

Colorism's Effect on the Presentation of Performative Justice for Indigenous Women in Video News Media

The Americas

Capstone

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Abstract: In this paper, I explore the role of colorism in the presentation of performative justice for indigenous women in Mexico. Indigenous people suffer from the lack of legal justice and security in the communities that they live in, indicating systemic barriers that create intentional social exclusion on behalf of the dominant society. I use the term performative justice as a push or approach to a problem in a non-traditional legal justice form that is meant to impact society and create change. Using content analysis, I analyze eight videos to identify indications of colorism through different video metrics and content markers that denote discriminatory representation. Through analyzing different video media

sources, I identify the language and structures used to determine whether colorism influences the representation of indigenous women in the media.

The colorism that is presented and communicated through video media represents the failure of performative justice, as it attempts to spotlight the femicide of indigenous women but lacks in effectively communicating the importance of violence against indigenous women in a predominantly non-indigenous country. A few aspects of the presentation of the indigenous femicide cases I analyzed indicated to me a failure of performative justice. The factor of less speaking times for families, the lack of urgency in the search for legal justice in these reports, and the lack of context given with existing as indigenous women in a predominantly non-indigenous society are all places where video media lacks in propelling the social change and awareness of this issue into society.

Introduction

The relationship between indigenous communities and dominant state powers has a complicated history inextricably intertwined with centuries of oppression, racism, colonialism, and colorism through military, political, and economic power. Many indigenous communities today still suffer the consequences of colonialism and continue to suffer from real modern oppression. Indigenous communities lack in resources, they are often within the lowest socio-economic class, they lack in representation politically and within media, and many do not have access to basic social services like healthcare or equal education.¹ Indigenous communities are often disproportionately affected by the lack of legal justice and security in the communities that they live in. Although some progress

¹“Indigenous Latin America in the Twenty-First Century”, World Bank, Accessed October 22, 2019, <https://www.worldbank.org/en/region/lac/brief/indigenous-latin-america-in-the-twenty-first-century-brief-report-page>.

has been made through the help of government social policies and non-governmental organizations, there are still real systemic barriers that create an invisible divide between the opportunities for non-indigenous people and indigenous people. These barriers inhibit full integration of indigenous people, when desired, and creates intentional social exclusion on behalf of the dominant society. Very often, indigenous people who live in urban settings do not get to experience full integration or equal experiences, and these areas are often the most insecure, dangerous and lacks in basic human services for those who live there.² Scholars have pointed out that within these communities; both urban and rural women suffer disproportionately to men.³ In Mexico, indigenous women suffer from the institutionalized gender discrimination that white women in dominant Mexican society

² “Indigenous Latin America in the Twenty-First Century.”

³ “Indigenous Latin America in the Twenty-First Century.”

also suffer from, but they take this discrimination on top of the burden of their ethnic identity, and their low economic status.⁴ Although indigenous women have been on the forefront of many indigenous rights movements, they are often targeted because of this in gendered ways. Many indigenous women suffer from gender violence that is a part of patriarchal societies, such as rape, kidnappings, and femicides.⁵ Indigenous women often do not have access to the same social services as women in the dominant society, such as law enforcement resources and assault counseling.⁶ As a result, legal justice is harder to attain for indigenous women.

Many indigenous people in Mexico are still suffering from systemic barriers and

⁴ Chandra Roy, "Indigenous Women: A Gender Perspective." Aboriginal Policy Research Consortium International, (2004): 3.

⁵ Rachel Sieder, "Indigenous Women's Struggles for Justice in Latin America." *NACLA Report on the Americas* 47, no. 4 (2014): 22–23.

⁶ "Indigenous Latin America in the Twenty-First Century."

lack of representation in mainstream media as a form of discrimination from the dominant society in Mexico.⁷ I believe it is valuable to look beyond perceived ethnic and socioeconomic biases that exist within the Mexican state, and explain why racism does not find its place in this narrative.

Racism does exist in Mexico, however is targeted at Afro-Mexican and Afro-indigenous people because the dominant society does not identify as the same race. Mexico's population of indigenous people are perceived as the same race as the dominant society in Mexico, but the distinction made between an indigenous person and a non-indigenous person is tone of their skin and facial features.⁸ For this reason, I use the term colorism as a possible theory to explain the discrimination of

⁷ "Tres Mexicanos Cuentan Cómo Han Vivido El Racismo | México." YouTube. El Pais, June 29, 2017. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=L81KdVPmqB0>.

⁸ "Tres Mexicanos Cuentan Cómo Han Vivido El Racismo | México." YouTube.

indigenous people in Mexico and the way in which it manifests through lack of accessibility to social services and media representation. For the purposes of my paper, I use Angela P. Harris' definition of colorism as "discrimination against persons based on their physiognomy, regardless of their perceived racial identity."⁹ I believe this clarification is necessary to use colorism as the lense in which I plan to assess and analyze the level of representation of indigenous women in mainstream media and legal justice for indigenous women who are victims of femicide.

Literature Review

Overview

When researching femicide in Latin America, few topics and key theories are necessary to clarify when assessing the public response to the femicide of indigenous women. First, I establish the

⁹ Angela P Harris, "From Color Line to Color Chart?: Racism and Colorism in the New Century." HeinOnline, Accessed October 20, 2019, 54.

conversation surrounding gender violence, the origins of the word "femicide" and its importance, and the way in which states address gender violence. I then describe the discussion around the understood relationship between indigenous communities and their states's institutions and the meaning of indigenous identities in Mexico. Additionally, I introduce the theory of colorism and its place in Latin America, as I believe colorism is a necessary theory to analyze when discussing public response to the femicide of indigenous women in Mexico.

Gender Violence

Gender violence is the targeted violence of a specific gender in society. Many academics attempt to theorize why and in what contexts gender violence occurs. These theories focus around gender dynamics between social movements, cultural understandings, the relationship between citizen and state, and the meaning

of power dynamics. To establish a foundation of gender violence, Jill Radford explains that rape, pornography, and physical violence against women and children, and sexual harassment are all forms of sexual violence and defining these things are necessary for women to identify and name their own experiences.¹⁰ Marcela Lagarde y de los Rios uses Radford's definition, but further suggests that femicide is nurtured by certain historical conditions that in turn raise social patterns that create the space for violent attempts to violate the integrity, health, liberties and lives of girls and women.¹¹ Radford argues that femicide can find its place in physical violence against women as the misogynous killing of women by men. Radford points to internalized misogyny imposed by a patriarchal state as what perpetuates this

violence. However, Sally Engle Merry believes that gender violence ventures beyond the power structure of patriarchy in society, and criticizes this belief that patriarchy is the only driving factor behind gender violence.¹² Merry expands theory into the cultural dimensions and understandings and strays from the strictly heteronormative view of gender violence and femicides.¹³ Merry evaluates gender violence through four different anthropological dimensions; changing social movements, understanding that gender exhibits itself differently in society based on audience, the impact of state power and violence on interpersonal behavior, and the variance within the global phenomena.¹⁴ Building on this concept of where gender violence stems from, Johnson et al. attempt to place the root of this violence against women as a problem that stems from

¹⁰ Radford, Russell. *Femicide: Politics of Women Killing*.

¹¹ Lagarde de los Rios, Marcela. *Terrorizing Women: Femicide in the Americas* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2010), xvi.

¹² Sally Engle Merry, *Gender Violence: A Cultural Perspective* (Chicester: John Wiley and Sons Incorporated, 2008) 46-48.

¹³ Merry, *Gender Violence*, 47.

¹⁴ Merry, *Gender Violence*, 47-48.

institutions within society, such as marriage and home life, community culture, and state custom, all support the attitudes and practices that perpetuate the notions of violence.¹⁵ Radford believes the word “femicide” is often given the gender-neutral term of “homicide,” and is the reason that femicide is often overlooked in discussions of feminism. Radford explains that “homicide” does not effectively highlight the misogynist intentions behind these killings.¹⁶ This materializes into disproportionate media coverage that instead focuses the issues of these killings onto blame of the women and attributing the male murderer as “animalistic,” rather than identifying the internalized misogyny that motivated the murder.¹⁷ Society places blame on women’s behavior when it is

¹⁵ Johnson, Holly, Natalia Ollus, and Sami Nevala. “*Violence Against Women Worldwide: Setting the Context.*” *Violence Against Women*, 2008, 1–16

¹⁶ Radford, Russell. *Femicide: Politics of Women Killing*, 4-5.

¹⁷ Radford, Russell. *Femicide: Politics of Women Killing*. 5.

measured against the male-dominated perceptions of what women’s behavior should be.¹⁸ Radford argues that this pervasive perspective of femicide influences how legal systems regard the killing of women, especially women of marginalized communities, less seriously than other murders.¹⁹ Similarly, Johnson et al. argue that societal attitudes towards women that are expressed at the institutional level, like media outlets and the legal system, creates a wave of social norms rooted in the same notions of gender inequality that eventually systemically prevent women from access to justice.²⁰

Distinguishing Homicide and Femicide

Russell and Radford hold the necessity for a sex-specific word such as “femicide” because a lack of distinction between femicide and homicide reinforces

¹⁸ Radford, Russell. *Femicide: Politics of Women Killing* 5.

¹⁹ Radford, Russell. *Femicide: Politics of Women Killing* 5.

²⁰ Johnson, Ollus, and Nevala. “*Violence Against Women Worldwide*”

the de-legitimization of the violent death of women.²¹ Similarly, Corradi et al. explain their understanding of the sociological necessity of the distinction of “femicide.”²² Corradi et al. discuss the goal of the word femicide is to raise awareness that violent deaths of women ought not be grouped the same way as “homicides” because it is supposed to leave a lasting impression of the circumstances of the murder, as a woman killed by a man.²³ In this regard, Corradi et al. believe the word is a mobilization against this invisible distinction between a homicide and femicide. Corradi et al. maintain the act of defining a new word can produce real change in society consciousness because of its ability to describe an aspect of society

that gender-neutral terms cannot.²⁴ Corradi et al. reviewed five theoretical approaches that clarified the usefulness of the new word. Corradi et al. explain how the feminist, sociological, criminological, human rights and decolonial theories prove that the distinction of the word “femicide” has the ability to “transform conventional perception, public awareness, scientific research and policy making.”²⁵ This theoretic contribution allows understanding of gender and sex dynamics in society and how they are manifested at the institutional level.

Indigenous Women Representation

Indigenous rights and relations with the state have a complicated history. Lynn Stephen chooses to reference indigenous rebellions throughout Latin American history that had a great impact on the

²¹ Radford, Russell. *Femicide: Politics of Women Killing*, 2.

²² Corradi, Consuelo, Chaime Marcuello-Servós, Santiago Boira, and Shalva Weil. “Theories of Femicide and Their Significance for Social Research.” *Current Sociology* 64, no. 7 (September 2016): 975–95

²³ Corradi, Marcuello-Servós, Boira, and Weil. “Theories of Femicide and Their Significance for Social Research” 976.

²⁴ Corradi, Marcuello-Servós, Boira, and Weil. “Theories of Femicide and Their Significance for Social Research” 976.

²⁵ Corradi, Marcuello-Servós, Boira, and Weil. “Theories of Femicide and Their Significance for Social Research” 978.

autonomy and self-determination of indigenous communities.²⁶ Stephens explains that indigenous autonomy is the idea that indigenous communities have the right to continue their respective internal practices and decision-making methods, with respect and allowance from the state²⁷. Additionally, Stephen argues that indigenous communities should have the right to equally participate in the cultural, economic and political dynamics of the state without inflicted prejudices or limitations of any kind²⁸. Yash Ghai reinforces this claim that when the rights of minorities are taken away, they will continue to be denied by their society.²⁹ David Gow and Joanne

²⁶ Lynn Stephen. *“Indigenous Rights and Self-Determination in Mexico.”* *Cultural Survival Quarterly* (2003)

²⁷ Stephen, *“Indigenous Rights and Self-Determination in Mexico.”*

²⁸ Stephen, *“Indigenous Rights and Self-Determination in Mexico.”*

²⁹ David Gow, and Joanne Rappaport. *“The Indigenous Public Voice: The Multiple Idioms of Modernity in Native Cauca”* In *Indigenous Movements, Self-Representation, and the State In Latin America*, (University of Texas Press, 2003) 47.

Rappaport add to this conversation that the struggle of indigenous populations is not just one between indigenous communities and non-indigenous communities, but also internal and external organizations structures are involved. These structures then must work together to create a unified voice for the indigenous movement.³⁰ When addressing the indigenous movement, Laura Graham asserts that indigenous leaders and prominent advocates have to make strategic choices when it comes to language they choose to communicate their struggle through, influencing the public perception of indigenous culture.³¹ Rachel Sieder brings forth the idea that within these indigenous conflicts with the state, indigenous women often remain at the forefront of the prejudices inflicted by the state in terms of

³⁰ Gow, Rappaport, *“The Indigenous Public Voice”* 48.

³¹ Graham Laura R. *“How Should an Indian Speak? Amazonian Indians and the Symbolic Politics of Language in the Global Sphere.”* In *Indigenous Movements, Self-Representation, and the State In Latin America*, (University of Texas Press, 2003) 183-184.

inaction and racial discrimination.³² Their struggle for right is impeded when the state fails to give collective indigenous rights.³³ Although indigenous women usually have their rights taken from them, Stephen argues that they have leading roles within the decision making of the Accords of Indigenous Life and Culture, indigenous women led the national movement to include these important notions of indigenous autonomy with a gendered lens. Stephens claims that their presence in political decisions creates opportunities for opportunities within their communities, much impact beyond them is unsure until the state respects the gendered critiques of systemic restrictions of indigenous women³⁴. Sieder adds that indigenous women are not complicit in their roles as

³² Rachel Sieder. *“Indigenous Women’s Struggles for Justice in Latin America.”* *NACLA Report on the Americas* 47, no. 4 (2014): 22–23.

³³ Sieder, *“Indigenous Women’s Struggles for Justice in Latin America.”* 22.

³⁴ Stephen, *“Indigenous Rights and Self-Determination in Mexico.”*

suppressed members of society. Indigenous women are known to provide harsh critiques of their societies, and well as the larger state³⁵. Both Stephens and Sieder’s theory helps us understand the way in which although indigenous women are represented as victims to the world, they do not believe that indigenous women follow the hegemonic language of gender equality because they are representing themselves from inside their communities out.

Cultural Colorism

When analyzing relations between indigenous people and the state, it is important to address the role of skin color. Angela P. Harris uses colorism to describe the discrimination against people for their skin color rather than race.³⁶ However, Harris believes that although the distinction between race and skin color is at times necessary, race and color are not different

³⁵ Sieder, *“Indigenous Women’s Struggles for Justice in Latin America.”*

³⁶ Angela P Harris, *“From Color Line to Color Chart? Racism and Colorism in the New Century”* *HeinOnline*, 54.

things in that they are equally used to assign status and stigma.³⁷ However, Canache et al. disagree with this idea that the distinction between race and skin color is useless and believes that colorism is evaluated using a three-part framework including social context, crucial demographic and psychological attributes, and the significant distinction and similarities of skin color, race, and ethnicity.³⁸ Canache et al. believe that although skin color does not influence the presence of discrimination, these distinctions can make a difference in the perceived levels of discrimination received.³⁹ Gonzales argues that in Latin America the role of preferred skin color, colorism, rather than racism determines the way certain members of society are treated

and view in terms of public representation and privilege.⁴⁰ Gonzalez suggests that while racism exists in Latin America, the prevalence of mixed-race people provides more focus of comparison on skin color within Latin American countries.⁴¹ Gonzales grounds his ideas of colorism within the history of slavery within Latin America. He claims that since African slaves were brought to Latin America and encouraged to have children with indigenous women their children were automatically considered Zambos, which were one of the lowest class citizens, other than Africans. If an African slave had a child with a White Spanish woman, then that child was on the Mulatto class, higher class than Zambo and an African.⁴² Gonzales argues that this was an issue of skin color, not race or ethnicity

³⁷ Harris, "From Color Line to Color Chart?" 54.

³⁸ Damarys, Canache, Matthew Hayes, Jeffery J. Mondak, and Mitchell A. Seligson. "Determinants of Perceived Skin-Color Discrimination in Latin America." *The Journal of Politics* 76, no. 2 (2014): 511.

³⁹ Canache et al., "Determinants of Perceived Skin-Color Discrimination in Latin America." 512.

⁴⁰ Gonzalez, "The Origins and Effects of 'Colorism' in Latin America: A Comparative Study of Mexico and Brazil."

⁴¹ Gonzalez, "The Origins and Effects of 'Colorism' in Latin America: A Comparative Study of Mexico and Brazil."

⁴² Gonzalez, "The Origins and Effects of 'Colorism' in Latin America: A Comparative Study of Mexico and Brazil."

because the only clear distinction made between citizens was their skin color. Gonzales argues that these social constructions continue today, and are the reason why legal and media representations are so disproportionate.⁴³ Chavez-Duenas et al. agree with the notion that skin color is the reason for lack of representation, but also false representation in that indigenous and traditionally non-White populations in Latin America are invisible and have had their traditions devalued by being labelled “exotic.”⁴⁴ They claim Thomas Holt uses the concept of “mestizaje” as a continuation of this idea that due to the mixed culture of their rich history, there was a positive view of mixed people that dictated the way in which the governments wanted to frame and

define their nation.⁴⁵ Chavez-Duenas et al. argue that this “positive” framing is another way to create stereotype people and filter what mainstream media understands about these cultures.⁴⁶ Safa believes that this functional disconnect between the state and indigenous people is not only in the media but translates in to oppression in other ways through keeping indigenous people in their low socio-economic status without much societal influence, and this translates to their perception of gender and gender relations.⁴⁷

Holt and Gonzales both retreat to the history of slavery and colonialism as an indicator of the way in which skin color influences the current relationships between indigenous people of darker skin color and the media and legal representation.

However, Chavez-Duenas et al. and Safa

⁴³ Gonzalez, “*The Origins and Effects of ‘Colorism’ in Latin America: A Comparative Study of Mexico and Brazil .*”

⁴⁴ Nayeli Chavez-Duenas, Hector Adames, Kurt Organista, “*Skin Color Prejudice and Within Group Racial Discrimination.*” *Hispanic Journal of Behavioral Sciences* 36, no 1 (2013): 20.

⁴⁵ Holt, Thomas. *Race and Nation in Modern Latin America*. Chapel Hill: Univ. of North Carolina Press, 2005

⁴⁶ Chavez-Duenas et al., “*Skin Color Prejudice and Within Group Racial Discrimination*”, 21.

⁴⁷ Helen I Safa, “*Challenging Mestizaje*” *Critique of Anthropology* 25, no. 3 (2005): 310.

believe that there is also active oppression happening now that have real effects in indigenous people's influence that are not just aftereffects of colonialism.

In understanding the public response to femicides of indigenous women in Mexico, it is not enough to look only at the theories of gender violence and femicides and indigenous identity and female relations within states because I believe this ignores a crucial concept in analyzing the femicides of indigenous women in Mexico. Mexico has a long history of complicated race relations that have created an area of analysis where the difference between races is not as important, but where the simple difference of pigmentation in skin within the same understood race determines where and to whom we establish justice. In my paper, I analyze the role of colorism in understanding public response of femicide of indigenous women in Mexico.

Methodology

In this paper, I analyze the public response to the femicide of indigenous women in Mexico in the form of media representation and its presentation and performance of justice. Using content analysis, I interrogate whether colorism plays a role in the way that indigenous women's stories are presented in video media in Mexico. Through analyzing different video media sources, I identify the language and structures used to determine whether colorism influences how indigenous women are represented in the media compared to women with lighter skin and European features. Academics use two main parameters to classify or distinguish indigeneity, ethnolinguistic characteristics and familial or self-identification.⁴⁸ Since the scope of my research is to assess the way

⁴⁸ David Gow, and Joanne Rappaport. "*The Indigenous Public Voice: The Multiple Idioms of Modernity in Native Cauca*" In *Indigenous Movements, Self-Representation, and the State In Latin America*, (University of Texas Press, 2003) 47.

in which that media perceives and perpetuates ideas of indigeneity, I clarify that I consider “indigenous” to be defined by the media source when seeking out cases of indigenous femicides. While I do not know the parameters media sources use to classify which women are indigenous, I believe their decision to refer to women as “indigenous” is a powerful demonstration into what the dominant society perceives as “indigenous” and can be an early indicator of colorism. I believe colorism creates the notion that the cases of these darker-skinned indigenous women do not hold the same importance or priority as femicide cases concerning non-indigenous women with lighter skin. My hypothesis is that colorism materialized through video media in Mexico represents the perceived failures of performative justice in cases of indigenous femicide.

Content Analysis

In this paper, I use content analysis to analyze how the cases of both indigenous

women and lighter-skinned non-indigenous women are represented in video media. I chose to compare cases of lighter-skinned non-indigenous women with cases of indigenous women in two different media sources. The first media source I chose is a popular television and internet media source called Excelsior Mexico. I chose this source because although it is based in Mexico City it reports on news throughout Mexico. This source does not only report on femicides or gender violence, but it is a news portal for public and political news, international news, sports, opinion pieces, and trending news stories. I chose this source because I believe it is a good representation of the mainstream media’s focus and wording.

The second news source I use is news show hosted by Yuriria Sierra that is a part of Imagen Noticias news channel. The show that Yuriria Sierra hosts focuses on social justice and is regarded as a progressive segment in television news. I

used this as my source to try to show a difference between how the mainstream media, Excelsior, and a more progressive reporter frame the cases of non-indigenous and indigenous women.

Video Metrics

I analyze all eight videos to identify how colorism is interpreted through different metrics and content markers that indicate discriminatory representation compared with one another. I compare the light-skinned cases against each other to identify common traits or themes, and I do the same for the dark-skinned indigenous cases. The metrics I use are length of video, percentage of run time family members speak, and how many results come up when I search the name within the news source I am looking at. I find it useful to compare the length of the videos, because although they are video media content and designed to be short, indigenous women often suffer from lack of representation, so even few minutes

have large implications. I also pay attention to the amount of time that family members speak because that is the final way for women to get their truth and own story out. Often indigenous people are cut from mainstream media because of fears from news sources that they do not speak “correctly” or are not the correct skin color to dominate the conversation.⁴⁹ If media sources do not reach out for comment, or do not let these family members speak, this can be an indication of what they want, or do not want, represented on their media channels.

Contextual Markers

As for contextual markers, I am looking for the focus of the article, such as justice, advocacy, or emotion, to grasp the message that the news source wanted to convey through their presentation of their story. I do this by looking at the images

⁴⁹ Graham Laura R. “*How Should an Indian Speak? Amazonian Indians and the Symbolic Politics of Language in the Global Sphere.*” In *Indigenous Movements, Self-Representation, and the State In Latin America*, (University of Texas Press, 2003) 183-184.

shown of the murdered women, the role that family plays, and whether they are addressed by their names or ethnicity first. I isolate references to women's ethnicity and whether they mention the indigenous ethnicity of the woman. I want to raise attention to erasure in the media and analyze which news sources choose to omit the woman's ethnicity. However, overuse of the word "indigenous" will indicate an emphasis on ethnicity and can be used in colorist language to create a disconnect between the public and these femicides.⁵⁰ These factors of content focus, family agency, and reference to ethnicity help identify colorism in the message the news sources care to convey and the amount of agency given to the family of the murdered women.

Role of Performative Justice

⁵⁰ Graham Laura R. "How Should an Indian Speak? Amazonian Indians and the Symbolic Politics of Language in the Global Sphere." In *Indigenous Movements, Self-Representation, and the State In Latin America*, (University of Texas Press, 2003) 183-184.

Using this data, I discuss how this representation of indigenous women can create consequences in the form of lack of legal justice. The colorism that is presented and communicated through media represents the failure of performative justice, as it attempts to spotlight the femicide of indigenous women but lacks in effectively communicating the importance of violence against indigenous women in a predominantly non-indigenous country. This colorism materializes when we analyze the language and context used in the reporting of indigenous femicides in mainstream media. I identify the role of performative justice by determining how much media attention the news story released, through the quantity of video news clips. Additionally, I determine how much that case or crime has influenced the community and incited protest in any form.

Evidence

ExcelsiorTV Video Sources

I begin my presentation of cases with the cases from Excelsior Mexico, my mainstream news channel. I utilize eight different cases to display I analyze the media clips reporting on the cases of Lesvy Berlin Osorio, who is non-indigenous and has light skin.⁵¹ Lesvy was 22 years old when she was found dead on her university campus with a public telephone wire wrapped around her neck. I chose Lesvy's case and the video called "Presunto homicida de Lesvy será juzgado por feminicidio" because it simultaneously gives an overview of the Lesvy's case and provides an update that Lesvy's case is now presented as a femicide rather than homicide.⁵²

⁵¹ "Presunto Homicida De Lesvy Será Juzgado Por Feminicidio." YouTube. Accessed November 5, 2019. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-2BeM3zehDE>

⁵² "Presunto Homicida De Lesvy Será Juzgado Por Feminicidio." YouTube.

My second case of a non-indigenous woman named Ana Daniela Vega. Ana Daniela was a 24-year-old university student in Guanajuato who was found strangled to death in her apartment. I use the video, "Hallan sin vida a estudiante de la Universidad de Guanajuato"⁵³ in which reporters visit the university where Ana Daniela attended. The suspect for her murder is her ex-boyfriend seen in video footage around her apartment at the time of her murder.⁵⁴ I categorize her murder as a femicide because of their previous romantic relationship that aligns with my established definition of femicide.

My third case is of a darker skinned indigenous woman in the ExcelsiorTV news named Florinda Martinez Ruiz from Ometepec. I use the video "Matan a una estudiante indígena en Ometepec, Guerrero"

⁵³ "Hallan sin vida a estudiante de la Universidad de Guanajuato" YouTube. Accessed November 28, 2019. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UZLa_VJCK7w

⁵⁴ "Hallan sin vida a estudiante de la Universidad de Guanajuato" YouTube.

as the media representation of her case. The video outlines Florinda is an indigenous woman from the Chacoapa Region of Mexico. Florinda rented a room in Ometepec, Guerrero where she was raped and killed at 23 years old. This case was labeled a homicide by authorities, but there was a community push to call the case a femicide because of the obvious targeting of this victim as a female.⁵⁵ I chose this case because it is a very clear case where an indigenous woman leaves her community to attend school and was a victim of femicide; however, the mainstream media fails to address the importance to identify this woman as an “outsider” without the familiarity and support system of her community. I address this gap in the story.

⁵⁵ “Matan a Una Estudiante Indígena En Ometepec, Guerrero.” YouTube. Accessed November 5, 2019. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cgP7L1TzAKw>

My fourth case is the indigenous femicide of Guadalupe Campanur Tapia.⁵⁶ Guadalupe was an indigenous community leader and indigenous rights activist in Cherán, Michoacán. Guadalupe was strangled and found by the side of the highway. The video, “Asesinan a activista de la comunidad de Cherán, Michoacán,” details the facts of her death, along with the reaction from her community. Guadalupe’s death shocked the community of Cherán because of her prominent position in the community as a political, environmental, and social activist.⁵⁷

Imagen Noticias con Yuriria Sierra Video

Sources

I then analyze four cases from Yuriria Sierra’s show on Imagen Noticias. For a case for a light-skinned non-indigenous woman, I chose was Victoria

⁵⁶ “Asesinan a activista de la comunidad de Cherán, Michoacán.” YouTube. Accessed December 5, 2019. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=C6c2qAzQHF8>

⁵⁷ “Asesinan a activista de la comunidad de Cherán, Michoacán.” YouTube.

Pamela Salas Martinez. Victoria was 23 years old when she went out one night to celebrate her birthday party with a friend. Later she was found murdered in a hotel room. I chose the video, “Así fue el 'adiós' de Victoria Pamela” because it was a very high profile case, but I believe that it has been so often represented because she was a beautiful light skinned woman who has a very strong family of advocates that often appear on television and media to demand justice for her. My second case of a non-indigenous femicide in Mexico is the case of Abril Perez. Abril Perez was murdered in Ciudad de Mexico when an unknown gunman shot her through the window of a car. Abril Perez was the wife of an ex-Amazon executive and was in the process of filing for divorce from her husband at the time, and was shot on her way to a court hearing. Abril Perez had accused her husband of beating her and attempted murder in the past, but he had the charges

downgraded and was eventually released. I use the video, “Suspenden a jueces involucrados en el caso de Abril Pérez, la mujer asesinada en la CDMX” because it addresses Abril’s case and gives an update as to the legal action being carried out.

My third case is the femicide of the indigenous woman Juana Baltasar Felipe. For this I use the video “Feminicidio de indígena Purépecha” to display how even though Yuriria Sierra creates a more progressive show, there are still struggles to represent why indigenous women do not receive adequate legal justice until it is too late. My fourth case of Imagen News con Yuriria Sierra is the indigenous femicide of a 15 year old girl from Iztapalapa. Sierra’s segment of the show does not mention the 15 year old girl’s name out of privacy for the family, but explain that she was found dead outside of a sports field. The video, “Niña de 15 años es encontrada asesinada en Iztapalapa ¿y la policía?” highlights the facts

of the case, gives factual background about the girl who was murdered, and speaks to a neighbor in the area about the girl and the tragedy that occurred.

Analysis

In understanding public response to femicides in Mexico, I look at different media outlets to analyze the way in which video media reports cases of femicide. I believe that different media sources can portray cases of femicide differently through choice of language, content, and framing metrics such as length of the report, and how many reports are published on the same case. Through each media source, I compare two videos that detail two different cases of femicide. I compare the cases of a lighter-skinned non-indigenous victim to a darker-skinned indigenous victim to understand that there are differences in the way that a news source chooses to frame that woman's story. Of the two news sources I choose to look at, I was able to realize similarities between the

framing of the non-indigenous women's cases and the way that the indigenous women's cases are presented, and from this, I could then create connections between the characteristics of how the media chooses to represent lighter-skinned non-indigenous women and darker-skinned indigenous women. These differences represent the way colorism unfolds in the media by creating distinctions and unwritten regulations for how different women's stories are told. In clarifying these characteristics, I believe it is possible to detect the ways in which the media frames and dictates public opinion surrounding the women at the center of these femicides.

The first media source I look at is ExcelsiorTV Mexico. This is the second oldest news source from Mexico City and reports on news throughout many Mexican regions, not just within Mexico City. This news source reports on femicides often, but it is not the focus of their news source. This

news source is an accurate representation of what typical mainstream media sources in Mexico are reporting on. I chose the case of Lesvy Berlin Osorio as my lighter-skinned non-indigenous femicide case. The video by ExcelsiorTV highlights the struggle for her mother to get justice from the man she suspects did this to Lesvy.⁵⁸ I do not want to simply compare the four cases in Excelsior by deciding which case is more horrific and deserves more attention, but I am analyzing the specific intentional framing reflected in this report by ExcelsiorTV. The video about Lesvy's story is 3 minutes and 44 seconds long and was one of 21 results that came up after typing Lesvy's name into the search bar of Excelsior's YouTube channel. The focus of this video was to find justice for Lesvy, part of which was the need to establish that her murder was a femicide.

This focus on justice conveys a strong

⁵⁸ "Presunto Homicida De Lesvy Será Juzgado Por Femicidio." YouTube. Accessed November 5, 2019. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-2BeM3zehDE>

message to those watching. Lesvy, a lighter-skinned Mexican woman, is deserving of this time and fight for justice. This video also demonstrated how involved her mother is in this process and fight for her daughter. We can see her advocacy and involvement in public groups, along with the strong focus on the words she speaks about Lesvy in this video. Her mother speaks for 2 minutes and 15 seconds of this video, which constitutes about 78% of the time of the video. This is significant because it is highlighting the importance they are giving to Lesvy's mothers input and involvement in her case. Along with the representation of her mother and time allocated to her words, images of Lesvy shown throughout the video are joyful "selfies" that highlight her as a person and show her individuality apart from her tragic case of femicide. The main idea received when watching this video is the emphasis and urgency of the need for justice of Lesvy's femicide, the importance of her

mother's involvement, and the lasting images of Lesvy as a happy and young individual.⁵⁹

After reviewing Lesvy's news story, I analyzed the presentation of Ana Daniela Vega's case. The video from ExcelsiorTV reporting on Ana Daniela's death had a run time of 1 minute and 54 seconds and was one of five results that came up on the ExcelsiorTV YouTube page. The video takes us to Ana Daniela's university where the reporters interviewed two students about the death of Ana Daniela.⁶⁰ Their answers were indicative of their lack of familiarity with Ana Daniela, as they did not speak on her character or what their relationship was like. Instead, they spoke about their uncertainty in the university safety measures and their assumptions that the university is intentionally lying to them about the facts of

⁵⁹ "Presunto Homicida De Lesvy Será Juzgado Por Femicidio." YouTube. Accessed November 5, 2019. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-2BeM3zehDE>

⁶⁰ "Hallan sin vida a estudiante de la Universidad de Guanajuato" YouTube.

the case. After the interviews, the reporter continues to give the facts of the investigation by the university. There was no mention of her family or loved one's response in the video, which was very different in Lesvy's video where her mother spoke for a large portion of the video. In this video there is no reference as to who the suspects are, and justice for Ana Daniela beyond the university setting. This case was never said to be a femicide in the video and was simply calling it a killing at that point in the investigation. Additionally, in this video there was one photo of Ana Daniela posing with her eyes covered with a black bar to hide her identity. I thought this use of image was interesting, because you can see she was very beautiful and happy in the picture, however the cover on the eyes was used in a way as to still keep her privacy and distance her from the viewer.⁶¹ Overall, Ana

Daniela's video provided a more factual

⁶¹ "Hallan sin vida a estudiante de la Universidad de Guanajuato" YouTube.

overview of the case with less of an emotional response than Lesvy's video.

The next video I analyzed from ExcelsiorTV was the case of Guadalupe Campanur Tapia who was an indigenous rights leader in Cherán, Michoacán. The story of Guadalupe was centered on the facts of the case, such as where Guadalupe was found and the lack of a formal missing person's report. The video continues to explain that Guadalupe was a big part of the growing activism in this community. This video had a 1 minute and 38 second run time where the beginning began with a reporter at the studio desk presenting the case and the rest of the video was simply showing the region on a map of where Guadalupe lived and died. There was no effort to contact family, conduct interviews in Guadalupe's community, or even show images of Guadalupe or example of her activist work. This missed opportunity displayed the lack of effort and importance that the media

channel gave to Guadalupe's life and activist work. Adding to all of these misgivings, in the video Guadalupe is called "a social activist" first by the first reporter.

Guadalupe's name was not mentioned in the title of the video and then was not said until 21 seconds into the video. This simple task of stating this murdered woman's name in the video was not given the utmost importance in this story about her and her contributions to her community. This news source is failing to identify the core issues in this case, that being an indigenous woman political, environmental, and social activist is a dangerous life and women's existence can be targeted for these reasons.

The next video I analyzed from ExcelsiorTV was the case of Florinda Ruiz Martinez. When looking at Excelsior's video, there were some immediate differences I noticed. This case did not come up with many results on Excelsior's website and I had to find the news clip through the

news source's YouTube page. The focus of this report was on the fact that Florinda was indigenous. Florinda's name is not stated until 20 seconds into the video, in the title of the video report and in the first 20 seconds, Florinda is only referred to as "an indigenous student." While it is important that Florinda's indigenous ethnicity be recognized, there was no meaningful discussion of the implications that being an indigenous woman in a non-indigenous community could present. This suggests that media often fail to understand the implications of being a darker-skinned indigenous woman living outside of her community and being a victim of gender violence. Because of this failure to address these important distinctions, the mainstream news sources are actively choosing to disproportionately represent indigenous women in their news sources. This video was only two minutes and seven seconds and showed very few images of Florinda. A

majority of the video was taken to interview classmates of Florinda to describe her. However, even though these were personal testimonies of people who knew her and spoke on Florinda's personality, their faces were cut off and voices altered, making the interaction very disconnected from the emotional and human aspects of this case. Adding to this, there was very little mention of family in Florinda's case at all. The reporter briefly mentions that her family traveled to Ometepe the week before the report, but does not explain for what reason, or what their reaction has been. The five-second sentence said by the reporter made up about 4% of the entire report, which indicates to the viewer that their opinions, and thoughts do not matter as much as other concerned families, like Lesvy's mom. The overall focus of the video was to show how the students and teachers of the school were protesting for justice for Florinda and to have her case considered a femicide. This is

a powerful message, however, this media source could have taken the extra step to help understanding of why this case concerning an indigenous woman away from home is important. I believe the absence of this argument can represent that the media source does not give enough importance to these victims.

Next, I analyzed a different news source called Imagen Noticias. This news source has one reporter named Yuriria Sierra that holds her own segment of the show where she often highlights social issues in the country. Yuriria Sierra is known to be a more progressive voice in the media and attempts to spread the stories that people do not often hear in their nightly news. Because of this, I wanted to analyze if Sierra was able to frame femicides differently than the mainstream media of Excelsior.

The case I chose to represent a lighter-skinned non-indigenous woman is the case of Victoria Pamela Salas

Martinez.⁶² This report by Imagen Noticias interviews Victoria's mother to create the story. This report has its focus on the emotional and personal aspect of Victoria's death. By using only an interview of Victoria's mother to explain Victoria's story, the main goal was to communicate the tragedy of the murder emotionally. Her mother details Victoria's personality was fun loving and joyful, and the video provided many images of Victoria smiling, taking "selfies" and giving visual aid to the mother's testimony of her daughter. In this report, the reporter then visits the house of the primary suspect and knocks on the door. This was not done in any of the past cases in the Excelsior. While the suspect does not open the door, this is a much more active role than in the previous reports of femicides. This video is four minutes and 4 seconds long and I calculated that Victoria's

⁶² "Así Fue El 'Adiós' De Victoria Pamela." YouTube. Imagen Noticias. Accessed November 5, 2019. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=G9zjl0GUxLY>.

mother spoke about 36% of the time. This is a significant portion of the video, especially for the emotional tragedy her mother was expressing. Again, I believe that the media giving the lighter-skinned non-indigenous women's families the opportunity to speak is powerful, and a privilege for them to be able to get their story out the way they want to.

The second case I looked at through Sierra's show was the murder of Abril Perez. Abril Perez was murdered in a car on her way to a court hearing for the divorce she was filing for at the time. Her husband was an ex-Amazon executive for Mexico and was very wealthy. Past charges that Abril brought against him was attempted murder and beating her with a bat. At that time, his charges were dropped to the charge of domestic violence by two judges.⁶³ The video I analyzed was about the hope that

⁶³ "Suspenden a jueces involucrados en el caso de Abril Pérez, la mujer asesinada en la CDMX" YouTube. Accessed December 10, 2019. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WV6zoOiQy_Y&list=PLssGO9Q2ot-678BCDTrgB3i-NamDH7nan&index=15

justice would be served to her ex-husband. This video was 3 minutes and 38 seconds and no time was given to family to speak. However, Abril's name was within the title and said in the first couple of seconds of the video, even if her family was not asked to speak. The focus of this video was on the activism and protests that were spurred by Abril's case, the attempt at retroactive justice, and the charges against the judges that were involved in the previous case. The retroactive justice is seen as they focus the case of Abril on the failing of the justice system before her murder and their attempts to rectify this by charging those judges now.⁶⁴ This can be a representation of performative justice for Abril, a wealthy, non-indigenous woman.

The next case I use from Yuriria Sierra's show is the case of a 15 year old girl who was murdered in Iztapalapa. This video

⁶⁴ "Suspenden a jueces involucrados en el caso de Abril Pérez, la mujer asesinada en la CDMX" YouTube. Accessed December 10, 2019.

does not release the name of the girl who was murdered or any images of her, however, Yuriria and her other reporter attribute this to the decision of her family for privacy in their tragedy.⁶⁵ While the reporters still visit the location of the murder they point out that there is no police tape, or any indication that it was a crime scene just a couple of days ago. This video is 2 minutes and 42 seconds long. In the video they talk to a neighbor of the girl for 20 seconds on the video, who expressed his condolences, but did not share how well he knew her or who she was outside of this murder. The reporter on the scene expressed that it was suspected that the girl did use drugs and that her death may have been correlated with that. While I expected this type of sentiments to be shared within colorist language, attributing or correlating deaths with drug related or crime related

⁶⁵ “Niña de 15 años es encontrada asesinada en Iztapalapa ¿y la policía?” YouTube. Accessed December 10, 2019. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=r55xjzByOtM>

activities. However, directly after this statement, the host Yuriria rebutted with the frustration that unjust blame is always attributed to the victim. She states, “We are always criminalizing the victim...this is a slippery slope, this is like saying ‘well, she was wearing a miniskirt’.”⁶⁶ I think this sentiment was a great indication of how this show is at least attempting to break down these social constructs that perpetuate colorism.

The last case I look at for my media analysis is the femicide of Juana Baltasar Felipe. Juana’s case is slightly different from the other cases presented, but I believe it is still a great representation of how indigenous women are often ignored by authorities. Juana was killed by her ex-husband. Juana had already tried to separate from him and tell the police, but they only told her to go back to him and reconcile the situation or fight. Juana decided to move out

⁶⁶ “Niña de 15 años es encontrada asesinada en Iztapalapa ¿y la policía?” YouTube.

of the house into her relatives' house with her kids where her ex-husband found her, and killed her in front of her family.⁶⁷ I distinguish this case from the others because there is a clear path of partner violence that led to an act of femicide, but I believe it is powerful to note that Juana did not receive help when she took her fear to the police. In this video, I do not believe that even in reporting her death, there is justice how she was represented because of colorist restraints. Like in Florinda's case, Juana's name is not mentioned in the title of the video segment, she is only referred to as, "Indígena Purepecha" and her real name is not mentioned until seconds into the two minute and 21 second video. The video features Juana's family, including her daughters and mother. This is significant for

⁶⁷ Sierra, Yuriria. "Feminicidio De Indígena Purépecha: Reportajes Especiales." Facebook Watch. Accessed November 5, 2019. <https://www.facebook.com/ImagenYuri/videos/1226990757437294/>.

indigenous representation, especially people they speak to the reporters and are able to tell their truth and version of what happened to their mother. Even in their native language, Juana's family was able to communicate the tragedy that occurred on a mainstream site dominated by Spanish. Although there is this family testimony, the tone of the video is very straightforward and strict with the presentation of the facts. Where both of the lighter-skinned non-indigenous cases use emotion in the presentation of their cases and gain sympathy from their reporters. Although the family was present for the recording, the families' explanation of what happened only took up 23% of the time of the video. Even with her family present, their speaking time took up less than the two light-skinned non-indigenous women did. Juana still awaits legal justice along with so many other women in Mexico.

Overall, I have seen many trends between the two media sources and eight cases I analyzed. The content markers that were the most telling were how much families were allowed to speak in these media content clips. I found that the non-indigenous families had a lot more freedom to speak on their daughters behalf and make sure that they highlight the atrocities and the ways in which she had been discriminated against while indigenous families were more often not mentioned, or given less speaking time. Additionally, I believe it is a powerful note that indigenous women are referred to as indigenous before their real names.

So many women still have not received legal justice for their femicides, especially indigenous women.⁶⁸ Maria Salguero's CrowdMap suggests that over 6,000 cases of femicide are either still unsolved, or the perpetrators have not

received any type of sentence for their crimes. However, I believe that media and video representation and reporting of femicide cases, even if they are still framed as homicides, are an approach at performative justice. I am using the term performative justice as a push or approach to a problem in a non-traditional legal justice form that is meant to impact society and create change. I believe this video media representation of indigenous femicide cases are an attempt at performative justice. However, where this performative justice fails is in the way these videos are presented. Few aspects of the presentation of the indigenous femicide cases I analyzed indicated to me a failure of performative justice. The factor of less speaking times for families, the lack of urgency in the search for legal justice in these reports, and the lack of context given with existing as an indigenous women in a predominantly non-indigenous society are all places where

⁶⁸ "Indigenous Latin America in the Twenty-First Century."

video media lacks in propelling the social change and awareness of this issue into society. Therefore, I believe their attempt at performative justice falls flat.

The importance of understanding and identifying these characteristics is seen through the real consequences it creates. Since public opinion can be dictated by these news sources, this can influence the way in which these cases are investigated. If lighter-skinned non-indigenous women are gaining more media exposure, there might be more pressure on the legal system to prioritize that case over the case of an indigenous woman that does not gain the same amount of media time. This is where we see the effects of colorism materialize into discrimination through lack of criminal justice resources allocated to femicide cases of indigenous women.

Conclusion

Colorism is not always manifested in violent attacks or to reaffirm explicitly

ethnic and racial authority. Everyday colorism is what is manifested through our language and representation, and our media is the viewable materialization of this.

Colorism is not just created in media, but it is created in everyday actions and perpetuated by mainstream media that normalize everyday colorism. Although the roots of colorism are deeply rooted the nation's cultural history, it is reinforced through every institution throughout the state today because there is not clear recognition of discrimination based on skin tone and people with more "indigenous features."

The reason why all of these hidden meanings matter is that they are all representative of a deeply ingrained discriminatory representation of indigenous people that is based on the color of their skin. Beyond geographical locations, these stories make no distinctions in ethnic barriers that distinguish cases of femicide of

indigenous women and non-indigenous women. There is no cultural misunderstanding that does not allow authorities to investigate actively accusations and suspects in cases of femicide. However, it is predisposed bias that leads authorities to generalize and refrain from interjecting in cases of domestic abuse or lead them to prioritize more “high profile” cases. These “higher profile” cases only get to that level because of the way they are represented in the media. The implication of performative justice may be effective in cases such as Abril Perez, where retroactive justice was a priority for her case and activism was reinvigorated through protests in Ciudad de Mexico. However, the way in which both ExcelsiorTV and Yuriria Sierra present their cases of indigenous women lacks the added nuance of the added discrimination and systemic barriers indigenous women face through the legal system. Through analysis of cases of two

cases of femicides against darker skinned indigenous women and two cases against lighter skinned non-indigenous women, there were clear advantages and priorities given to the non-indigenous women’s cases through the form of family speaking times, segment lengths, and overall number of stories following their cases. These results speak to the fact that indigenous women are not represented equally through media or through performative justice, and colorism contributes to the ethnic and cultural divide between the two communities.

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