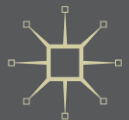


RETHINKING
POLITICAL
VIOLENCE

A GENDERED LENS FOR GENOCIDE PREVENTION



Edited by Mary Michele Connellan
and Christiane Fröhlich



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A Gendered Lens for Genocide Prevention

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TO THE PEOPLE OF SYRIA

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This book is the product of intense collaboration across disciplinary, political and cultural boundaries between us, the editors, and our authors, reviewers and publishers. We would like to thank the reviewers, who have put tremendous work into engaging with individual chapters; the publishers, who have given us the space to critically engage with a politically pressing topic; the authors, who have dedicated time and energy to the individual chapters; and our friends, family and mentors who have endlessly supported us.

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A Gendered Lens for Genocide Prevention

Mary Michele Connellan and Christiane Fröhlich

In this book, we develop, together with our authors, the concept of “a gendered lens for genocide prevention” in order to provide innovative and effective ways of understanding the role of gender in genocide studies, as well as new tools for policymaking and preventative efforts. Our starting point is that while gender has been recognized as a crucial factor in understanding genocide and mass atrocities, most notably in the work of Adam Jones,¹ a specific gendered lens for genocide prevention is still lacking in both policy and academia. Therefore, this book draws on contemporary feminist theory, concepts of masculinity, critical discussions of international law and in-depth case studies to uncover socially constructed gender roles which are crucial for the onset, form and prevention of genocide and mass atrocities.

Following a sociology of knowledge approach, we consider knowledge about genocide to be influenced by attitudes, interests and identities of individuals, all of which shape the structure and extent of what is or can be

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known about genocide. As Cushman stated, “[g]enocide is an objective reality, but it is one which people approach with a variety of personal, ideological and disciplinary dispositions which shape what we know about this all-too-real phenomenon.”² With this book, we aim to dismantle some of the social and institutional processes which play a role in creating knowledge about genocide; these can be understood as evidence-based representations of nature, socio-cultural relations and behavior. On this basis, even more importantly, we aim to uncover how genocide and mass atrocities become accepted practices in a given group and setting; one of these processes is the development of socially constructed gender roles and their interaction with violent and non-violent behavior. We believe that this knowledge is a prerequisite for the development of effective preventative efforts.

CENTRAL CONCEPTS: GENOCIDE, GENDER AND PREVENTION

Crucially, we recognize genocide and mass atrocity not as static phenomena, fixed across space and time, but as deeply dependent on context and perception. In accordance with Theriault,³ we underline the necessity to historically situate events or processes, and the key role of the respective “prevailing ethical views of a time and place.”⁴ We see genocide and mass atrocities as contingent, unpredictable and as a product of human agency.⁵ While gender too is transient, we nevertheless find that intersectional markers of difference like class, ethnicity, age or gender are relevant for understanding the perpetration and victimization caused by genocide and mass atrocities, in order to gain an insight into their mechanisms and characteristics.

Our understanding of gender is as the socio-culturally and politico-economically constructed roles and responsibilities ascribed to men and women which change over time, are context and history-specific and are inseparable from power relations.⁶

As mentioned, our ambition with this book is to provide knowledge about possible entry points for genocide and mass atrocity prevention. This indicates our fundamental belief that atrocities are preventable, and a more comprehensive knowledge about their mechanisms and characteristics will benefit future prevention efforts. In this sense, we are part of what Cushman has termed “preventionism.”⁷ However, answering his critique of preventionism as “an ideology which pervades the liberal project of modernity and the social sciences which are part of that

project,”⁸ this book aims to critically reflect on the anthropo-, andro- and eurocentric characteristics of traditional ideas of genocide and to develop a new, more holistic and comprehensive perspective through what we call a gendered lens for genocide prevention.

WHAT IS A “GENDERED LENS”?

Central to our conceptual argument is that by defining genocide in a static and traditional way, most commonly as the systematic killing of men and boys at fighting age (between ages 16 and 60), other, equally genocidal violence, like systematic sexual violence as a tool of ethnic de- or repopulation, the destruction of communities and genocidal dispersion⁹ evade adequate recognition and intervention. As Adam Jones writes: “Focusing on genocide as traditionally viewed (...) tends to give short shrift to mass atrocities against females, who are more likely to be raped and/or enslaved in such conflicts than they are to be killed outright.”¹⁰ The related term “gendercide” was coined by Mary Anne Warren, who defined it as follows:

... gendercide [is] the deliberate extermination of persons of a particular sex (or gender). Other terms, such as “gynocide” and “femicide,” have been used to refer to the wrongful killing of girls and women. But “gendercide” is a sex-neutral term, in that the victims may be either male or female. There is a need for such a sex-neutral term, since sexually discriminatory killing is just as wrong when the victims happen to be male. The term also calls attention to the fact that gender roles have often had lethal consequences, and that these are in important respects analogous to the lethal consequences of racial, religious, and class prejudice.¹¹

Adam Jones later explored the concept of gendercide to include the idea that “civilian males of an imputed ‘fighting age’ were especially vulnerable to genocidal massacre,”¹² thereby adding the masculine perspective to the originally women-centered idea of a gendercide.

What this book adds to the discussion is a focus on prevention. Our particular kind of a gendered lens for genocide analysis is centered around the understanding that throughout the process of genocide, there are various entry points for prevention. Many scholars and institutions¹³ have developed different frameworks for prevention, notably Gregory Stanton’s ten-stage approach, which follows the process of genocide, as

“predictable but inexorable,” one that is not linear, where “stages may occur simultaneously.”¹⁴ While Stanton’s approach is useful and informative, it is lacking an inclusion of the role gender plays in each of the proposed ten stages. Stanton focuses particularly on genocide, whereas this book considers mass atrocities and genocide prevention simultaneously, because we believe that the role gender plays in both processes is essentially similar. As such, we suggest an approach to genocide prevention similar to Stanton’s, with the addition of the following indicators, or entry points, for prevention at each stage. These indicators should likewise be applied to any framework for mass atrocity prevention:

- Direct references by agents of genocide or mass atrocity to gendered roles or expectations;
- Changes in traditional gender roles, particularly increased representations of the violent masculine;
- Increased cases of sexual or gender-related violence;
- Intimidation tactics based on gender roles;
- Gendered imbalances in survivors and the social, economic and cultural implications; and
- Gendered differences in reprisals during and after genocide.

The contributions to this book engage with these entry points on different levels and from different perspectives, with the overarching goal of operationalizing them in order to improve prevention and mitigation efforts in situations of genocide and mass atrocities. In this sense, the concept of intersectionality is particularly useful; it can help to identify ways of approaching genocide prevention differently and more effectively.

While this is not in itself a new perspective – feminist approaches have long been characterized by the critical evaluation of intersections between gender and other power structures¹⁵ – intersectionality as a concept has never actually entered mainstream social sciences.¹⁶ This book aims to show that both research and policymaking would benefit from critical engagement with post-colonial, anti-racist and post-structural ideas that have informed the concept of intersectionality. Power intersections are evident in all relations and on all levels of human interaction, for example, in institutional practices or individual decision-making. The key element in power intersections is social in- and exclusion based on markers of difference, and, crucially, these markers serve as the basis for the definition of what is “normal,” while at the same time revealing underlying power

structures, which are often portrayed as “natural.”¹⁷ Such structures determine individual or group access to material and virtual resources, they influence societal structures and institutions, and they are reproduced through daily social practices. What is more, these structures often underpin processes of violence and vulnerability. This book therefore develops alternative ways of explaining and understanding social processes like identity formation, the gendered nature of everyday practices and the co-constitutive character of social roles and different positions of power in a given society and context.

THE BOOK

The book’s framework is applied to a diverse range of topics by our authors, covering not only historic cases of genocide and its treatment by international law, for instance the Holocaust, the Red Khmer and Rwanda, but also contemporary cases like mass atrocities committed against Yazidis in Iraq and Syria.

In her conceptual chapter, *Mary Connellan* highlights the significance of the interplay between norms of recognition of genocide and experiences of vulnerability and violence. Using a feminist approach influenced by the work of Judith Butler, she draws attention to the problems associated with the notion of “protecting vulnerable groups,” and deconstructs ideas of “protection” and “vulnerability,” analyzing the relation between gender and violence and addressing the international legal framework on gender and sexual violence. Crucially, Connellan asks who shall be protected, by whom and how? The ways power and vulnerability are inherited by states and individuals are central to her discussion, and provide vantage points for the in-depth analysis of the key subjects of recognition and violence.

Henri Myrntinen uncovers both the gendered invisibility in and the centrality of men, boys and masculinities in acts and processes of genocide. He outlines how taking a critical masculinities approach can help in understanding the complex relationship between gender norms and mass atrocities. Although men play central roles as perpetrators, victims, survivors, enablers, bystanders and witnesses, they are seldom analyzed as gendered beings, with expectations projected onto them by society and in part internalized by themselves. These projections interact with age, class, sexual orientation, dis-/ability, as well as ethnic or religious background. In a situation of genocide or mass atrocity, these may push one group of

men to become perpetrators, and force others into a position as targets of violence. By outlining such an intersectional, critical approach to masculinities at the macro- and micro-levels of perpetration, Myrntinen offers the required tools to develop a more nuanced understanding of the dynamics of violence as well as of the gendered ideologies underpinning genocide.

James Snow critically engages with the ways women are framed in genocide studies as well as in media narratives of genocide, thereby questioning gender stereotypes and how genocide is “seen” and understood. Focusing on the genocide in Rwanda and its aftermath, including the prosecution of perpetrators, Snow analyzes how gender stereotypes direct the way women are viewed primarily as targets and victims of violence, while turning a blind eye to female perpetrators. In the rare case that women are acknowledged as actual or potential perpetrators of genocide, they are confined to one of two frames: Either they are cast as *femmes fatales*, or they are constructed as monsters and sometimes mother-monsters. Using the case of Pauline Nyiramasuhuko, Snow shows that female perpetrators are portrayed as “mother-monsters” in a way that recalls and parallels the mother-monster of Greek mythology, Medea. Snow counters this simplification and mythologization by operationalizing West and Zimmerman’s framework of “doing gender” to illuminate that we need to focus on specific and local factors that might explain women’s participation in genocide, to better assuage or prevent mass atrocities.

Douglas Irvin-Erickson reminds the reader that the world’s first genocide prevention framework explicitly considered gender crimes and sexual violence to be acts of genocide, a fact often overlooked today because they were removed from the genocide discussion in the aftermath of the Second World War. Irvin-Erickson highlights the challenges arising from this for genocide prevention and persecution efforts during and after the Cold War. For instance, in the trial of Thomas Lubanga Dyilo at the International Criminal Court (ICC) and the trial of Khieu Samphan and Nuon Chea at the Extraordinary Chambers in the Courts of Cambodia (ECCC), which are widely acknowledged as landmark cases in international criminal law, the defendants were convicted of war crimes and crimes against humanity, but cleared of all charges for sexual violence, outraging observers and human rights advocates who widely considered them to have facilitated mass rape in the Democratic Republic of Congo and Cambodia. Irvin-Erickson argues that the two primary reasons why the prosecution of rape and other sexual crimes failed in both cases at the ICC and ECCC were the same challenges to the prosecution of sexual

crimes that Raphaël Lemkin identified when he urged his colleagues at Nuremberg to prosecute Nazi defendants for sexual crimes. Irvin-Erickson pays particular attention to Lemkin's insistence that prosecutors should present sexual crimes as integral to larger criminal programs, so that leaders can be held accountable in international criminal courts for acts of sexual crimes without having to prove a direct causal link between high-ranking defendants and the acts of sexual crimes committed by low-level perpetrators.

Anna Hedlund interrogates the dispersal of mass atrocities from Rwanda to the Congo and how gendered power structures influence the practices of memorializing genocide in rebel camps. She thus turns our attention from the male soldiers of the Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Rwanda (FDLR), who have received great attention over the years in human rights reports and academic literature, to the marginalized refugee population – women, elders and children – who move about with the rebels. Building on several months of anthropological fieldwork in a rebel camp of the FDLR in the Congo, Hedlund paints a detailed picture of the diverse roles women hold in the camp and the group based on their individual history, background, age, ethnicity and recruitment experience. By including women's voices into the analysis of the FDLR, Hedlund shows that some women are victims under FDLRs control and have traumatic memories and experiences of forced recruitment and violence, whereas other women are active participants in mobilizing violence and share the group's military, ideological and political goals to return to their home country, Rwanda. The chapter shows that applying a gendered lens to the FDLR, the Rwandan genocide and its aftermath can provide policymakers and organizations working to prevent violence and genocide with a better understanding of how gender and societal roles are lived and performed inside an armed group in contexts of ongoing violence.

Nikki Marczak explores the enslavement of women as a genocidal strategy against Armenian and Yazidi communities during genocides a century apart. By applying a gendered lens to both genocides, Marczak uncovers important parallels: Both peoples have endured the horrors of genocide, sexual violence, trafficking, forced marriage and forced maternity. Genocidal enslavement of women deprives them not only of physical freedom, but of their culture, identity and community, potentially leading to social death. Both cases show how genocide is as much about restricting the future potential of a group via biological, sexual and cultural strategies of destruction, as it is about the physical murder of existing members.

Marczak shows that the gendered nature of the Yazidi genocide follows a similar trajectory as the Armenian genocide and explores how an awareness of their parallels may be useful for intervention. She outlines how the use of forced conversion and assimilation, forced marriage and impregnation, sexual slavery and sexual violence, were and are underpinned by gendered and ideological concepts, designed to destroy the group's biological, cultural and social infrastructure; the identification of which may serve as important indicators for preventative efforts.

In bringing together the diversity of case studies and conceptual frameworks within the framework of a gendered lens for genocide, we hope to provide new ways of approaching genocide and mass atrocity in both research and policy. The book does not attempt to offer a single or particular solution to preventing genocide and mass atrocities, but rather highlights the fact that it is prevention that should be at the forefront of both academic work and political initiatives. We propose that any future work on genocide and mass atrocity prevention should involve a better understanding of how gendered roles interact with violence at different stages, and how working with this knowledge can assist prevention efforts.

NOTES

1. Adam Jones (ed.). *Gendercide and genocide* (Nashville: Vanderbilt University Press, 2004), and Adam Jones, "Gendercide: Examining gender-based crimes against women and men," *Clinics in Dermatology* 31: 2 (2013): 226.
2. Tom Cushman, "Is genocide preventable? Some theoretical considerations," *Journal of Genocide Research* 5:4 (2003): 523.
3. Henry Theriault, "Against the grain: Critical reflections on the state and future of genocide scholarship," *Genocide Studies and Prevention* 7:1 (2012): 124f.
4. *Ibid.*
5. See Cushman, "Genocide," 524.
6. See Christiane Fröhlich and Giovanna Gioli, "Gender, conflict and global environmental change." *Peace Review – A Journal of Social Justice* 27: 2 (2015).
7. Cushman, "Genocide," 524.
8. *Ibid.*
9. Theriault, "Against the grain," 125.
10. Jones, "Gendercide," 227.