

Presentation title:

The emotional politics of patriarchy: a phenomenological analysis of femicide perpetration in Latin America

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Violence against women and, in particular, femicide have been increasingly discussed topics in academia, policy-making and social movements. Nonetheless, most of the discussions have focused on promoting statistical registers, identifying risk factors and patterns, enacting anti-femicide laws and designing gender-based violence monitoring programs. These trends have produced a dearth of criminological literature addressing the subjective and experiential nature of this crime.

Stemming from a large-scale biographical project in Latin America (CRIMLA), this paper analyses the narrated experiences of incarcerated men who committed intimate femicide. A sub-sample of 41 life stories was analysed with participants from Argentina, Brasil, Chile, Honduras, and Mexico, following a quota sampling. Repeated open-ended biographical interviews were conducted (three per case). Inductive coding and Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis were used to analyse the corpus, drawing upon phenomenology and social studies of masculinities as theoretical framework.

Three domains were explored: experiences related to the self, the victims, and others. Feeling threatened by female partners and their actions, feeling prompted to defend breached male-chauvinistic social norms, and experiencing physical harm as a righteous restorative practice were cross-cutting themes narrated by the men. Integrating the topics addressed by the participants, a phenomenological model is presented, to describe the diversity of experiential elements at stake during femicide perpetration and that “precipitate” the course of action.

This paper expands simplistic notions of the naturalisation of violence and machismo, by showing that violence is linked to threat, a defence of social norms and a resistance to vulnerability. Based on the similarities in the lived experiences of men in Latin American, I argue that to better comprehend and prevent intimate femicide, the emotional politics of patriarchy should be better understood.