVID-19 in Italy: Ageism and Decision Making in a Pandemic." *Journal of the American Medical Directors Association* 21(5):576–77.
- Cetina, Saydi Núñez. 2021. "Violencia Contra Las Mujeres y Femicidio Íntimo a La Sombra Del Covid-19. Los Efectos Perversos Del Confinamiento." *Política y Cultura* (55):99–119.
- Chenoweth, Lesley. 1996. "Violence and Women with Disabilities: Silence and Paradox." *Violence Against Women* 2(4):391–411.
- Chouinard, Vera, and Valorie A. Crooks. 2005. "'Because They Have All the Power and I Have

- None': State Restructuring of Income and Employment Supports and Disabled Women's Lives in Ontario, Canada." *Disability and Society* 20(1):19–32.
- Cohen, Donna, Maria Llorente, and Carl Eisendorfer. 1998. "Homicide-Suicide in Older Persons." *American Journal of Psychiatry* 155(3):390–96.
- Collantes, Christianne France. 2021. "'Unforgotten' Informal Communities and the COVID-19 Pandemic: Sitio San Roque under Metro Manila's Lockdown." *International Journal of Human Rights in Healthcare* 14(3):279–92.
- Collins, Patricia Hill. 1998. "The Tie That Binds: Race, Gender and US Violence." *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 21(5):917–38.
- Crawford, Danette, and Joan M. Ostrove. 2003. "Representations of Disability and the Interpersonal Relationships of Women with Disabilities." *Women & Therapy* 26(3–4):179–94.
- Curry, Mary-Ann, Dena Hassouneh-Phillips, and Anne Johnston-Silverberg. 2001. "Abuse of Women With Disabilities." *Violence Against Women* 7(1):60–79.
- DAWN Canada. 2014. *Fact Sheet: Women with Disabilities and Housing*. Retrieved September 12, 2020 (https://dawnCanada.net/media/uploads/page_data/page-267/english_-_housing_-_january_2014.pdf).
- DAWN Canada. 2019. *More than a Footnote: A Research Report on Women and Girls with Disabilities in Canada*. Retrieved February 17, 2019 (<https://www.dawnCanada.net/projects/beyond%20uncrpd/#head-beyond%20uncrpd>).
- Dolmage, Jay Timonhy. 2018. *Disabled Upon Arrival: Eugenics, Immigration, and the Construction of Race and Disability*. Columbus: The Ohio State University Press.
- Dowse, Leanne, Carolyn Frohmader, and Aminath Didi. 2016. "Violence Against Disabled Women in the Global South: Working Locally, Acting Globally." Pp. 323–36 in *Disability in the Global South: The Critical Handbook*, edited by S. Grech and K. Soldatic. Springer.
- Dowse, Leanne, Karen Soldatic, Jo Spangaro, and Georgia Van Toorn. 2016. "Mind the Gap: The Extent of Violence against Women with Disabilities in Australia: The." *Australian Journal of Social Issues* 51(3):341–59.
- Eales, Lindsay, and Danielle Peers. 2020. "Care Haunts, Hurts, Heals: The Promiscuous Poetics of Queer Crip Mad Care." *Journal of Lesbian Studies* 0(0):1–19.
- Emmett, Tony. 2006. "Disability, Poverty, Gender and Race." Pp. 207–33 in *Disability and Social Change: A South African Agenda*, edited by B. Watermeyer, L. Swartz, T. Lorenzo, M. Schneider, and M. Priestley. Cape Town: HRSC Press.
- Emmett, Tony, and Erna Alant. 2006. "Women and Disability: Exploring the Interface of Multiple Disadvantage." *Development Southern Africa* 23(4):445–60.
- Erasmus, N. 2020. "Age Discrimination in Critical Care Triage in South Africa: The Law and the Allocation of Scarce Health Resources in the COVID-19 Pandemic." *South African Medical Journal* 110(12):1172–75.
- Erevelles, Nirmala. 2011. *Disability and Difference in Global Contexts: Enabling a Transformative Body Politic*. Palgrave MacMillan.
- Farmer, Paul E., Bruce Nizeye, Sara Stulac, and Salmaan Keshavjee. 2006. "Structural Violence and Clinical Medicine." *PLoS Medicine* 3(10):1686–91.
- Gago, Veronica. 2020. *Feminist International: How to Change Everything*. Londong and New York: Verso.
- Galtung, Johan. 1969. "Violence, Peace, and Peace Research." *Journal of Peace Research* 6(3):167–91.
- García Del Moral, Paulina. 2018. "The Murders of Indigenous Women in Canada as Femicides: Toward a Decolonial Intersectional Reconceptualization of Femicide." *Signs* 43(4):929–54.
- George, Katrina. 2007. "A Woman's Choice? The Gendered Risks of Voluntary Euthanasia and Physician-Assisted Suicide." *Medical Law Review* 15(1):1–33.
- Gordon, Adam L., Claire Goodman, Wilco Achterberg, Robert O. Barker, Eileen Burns, Barbara Hanratty, Finbarr C. Martin, Julienne Meyer, Desmond O'Neill, Jos Schols, and Karen Spilsbury. 2020. "Commentary: COVID in Care Homes—Challenges and Dilemmas in Healthcare Delivery." *Age and Ageing* 49(5):701–5.
- Grech, Shaun. 2012. "Disability and the Majority World: A Neocolonial Approach." Pp. 52–69 in *Disability and Social Theory: New Developments and Directions*, edited by D. Goodley, B. Hughes, and L. Davis. London: Palgrave MacMillan.
- Grech, Shaun, and Karen Soldatic. 2015. "Disability and Colonialism: (Dis)Encounters and Anxious Intersectionalities." *Social Identities* 21(1):1–5.
- Hanna, William John, and Betsy Rogovsky. 1991. "Women with Disabilities: Two Handicaps

- Plus." *Disability, Handicap & Society* 6(1):49–63.
- Iacobucci, Gareth. 2020. "Covid-19: Lack of PPE in Care Homes Is Risking Spread of Virus, Leaders Warn." *BMJ* 368:m1280.
- Ingstad, Benedicte, and Arne H. Eide. 2011. "Introduction: Disability and Poverty: A Global Challenge." Pp. 1–14 in *Disability and Poverty: a global challenge*, edited by B. Ingstad and A. H. Eide. Chicago: Chicago University Press.
- Jackson, Liza Kim, and nancy viva david halifax. 2018. "Making Homelessness Harder: Possibilities for Radical Re-Orientation." Pp. 121–52 in *Not a New Problem: Violence in the Lives of Disabled Women*, edited by M. Owen, D. Hiebert-Murphy, and J. Ristock. Halifax and Winnipeg: Fernwood Publishing.
- Kafer, Alison. 2013. *Feminist Queer Crip*. Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press.
- Lagarde, Marcela. 2006. "Del Femicidio Al Femicidio." *Desde El Jardín de Freud - Revista de Psicoanálisis* 0(6):216–25.
- Lagarde, Marcela. 2010. "Preface: Feminist Keys for Understanding Femicide: Theoretical, Political, and Legal Construction." P. xi-xxv. in *Terrorizing Women: Femicide in the Américas*, edited by R.-L. Fregoso and C. Bejarano. Durham: Duke University Press.
- Laucius, Joanne. 2020. "Bugs, Bed Sores and Burnout: Observations on Five Distressed LTC Homes." *Ottawa Citizen*. May 26. Retrieved September 3, 2020 (<https://ottawacitizen.com/news/local-news/bugs-bed-sores-and-burnout-observations-on-five-distressed-ltc-homes>).
- Leder, Drew. 1990. *The Absent Body*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Lemmens, Trudo, and Roxanne Mykitiuk. 2020. "Disability Rights Concerns and Clinical Triage Protocol Development During the COVID-19 Pandemic." *Health Law in Canada* 40(4):103–112.
- Marcus, Sharon. 1992. "Fighting Bodies, Fighting Words: A Theory and Politics of Rape Prevention." Pp. 385–403 in *Feminists Theorize the Political*, edited by J. Butler and J. W. Scott. New York and London: Routledge.
- Maynard, Robyn. 2017. *Policing Black Lives: State Violence in Canada from Slavery to Present*. Halifax and Winnipeg: Fernwood Publishing.
- Mays, Jennifer M. 2006. "Feminist Disability Theory: Domestic Violence against Women with a Disability." *Disability and Society* 21(2):147–58.
- McBryde Johnson, Harriet. 2003. "Unspeakable Conversations." *The New York Times*, February 13. Retrieved February 8, 2018 (<https://www.nytimes.com/2003/02/16/magazine/unspeakable-conversations.html>).
- Meekosha, Helen. 2011. "Decolonising Disability: Thinking and Acting Globally." *Disability and Society* 26(6):667–82.
- Menjívar, Cecilia. 2011. *Enduring Violence*. Berkeley, California: University of California Press.
- Menjívar, Cecilia, and Shannon Drysdale Walsh. 2017. "The Architecture of Femicide: The State, Inequalities, and Everyday Gender Violence in Honduras." *Latin American Research Review* 52(2):221–40.
- Molina, Jorge, and Meraris López. 2021. "Militarización de La Salud En El Salvador." *Proceso* 2(38):8–10.
- Monárrez Fragoso, Julia. 2012. "Violencia Extrema y Existencia Precaria En Ciudad Juárez." *Frontera Norte* 24(48):191–99.
- Monárrez Fragoso, Julia E. 2018. "Femicide: Impunity for the Perpetrators and Injustice for the Victims." Pp. 913–29 in *The Palgrave Handbook of Criminology and the Global South*, edited by K. Carrington, R. Hogg, J. Scott, and M. Sozzo. Cham: Springer International Publishing.
- Mykitiuk, Roxanne, and Ena Chadha. 2011. "Sites of Exclusion: Disabled Women's Sexual and Reproductive Rights." Pp. 157–99 in *Critical Perspectives on Human Rights and Disability Law*, edited by M. H. Rioux, L. A. Basser, and M. Jones. Leiden, NL: Martinus Nijhoff Publishers.
- Nosek, Margaret A., Catherine Clubb Foley, Rosemary B. Hughes, and Carol A. Howland. 2001. "Vulnerabilities for Abuse among Women with Disabilities." *Sexuality and Disability* 19(3):177–89.
- Otlowski, Margaret. 1993. "Mercy Killing Cases in the Australian Criminal Justice System." *Criminal Law Journal* 17(1):10–39.
- Owen, Michelle. 2010. "'Have You Experienced Violence or Abuse?': Talking with Girls and Young Women with Disabilities." Pp. 187–205 in *Living the Edges: A Disabled Women's Reader*, edited by D. Driedger. Toronto: Inanna Publications and Education Inc.
- Paterson, Kevin, and Bill Hughes. 1999. "Disability Studies and Phenomenology: The Carnal Politics of Everyday Life." *Disability and Society* 14(5):597–610.
- Pazzarelli, Francisco. 2017. "Entrevista Esas Papitas Me Están Mirando ! Silvia Rivera Cusicanqui y

- La Textura de Ch'ixi de Los Mundos." *Revista de Antropologia Da UFSCar* 9(2):219–30.
- Pederson, Katie, Melissa Mancini, David Common, and William Wolfe-Wylie. 2020. "85% of Ont. Nursing Homes Break the Law Repeatedly with Almost No Consequences, Data Analysis Shows." *CBC News*. October 23. Retrieved October 23, 2020 (<https://www.cbc.ca/news/marketplace/nursing-homes-abuse-ontario-seniors-laws-1.5770889#:~:text=A%20data%20analysis%20of%20the,that%20break%20that%20law%20repeatedly.>).
- Pessoa, Brenna Galtierrez Fortes, and Elaine Ferreira Do Nascimento. 2020. "Feminicídio e Covid-19 : Duas Expressões Da Questão Social." *Revista Espaço Acadêmico* (224):37–46.
- Piepzna-Samarasinha, Leah Lakshmi. 2020. "Crippling The Resistance: No Revolution Without Us." *Disability Visibility Project*. Retrieved May 28, 2021 (<https://disabilityvisibilityproject.com/2020/08/24/cripping-the-resistance-no-revolution-without-us/>).
- Rajan, Doris. 2011. *Women with Disabilities and Abuse: Access to Supports Report on the Pan-Canadian Focus Groups*. DAWN Canada.
- Razack, Sherene H. 2000. "Gendered Racial Violence and Spatialized Justice: The Murder of Pamela George." *Canadian Journal of Law and Society* 15(2):91–130.
- Razack, Sherene H. 2016. "Gendering Disposability." *Canadian Journal of Women and the Law* 28(2):285–307.
- Riva, Luciana, and Carlo Petrini. 2021. "Ethics of Triage for Intensive-Care Interventions during the COVID-19 Pandemic: Age or Disability Related Cut-off Policies Are Not Justifiable." *Clinical Ethics* 16(3):228–33.
- Rogers, Michaela M., and Jennifer E. Storey. 2019. "Elder Homicide: A Systematic Literature Review." *Aggression and Violent Behavior* 48:141–51.
- Russell, Diana. 2012. "Defining Femicide: Introductory Speech Presented to the United Nations Symposium on Femicide." Retrieved May 14, 2021 (<https://www.dianarussell.com/defining-femicide-.html>).
- Rylko-Bauer, Barbara, and Paul E. Farmer. 2016. "Structural Violence, Poverty, and Social Suffering." Pp. 47–74 in *Oxford Handbook of the Social Science of Poverty* 2, edited by D. Brady and L. M. Burton. Oxford Handbooks.
- Scheper-Hughes, Nancy. 1992. *Death Without Weeping: The Violence of Everyday Life in Brazil*. Berkeley, California: University of California Press.
- Schöne-Seifert, Bettina, and Hugo K. Van Aken. 2020. "Editorial: COVID-19 Pandemic: Urgent Need for Action in Care Homes and Senior Citizens' Homes from a Medical-Ethics Perspective." *Current Opinion in Anaesthesiology* 33(4):481–82.
- Schwartz, Naomi, Ron Buliung, and Kathi Wilson. 2019. "Disability and Food Access and Insecurity: A Scoping Review of the Literature." *Health & Place* 57:107–21.
- Shah, Sonali, Lito Tsitsou, and Sarah Woodin. 2016. "Hidden Voices: Disabled Women's Experiences of Violence and Support Over the Life Course." *Violence Against Women* 22(10):1189–1210.
- Skeggs, Beverley. 1997. *Formations of Class and Gender: Becoming Respectable*. Sage Publications.
- Soldatic, Karen. 2013. "The Transnational Sphere of Justice : Disability Praxis and the Politics of Impairment Politics of Impairment." *Disability & Society* 28(6):744–55.
- Soldatic, Karen, and Shaun Grech. 2014. "Transnationalising Disability Studies: Rights, Justice and Impairment." *Disability Studies Quarterly* 34(2):1–14.
- Soldatic, Karen, and Barbara Pini. 2009. "The Three Ds of Welfare Reform: Disability, Disgust and Deservingness." *Australian Journal of Human Rights* 15(1):77–95.
- Spagnuolo, Natalie, and Josée Bélanger. 2018. "An 'Unconscious Terrain of Habits': Structural Violence against Women Labelled with Intellectual Disabilities." Pp. 76–96 in *Not a New Problem: Violence in the Lives of Disabled Women*, edited by M. Owen, D. Hiebert-Murphy, and J. Ristock. Halifax and Winnipeg: Fernwood Publishing.
- Stall, Nathan M., Aaron Jones, Kevin A. Brown, Paula A. Rochon, and Andrew P. Costa. 2020. "For-Profit Long-Term Care Homes and the Risk of COVID-19 Outbreaks and Resident Deaths." *Cmaj* 192(33):E946–55.
- Stern, Alexandra Minna. 2016. "Eugenics in Latin America." in *Oxford Research Encyclopedia of Latin American History*. Oxford University Press.
- Stienstra, Deborah, Valérie Grand'Maison, Laura Pin, Erin Rodenburg, Kim Garwood, and Kathryn Reinders. 2021. *Disability Inclusion Analysis of Lessons Learned and Best Practices of the Government of Canada's Response to the COVID-19 Pandemic*. Retrieved April 1, 2021 (<https://liveworkwell.ca/sites/default/files/pageu>

- [ploads/DisabilityInclusionAnalysisCOVID-19_Final_031621_protected.pdf](#).
- Swartz, L., X. Hunt, B. Watermeyer, M. Carew, S. H. Braathen, and P. Rohleder. 2018. "Symbolic Violence and the Invisibility of Disability." *African Safety Promotion* 16(2):21–30.
- Thiara, Ravi K., Gill Hague, and Audrey Mullender. 2011. "Losing out on Both Counts: Disabled Women and Domestic Violence." *Disability and Society* 26(6):757–71.
- Thompson, Dana-Claudia, Madalina-Gabriela Barbu, Cristina Beiu, Liliana Gabriela Popa, Mara Madalina Mihai, Mihai Berceanu, and Marius Nicolae Popescu. 2020. "The Impact of COVID-19 Pandemic on Long-Term Care Facilities Worldwide: An Overview on International Issues" edited by S. Baloyannis. *BioMed Research International* 2020:1–7.
- Titchkosky, Tanya. 2007. *Reading and Writing Disability Differently: The Textured Life of Embodiment*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press.
- Titchkosky, Tanya. 2012. "The Ends of the Body as Pedagogic Possibility." *Review of Education, Pedagogy, and Cultural Studies* 34(3–4):82–93.
- True, Jacqui. 2012. *The Political Economy of Violence Against Women*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- UN General Assembly. 2017. "Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights of Girls and Young Women with Disabilities: Note by the Secretary-General."
- Weil, Shalva. 2020. "Two Global Pandemics: Femicide and COVID-19." *Trauma and Memory* 8(2):110–12.
- Young, Iris Marion. 1990. *Justice and the Politics of Difference*. Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press.

Author Biography

Valérie Grand'Maison is a disabled feminist and white settler from Montréal (Tiohtiá:ke), Canada. She is currently a Ph.D candidate at the University of Guelph, Ontario, writing her dissertation on the transnational mobilization against gendered violence of feminist disability organizations. In her research, she adopts intersectional and disability justice approach to amplify the knowledges and skills of diverse women with disabilities for creating social change.

Edelweiss Murillo Lafuente is an early-stage sociology researcher. She is a transnational feminist and a PhD student at the University of Florida. She was born in what is officially called La Paz, Bolivia. Her most recent research focuses on anti-ableist feminist movements in the global south. She believes in kindness and social change.