**THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO**

**Femicides in Mexico from 1990 to Present: The Power of the Media in Respects to Fomentation and Advocacy Against Femicides**

By

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***Abstract***

Femicide is the term given to describe the gender-based murder of a woman or girl by a man (Merriam-Webster). This is the most extreme form of gender-violence and, sadly, the numbers continue to rise with no end in sight. Thousands of women live in fear for their own life as well as that of their female family members, friends, neighbors, etc. as they never know what day will be their last. Since 1993, femicides have increased at a staggering rate. In 2019 there were 976 reported femicides (Pasquali, 2020), with the number increasing 7.7% in the first half of 2020 (Sanchez and Rodriguez, 2020). With the rise in numbers there has also been a rise in awareness of the problem. The pages below seek to answer the question: How do the discursive strategies employed in different media portrayals of femicide resist or reproduce the sexist, gendered logics underpinning femicide itself? I pose that media is a strong influencer of society and has been used to foment misogyny and ultimately femicides. In my analysis, I examine the lyrics of popular music to expose the misogynistic message, which is often overlooked. I analyze how snuff films, an extreme form of pornography sexualizes female murder, further fetishizing violence against women. Social media is a powerful tool, but I show how it is used for victim blaming and shaming. I explore how policymakers and even the general public in Mexico may disregard the importance of femicide and partake in victim blaming. While media in general is often a driving force for femicide, advocates against femicide have come to realize the influence of the media and are taking charge of that power by using it to create a conversation surrounding femicides in order to incite people to begin to speak out against femicides and demand a solution.

I discuss three documentaries from the point of view of the families in which they express the impact that femicide has had on them. I provide examples of femicide cases and how they have been handled by the general public and the media. I examine news articles and videos ranging from 1990 to the present in which femicide is mentioned or reported about. In my research I have found that there is a glorification of violence against women, fomented by the misogynistic culture prevalent in the country. Due to the fact that a critical conversation around the portrayal of femicides in popular media could incite people to begin to speak out against these atrocities and demand a solution, my research has the potential to show how the media can have a greater effect on topics such as femicide than simple policy.

***Introduction***

Serviss (2013, 612) states that “Alma Farel, reported missing in 1993, is often marked as the first victim of modern femicide in the Mexican state of Chihuahua.” Femicide is the term given to describe the gender-based murder of a woman or girl by a man (Merriam-Webster). This is the most extreme form of gender-violence and, sadly, the numbers continue to rise with no end in sight. It has become a nearly daily occurrence to hear of a woman who has been a victim of violence. In 2019 there were 976 reported femicides in Mexico (Pasquali, 2020), with the number increasing 7.7% in the first half of 2020 (Sanchez and Rodriguez, 2020). There are many actions that would constitute violence towards women ranging from physical battery to sexual abuse; perpetrators also range from romantic partners to complete strangers. The issue of violence has grown to such a magnitude that many women, myself included, feel a sense of fear and anguish whenever they are alone in public.

For this thesis, I explore the topic of femicide, specifically in Mexico. Femicide is the killing of women solely because they are women. The women being murdered range in ages from young elementary aged girls to older women. Many of these cases of femicides remain unsolved and even uninvestigated (Litwin, 2020). The dismissal of violence towards women is largely due to the aspects of misogyny that is normalized by the media I analyze, such as music and music videos. In these media formats women are victim blamed, humiliated, and abused but the acts are glorified and feed into the belief that men have the right to do with women what they please.

Popular media plays an important role in how we as individuals treat others as well as what mindset we have regarding certain issues. If someone grows up listening to songs and watching movies or videos in which women are degraded and controlled, they may grow up to believe it is normal or correct to treat women that way. Nowadays many individuals get their news from social media. If a post on a social media platform calls for an end to femicide, it is likely for the individual seeing the post to do their own research on the topic or feel inclined to share the post thus reaching other individuals with this information. My paper analyzes the following question: how do the discursive strategies employed in different media portrayals of femicide resist or reproduce the sexist, gendered logics underpinning femicide itself? I pose that media is a strong influencer of society and has been used to foment misogyny and ultimately femicides. To explore this concept, I analyze music, documentaries, cases, news articles, and videos in which the topic of femicide is spoken about or portrayed, whether it be speaking out against femicide or inciting it. I also explore how policymakers and even the general public in Mexico may disregard the importance of femicide. I focus on the entirety of Mexico from 1990 to the present. A fact that I analyze is how advocates against femicide have come to realize the influence of the media and are taking charge of that power by using it to create a conversation surrounding femicides in order to incite people to begin to speak out against femicides and demand a solution. Thus, my research has the potential to show how the media can have a greater effect on topics such as femicide than simple policy.

***Ethnographic / Historical Context***

Since the first femicide in Mexico was reported in 1993, the cases have been increasing with no end in sight. In the year 2020 cases of femicides had increased by 137 percent since 2015 (Minutaglio, 2020). Approximately 10 women are killed every day in Mexico (Sandin, 2021). Little to nothing is done to solve the hundreds of femicide cases plaguing Mexico. Why have femicides continued to happen at such an alarming rate?

*Stages of Femicides in Mexico*

Alma Chavira Farel was 13 years old when she disappeared and was sexually tortured and killed by a stranger (Chew Sánchez & Limas Hernández, 2020, p. 20). It is said that Mexico has four phases of femicide. The first phase would be from 1993 to 2000 dubbed the Feminicidal Emergence (Chew Sánchez & Limas Hernández, 2020, p. 20). A possible factor that served as a catalyst for the first phase is the “decisive implementation of neoliberal policies that started to be implemented since the late 1980s” (Chew Sánchez & Limas Hernández, 2020, p. 19). The second phase of femicide stemmed from the Cotton Field murders in which eight bodies were found with injuries caused by extreme sexual violence in a cotton field in Ciudad Juárez (Kirkpatrick, 2017). This second phase lasted approximately from 2001 to 2007 (Chew Sánchez & Limas Hernández, 2020, p. 21). The third phase of femicide is known as the “Consolidation Phase”. This phase’s most defining characteristic is that from around 2000 to 2010 was when the war on drugs was at its peak (Chew Sánchez & Limas Hernández, 2020, p. 24). This phase lasted from 2006 to 2018. Mexico is currently in the fourth phase of feminicide. This phase started when Andrés Manuel López Obrador became president in 2018 (Chew Sánchez & Limas Hernández, 2020, p. 26).

Throughout each phase it is clear to see the substantial growth of femicides. Every year the numbers continue to rise with no end in sight. What can be causing such an exponential rise in numbers?

*Why Have Femicides Grown to Such a Magnitude?*

There are countless reasons why femicides have grown and continue to grow in numbers. The reality of the situation is that we will never truly know why men believe they have they have the right to take a woman’s life. What we can try to speculate is what changes or events in society are allowing these men to commit femicide and practically get away with it unscathed. Misogyny is a crucial factor in femicides because men believe they have the right to do whatever they wish to a woman. There are several possible reasons why femicides continue in abundance.

People living in certain parts of Mexico continue to live in extreme poverty. This is due to the lack of jobs or the lack of good pay to those who are fortunate enough to find a job. With many men having no luck finding stable jobs or migrating to other parts of the country or out of the country in order to make a living, women have begun to enter the workforce at astounding rates as compared to previous years. This continued addition of women into the workforce has gone on to change the traditional dynamic between the sexes where the men would be the head of the household and would earn the sole income. Although women have begun to work and bring income into the household as well, this has not changed the patriarchal or misogynistic mentality society has towards the stereotypical roles of men and women (Olivera and Furio, 2006, p. 107). Many men refuse to accept that women are no longer dependent on them for survival or to be supported economically by their husband. This new belief and situation go against the misogynistic belief that women need men in order to survive and are only useful in the home (Olivera and Furio, 2006, pp. 108-109). The reaction men have towards not being the sole provider of the household has become more severe, as is illustrated by the ever-higher rates of violence against women. With men feeling their patriarchal role being threatened by women’s newfound economic independence, they are led to find ways to attempt to exert their power.

Another important factor in femicides is organized crime in Mexico. Although the president of Mexico claims the war against drugs and crime has ended, it appears to continue unabated. Women are sadly victims of this situation. The armed conflict between the government and delinquents has continued to exacerbate violence against women and to increase the targeting of women and children for human trafficking and sex slavery (Hincapié, 2019, p. 63). Women are also seen as a commodity for criminal organizations. They have begun using women as a way to earn income. They are doing through human trafficking, prostitution, child trafficking, pornography and drug trafficking, among other activities (Hincapié, 2019, p. 69). It is important to note that criminal organizations are not the only factors posing a threat to women. It has been found that the police and members of armed forces are also a potential danger to women. When they arrest women suspected to being linked to criminal organizations, these women are subjected to torture as well as sexual violence (Hincapié, 2019, p. 74). The increase in crime in Mexico correlates with the increase of femicides. Drug crimes tend to overshadow the crimes and violence against women. Officials in Mexico must begin to give the importance to femicides that it warrants.

***Literature Review***

Femicide is the killing of women solely because they are women. Although I focus on Mexico in this paper, that does not mean that femicides are only present in Mexico. This is a worldwide problem with little or sporadic awareness being given to the topic. Many scholars have written about the subject attempting to shed light and educate the general public on the femicide epidemic. In the following section I analyze literature that has spoken about femicide on a global perspective as well as literature that links misogyny and violence towards women.

*Femicides: a Global Issue*

How did femicides come to be? Many scholars argue that femicides are historically rooted and normalized since the time of the conquest and ranges from atrocities committed during civil strife to everyday practices that are fundamental to the society (Wilson, 2014, p. 14). Femicide is also seen as being perpetrated by patriarchal ideologies in which men will seek to control women and punish those who may resist being controlled (Della Giustina, 2010, p. 14). It can also be due to the “historical and social-wide setting that legitimates unequal gender relations between men and women” (Messerschmidt, 2017, p. 72). These types of settings and beliefs can easily foster a toxic environment for women in which their lives are in danger if they were to not ‘obey’ their husband or romantic partner.

Violence against women in Latin America is very prevalent and almost a daily occurrence. Of the world’s top 25 countries with the highest rates of femicides, 14 are in Latin American and the Caribbean (Global Americans, 2017). In Guatemala since the year 2000 many women’s corpses have begun to appear without explanation for their death. All that is known is that the women’s bodies show signs “of having been treated with hatred and obvious cruelty” (Fregoso & Bejarano, 2010, p. 127). A problem in Guatemala is the authorities and the importance they give femicides. Many times, authorities are apathetic about looking into the murders and are often distrusted because of their corruption. Additionally, police tend to blame the victim by claiming that the women murdered did not follow the traditional gender roles and were immoral (Wilson, 2014, p. 9). Further in this paper I detail certain femicides that have occurred in Mexico in the past decades.

Femicides are not unique to Latin America. The topic is gaining visibility in Europe as well. Appointed designation for femicides has been, up until now, gender-neutral or even male-centered with words such as ‘manslaughter’. At the same time femicides tend to be ignored when domestic violence and intimate partner violence are studied (Vail & Corradi, 2018, p. 2). For example, in France the concept of femicide is very rarely used. In France, media reports of femicide cases by an intimate partner tend to use terms such as cases of ‘family dramas’ or ‘separation dramas’ (Vail & Corradi, 2018, p. 109). The minimization of the murder of a woman is hurtful not only on a personal level to the family members of the victim, but also to the discourse in general. By not giving femicide the attention it deserves, this rhetoric allows for continuation of the status quo, as these cases will only be labeled as ‘family dramas’ and not given the seriousness they warrant. It is worth noting that there has been a meaningful shift in the discourse surrounding femicide. For many years, the topic of ‘femicides’ was taboo. In Greece femicide is not a term used at all, with the media reporting on these deaths as a ‘family tragedy’, ‘crime of passion’, ‘love crime’ or even an ‘unexpected crime’ (Vail & Corradi, 2018, p. 116). Labelling these murders as ‘love crime’ or ‘crime of passion’ can potentially romanticize the killing of women. It can be interpreted as a man loving a woman so much he killed her out of his intense love, which is absolutely not the case. The media coverage of a particular murder in the Republic of Georgia in 2014 is when the term femicide was broadly used by the public as well as the media. Vail & Corradi (2018, p. 112) mention the terrible case that took place, “On 17 October 2014, when a man recently released from prison killed his ex-wife and then committed suicide in front of students and professors at Ilia State University in Tbilisi, Georgia”. It is extremely frustrating to see that it took such a serious murder for the media and the general public to accept the killings for what they are, femicides. It should not take an extreme case in order to gain attention to this matter. Every case should draw attention and outrage. Individuals have sadly become desensitized to femicides because it has become a daily occurrence.

Femicides continue to occur at an unbelievable rate. For women in the United States, it is important to know that they are “three times more likely to be murdered than a woman in Canada, five times more likely to be murdered than a woman in Germany, and eight times more likely to be murdered than a woman in England and Wales” (Della Giustina, 2010, p. 15). Why is it that femicides occur at such rates? It could be due to misogynistic culture giving men the belief that they are allowed to hurt women with no consequence. When it comes to identifying femicides and why they occur one must take the violent acts, motives, and the imbalance of power between the sexes in the political, social, and economic spheres into account (Wilson, 2014, p. 8). Men continue to believe they are superior to women in many aspects and refuse to think otherwise. This is why many men who engage in intimate partner femicide assume they have the right to violently dominate their partner with numerous female partners being beaten for issues centering on household labor, possessiveness, and sexual jealousy (Messerschmidt, 2017, p. 75). The power of imbedded ideals in men are very hard to change or erase. Misogyny and machismo culture not only prompts violence against women but can also influence how the media decides to cover such murders. Many times, femicide, rape, and battery are ignored or sensationalized in the media depending on the victim’s race, class, and attractiveness (by male standards) (Radford & Russell, 1992, p. 15).

How do men reach the point of committing femicides? This is a very difficult question to answer. The truth is that there are multiple causes and events that lead men to commit femicides. Many times, they commit femicides because they can and know they will get away with it. For example, it is a sad fact that “society wide violence in the form of rape and torture during wars and civil strife presents a legitimating environment for other types of violence against women, including femicide and domestic violence in the future” (Wilson, 2014, p. 14). By having this justification, men are given the allowance to murder women with no consequences. Men also commit femicides when they fear their masculinity is being threatened. What would they consider a threat? An example is when they feel as though they can no longer control their partner. When a man begins to realize that his possession over her is vanishing, or has vanished, he becomes angry, and enters into a resentful rage, ultimately killing his partner because he feels as though he has been wronged (Messerschmidt, 2017, p. 76). It has been noted that “violence against women progressively develops from insinuations, offensive comparisons, harassment, threats, verbal intimidation, abuse, irresponsibility, betrayal, and abandonment to beatings, forced sex, rape, and persecution” (Fregoso & Bejarano, 2010, p. 50). Femicides can stem from a small shove, a slight insinuating comment, or even a slap. It is little comments or sporadic beatings that many times go unnoticed or unreported that snowball into the final act of femicide.

Although women in general are victims and vulnerable to femicides, there is a subpopulation of women that are even more at risk. It is often reported that, “the police, media, and public response to crime against women of color, poor women, lesbians, women prostitutes, and women drug users is particularly abysmal-generally apathy laced with pejorative stereotyping and victim blaming” (Radford & Russell, 1992, p. 15). This is true for many crimes, not only femicides. When a wealthy, Caucasian man is mugged, he is given much more importance and attention than if a poor, minority individual was mugged. This is because of the belief that “bad things don’t happen to good people”. The problem with this logic boils down to, who decides who the good people are and what criteria must be met to be categorized as good? Research has shown that more women were murdered in cities where women enjoyed a greater status, which supports the general backlash theory; in contrast, overall femicides were higher when gender-specific economic disadvantage was higher…which supports the gender inequality theory (Della Giustina, 2010, p. 39). This would then support the idea that violence against women is at times justified by various reasons. These reasons can range from racial, ethnic, or class as well as being members of groups that are seen as subordinate, for example simply being a woman while living in a household with a man (Wilson, 2014, p. 14). The research carried out reiterates the belief that “women face multiple oppressions that may lead to their murder...a woman’s social context combines interconnecting systems of power (patriarchy, racial hierarchy, and capitalism) and oppression (sexism, racism, and classism)” (Della Giustina, 2010, p. 151).

Lastly, there is a type of femicide that is not very common or spoken about. This form is failed femicides. A failed femicide is an “attempted femicide where the medical examination of the victim confirmed a life-threatening event, the victim had been hospitalized in emergency, and she or the perpetrator had described the event as an attempted murder”, but the victim survives said attack” (Weil, 2016, p. 7). The reason why there is not an abundant amount of information about failed femicides is because it is very rare. Three Ethiopian female migrants who are survivors of a failed femicide were interviewed for the article “Failed Femicides Among Migrant Survivors”. All three survivors stated that the failed femicide was just an extreme form of the domestic violence they had been enduring for years and was just one in a series of femicide attempts. It has been recorded that “the dominant motives for femicide among Ethiopian immigrants were economic problems (45.8%) and depression (25%)” (Weil, 2016, p. 16). It emerges from the women that “a prominent cause of femicide is perceived jealousy or infidelity on behalf of the men” (Weil, 2016, p. 16). Failed femicides, as well as femicides that unfortunately were successful, seem to stem from the man’s belief that the victim had no rights to their own body and were but the man’s property to do what they pleased with (Fregoso & Bejarano, 2010, p. 128).

*Femicides in Media*

The research on femicides in media focused on how femicides are portrayed and how awareness is being brought to the topic. It is important to note how the media decides to portray the stories of violence against women because this can reveal just how routinized violence toward women has become (Godoy-Paiz, 2012). For example, Godoy-Paiz (2012) states “when a perpetrator is mentioned or named by the media, it is typically in the context of reporting a “crime of passion,” in a claim that works to shift blame to the woman, as it is presumed that her personal relationships are the cause of her death.” This links to the idea of victim-blaming and -shaming, trying to put the blame on anyone in order to not accept the bigger problem at hand. Media portrayals of femicide also tends to strip the individuality of the victim by stating only where the body was found, its condition, and time it was found disregarding the victim’s identity (Godoy-Paiz, 2012).

The media is also used to bring awareness to femicides, whether it be through newspapers or music. Silva Londoño (2017, pp. 148, 158) explains how hip-hop and rap challenges those who insist on blaming the victims of femicides by being an outlet to openly express how femicides make women feel, how the impunity and injustice is anxiety producing. This method of awareness gives creative liberty to express yourself with no filter and to allow women to release all the anger they have suppressed due to fear of speaking out. Staff of women’s organizations have also begun to use press conferences, interviews to newspapers and news channels as a way to openly and publicly denounce violence against women (Godoy-Paiz, 2012). The media has also been an outlet for family members of victims to continue to advocate and demand justice for their loved ones. Mothers, sisters, and relatives of femicide victims have participated in demonstrations, interviews, press conferences, documentaries, etc. in order to continue to give their loved one’s recognition and individuality (Martínez, 2017).

It is very impactful having the availability to use so many different forms of media in order to bring awareness to femicides. Without the existence of so many platforms and media outlets it would be difficult to spread information regarding femicide to so many individuals. Although we have seen that the media has positive effects regarding bringing awareness to femicides, it also can be used in order to perpetuate misogynistic ideals that perpetuate violence towards women.

*Link Between Various Pop and Niche Cultural Manifestations of*

*Misogyny and the Normalization and Perpetuation of Violence Towards Women*

Cultural manifestations of misogyny are so embedded in pop culture that at times it is hard to pinpoint when we the audience is being exposed to misogynistic perpetuations of violence towards women. There have been scenes in movies and shows that romanticize or normalize domestic violence and sexual abuse. The fact that they are being aired to the public is why many people are unaware of just how inappropriate the scenes are. The normalization of such scenes leads future writers of entertainment to believe such dramatization of serious topics is ok and appealing to the public.

Rape scenes in movies and shows have become a constant theme that is at times romanticized or shown as satisfactory for the victims. An example of this is shown on one of the longest running soap operas, *General Hospital*. In a particular episode a male protagonist, Luke, rapes a female protagonist, Laura. Further in the show the scene was recalled as a ‘seduction’ rather than a rape, and the two fall in love and eventually marry (Beck, 2018). *General Hospital* portrayed this extreme sexual assault as a relationship starter rather than what it, a complete and utter defiance of consent and trust (Beck, 2018). Rape has begun to be sexualized in many TV series in which “rape scenes have often been depicted in graphic detail that sometimes objectifies the victim while emphasizing her lack of consent in an erotic standpoint” (Roberts, 2013). Scenes showcasing rape or any type of violation of consent suggests to the audience that “if you ignore rejection and force yourself on an individual, there will generally be a positive outcome” (Barnes, 2018).

Violence towards women has also become a ‘hot theme’ added to many scripts for movies and shows. It has been shown that representations of domestic violence, such as sexual violence as well as physically beating women, has become abundant in film, television, music, and print media (Domestic Violence in Popular Culture, 2015). These very scenes are very dangerous because any given audience can begin to become desensitized to such topics of domestic violence, which, in turn “may serve as an invitation to dehumanize real subjects in the realm of everyday life” expecting to receive the same outcomes shown in the media (Domestic Violence in Popular Culture, 2015). We must also think of the audience. There is no way to control who is watching what content or who is being exposed to such explicit scenes. Children with impressionable minds may believe that such attitude and actions towards women is acceptable when it truly is not and should not portrayed as such.

***Findings***

*Media Portrayals Reproducing Pervasive Culture of Misogyny, Which in Turn Shapes Femicides*

The reproduction of pervasive culture is all around us nowadays. Although misogyny is not as blatantly seen now as it was before, this does not mean that it no longer exists. These forms of pervasive culture come in small, subtle doses but, enough to shape violence towards women and, ultimately, femicides. I have chosen four songs, all in Spanish, that openly or subtly promote misogynistic views or beliefs. I chose certain lyrics from the songs and translated them into English. Although I do not utilize the songs in their entirety, this does not mean that the rest of the lyrics do not in some way or another shape femicides. This is also true with the music videos chosen. The snuff films/pornography I explore and analyze are those that show degradation or are roleplaying abuse. Sadly, another form of misogyny is by victim blaming or shaming. I looked through social media posts and statements in which they are explicitly blaming or shaming the victim for abuse, death, etc. Certain content in this section gets graphic and a bit hard to read but it is important to translate exactly what is being said and done to promote the pervasive culture of misogyny in order to be able to fight it back. Focusing on portrayals that reproduce the pervasive culture of misogyny showcases how these forms of media only further shapes femicides. An individual generally listens to music every day. It is a form of media in which misogynistic ideals can easily be broadcasted receiving little to no backlash.

*Music and Music Videos*

*Borro Cassette – Maluma*

Juan Luis Londoño, stage name Maluma, is a Colombian singer and songwriter. He is considered as one of “he artists with the greatest impact on urban music and the youth idol of Latin music globally” (Maluma – Official Website). He is a very well-known artist, and many youths listen to him almost on a daily basis. Maluma also delves into the reggaeton genre with many of his songs touching on explicit or erotic topics. The song I chose “Borro Cassette” (Erase the cassette) touches on some erotic topic but also blatantly talks about taking advantage of someone.

The song begins with Maluma singing about kissing and dancing with a woman at a party. He continues by singing that the next day he tried calling the woman, but she says she does not remember him. She says the drinks and the alcohol created havoc with her head and she doesn’t kiss just anyone. Alcohol impairment is a real thing in which an individual’s judgment and actions can become impaired depending on the amount of alcohol they drink.

I will be analyzing the following lyrics:

*English Spanish*

“I told you mami, have a drink / and “te dije mami, tomáte un trago / y cuando

when you’re drunk, let’s go to my house / estés borracha pa’ mi casa nos vamo’ / me

you surprised me when you pulled out that sorprendió cuando sacaste ese cigarro /

cigar / you drank so much that you’ve forgotten tomaste tanto que lo has olvidado /..bastaron

/... just a couple of drinks were enough to meet solo un par de copa’ pa’ conocerte en la

you in privacy” intimidad”

(Borro Cassete – Maluma)

In these lyrics Maluma is describing taking advantage of an impaired woman. He sings about how he told the woman to drink and how once she’s drunk he will take her to his house. She pulled out a cigar which could possibly be drugs, thus impairing her even more by mixing drugs with alcohol. He continues to say that she drank so much she’s forgotten what happened. In the last line of this group of lyrics he sings that a couple of drinks were enough to truly get to know her in privacy. From this line we can infer he had intercourse with her. If she does not remember this happening, is it possible that she did not give consent? Yes, it is.

In the rest of the song, Maluma repeats himself saying how is it possible that she doesn’t remember him and what they did. He describes how they passionately kissed and how she desperately called for him. His last words before the song ends are him telling the girl they made love and had a great time. He then says “you’re going to tell me you erased cassette? Nah.”. He dismisses her claims of not remembering what happened as if he didn’t blatantly take advantage of the woman. Although this is ‘just a song’, it does not mean that the lyrics could not incite someone in one way or another to commit this crime or promote it as something sexually appropriate.

*Ojalá Que Te Mueras – Pesado*

Grupo Pesado is a group that is very popular in the regional Mexican music genre. They have been a group since 1993, with a few changes in group members and continue to be active today continuing to make music labeled as “norteñas”, a genre of music meant to be danced to (Biografía de Grupo Pesado, Portada). Many, including myself, grew up listening to this band and their songs. As a child, I never knew what was being said until now that I am older I am finally able to fully understand the lyrics and their connotations. The song is titled “Ojalá Que Te Mueras” (I Hope You Die) which is already very controversial.

The song begins by saying how much this individual hopes the woman dies. It states that he hopes the earth opens up and swallows her so that she can disappear and so that everyone forgets her. He’s hoping she dies and gets denied from going to heaven and that her soul goes to hell. He proceeds to wish that everyone humiliates her and that hopefully she is always in agony. It is revealed that this individual is wishing her tremendous pain, misfortune, and even death because she was unfaithful to him.

I will be analyzing the following lyrics:

*English Spanish*

I hope you die / may your whole world “Ojalá que te mueras / que todo tu mundo

be empty / I hope each teardrop burns se quede vacío / Ojalá cada gota de llanto te

even your soul / I hope you do not find queme hasta el alma / Ojalá que no

peace / I hope you die” encuentres la calma / Ojalá que te mueras”

(Ojalá Que Te Mueras – Pesado)

In this section of lyrics, the individual hopes for the woman’s death twice. He’s wishing for her life to be empty and for her to have nothing. The soul is very sacred in Latin culture where you are told multiple times in church, in the bible, etc. to save and protect your soul. By wishing her tears burn even her soul is a very strong insult and a bad wish for anyone. He even wishes she never finds peace, staying forever in that limbo of agony, pain, and resentment.

The song continues to repeat itself by saying he hopes the woman dies and suffers for the rest of her life. As previously mentioned, the individual is wishing all of this on the woman because she was unfaithful. Infidelity by a woman is taken very seriously in Mexico and that woman is labeled as impure, even if her husband had been unfaithful himself. Women cannot under any circumstances be unfaithful and are at times physically abused if speculations of infidelity are believed by their spouse. This is a very common act in Mexico. In February 2020, Araceli, a 33-year-old woman living in Mexico City, Mexico, was stabbed and killed by her husband Francisco Javier, 57 years old, due to him believing Araceli was being unfaithful to him (Lopez, 2020). This is only one example of the lyrics in this song coming true.

This musical group is very famous in Mexico, with many people listening to them on a daily basis. The song analyzed is a very popular song that tends to be sung by individuals going through a heartbreak or a fight with their significant other. At a time of despair and inebriation it is very easy to take the song’s lyrics to heart and want to seek revenge on the woman you believe was unfaithful. The calls for her death and despair can cause others to act on their hopes and end up truly hurting someone.

*Para que Regreses – El Chapo de Sinaloa*

Ernesto Pérez, stage name El Chapo de Sinaloa, is a regional Mexican artist who specializes in rancheras, boleros, and corridos (El Chapo de Sinaloa, Birchmeier). He has been singing since the mid- ‘90s and continues active to this day. El Chapo de Sinaloa is seen as a ‘man’s man’, a man who is overtly masculine and is regarded as the epitome of man. This is very much reflected in the songs he sings and the style in which he sings them. The song I have chosen is called “Para que Regreses” (For You to Come Back).

In the first section of the song, El Chapo de Sinaloa is singing about the many things he hopes happens to his ex-lover. He hopes his lost love does not find a sincere and true love and that whatever man she does find just uses her for her body then leaves. After listing other ways in which he wants her to be mistreated he says he hopes all of this so that she comes back to him. He is hoping she is emotionally abused so that he can once again regain her love at the expense of her feelings. He hopes she never finds someone that will love her like he did and does so that she can realize how happy he made her.

I will be analyzing the following lyrics:

*English Spanish*

“That when you ask for forgiveness “Que cuando pidas perdón siempre te

they always ignore you / that they offend ignoren / que te ofendan / que te humillen

you / that they humiliate you day by day día a día noche a noche hasta que llores /

night by night until you cry / that you are que estés triste y que no te den consuelo /

sad and that they do not give you comfort / que te arrastren por el suelo”

that they drag you across the ground”

(Para Que Regreses – El Chapo De Sinaloa)

In this section of lyrics El Chapo de Sinaloa is singing that he hopes his ex-lover is ignored by her new significant other. He is wishing she is offended and humiliated day in and day out. He is wishing she never finds comfort in her new relationship and is dragged across the ground. This statement can have many meanings, from literal to figurative. He can be literally wishing that she is physically abused and mistreated, but it can also be a figurative ‘drag.’ This figurative ‘drag’ would be more like dragging her name through the mud or treating her poorly verbally and emotionally.

Whether or not his implications are literal or not, it’s disturbing that this song can be considered a love song. Many see it as something sweet and endearing that he wants her back and would do anything and hope for anything to happen in order for them to be in a relationship again. Looking at the YouTube comments for the song a certain listener commented that this song should be dedicated to the love of your life so that every time it is played you think of them and the happy times you spend with them. As I continued reading the comments I got the sense that for many listeners this song is melancholic, with many commenting how they used to hear their parents playing this song. It is also recognized as a love song you dedicate to your partner. In reality, this song is highly unsettling. This man is wishing for the worst to happen to his ex-lover because he wants her back. He is wishing she is mistreated physically, mentally, and emotionally. How does this reproduce the pervasive misogynistic culture? By undervaluing a woman’s independence and right to choose who to be with by overvaluing what the man wants. It is somewhat stating that no matter what the man will get what he wants even if it is at the expense of the woman he supposedly loves and cares for. Throughout the rest of the song, he continuously repeats himself and his ill-wishes towards his ex-lover, in the name of love of course.

*Bonita Finca de Adobe – Ramón Ayala*

Ramón Covarrubias Garza, stage name Ramón Ayala, is one of the most renowned Mexican singers, musicians, and composers (Rolamix, 2019). He is nicknamed “the king of the accordion” and is part of the following genres: regional Mexican, “grupera”, “norteñas”, and “corridos”. Ayala is known for many romantic ballads he sings but also for singing about despair. The song I have chosen is one of the songs that is at times considered a beautiful song but has a scandalous theme and lyrics. The name of the song is “Bonita Finca de Adobe” (Pretty Adobe Farm).

In the first half of the song Ayala sings about asking the adobe farm to watch over his love and asking it to not let her be taken from him. He then goes on to request that the farm ask her to have patience during his absence and to not allow her to go out. This line is interesting because he is asking to keep the woman indoors and not to allow her to leave in order for her not to find someone else. This resonates with the misogynistic, controlling belief that women must be kept indoors at all times to avoid their eyes, and ultimately their hearts, from wandering. Indeed, this kind of abusive behavior is actually enacted on women by men in reality. In July 2019, a man in Mexico was arrested for threatening his wife with a gun and not letting her leave their home (Rocha, 2019). At a certain point, the song’s lyrics stop being “just lyrics” and become action steps for an unstable man.

I will be analyzing the following lyrics:

*English Spanish*

“Pretty adobe farm / oak and mesquite “Bonita finca de adobe / puertas de

doors / if they steal her love from me encino y mesquite / si me roban sus

my revenge will be very cruel / never amores muy cruel será mi desquite /

ever betray me because if her love I lose jamas, jamas me traiciones que si su

I will burn you, her and that man with green amor se me pierde a ti, a ella y a ese

wood” hombre los quemo con leña verde”

(Bonita Finca de Adobe – Ramon Ayala)

Ayala is blatantly stating that, if he loses her love, he will kill her and her new lover. Not only will he burn them, but he will do so with green wood. Green wood does not burn easily and would take a long time to light. This speaks to the intent of the song’s protagonist to heighten the level of torture he will exercise, since they will be suffering a slow burning death, with green wood. There’s clearly a sadistic tone to these lyrics. It is a bit disconcerting to realize so many people sing this song nonchalantly, without truly paying attention to the lyrics. I’ve personally heard this song many times at parties in which couples dance to this song as if it were romantic. It is also a song that many men listen to when they are drinking.

Throughout the rest of the song the protagonist repeats how he will burn them with green wood. He also mentions that he does not want to lose her love for money. This is a severe connotation that women follow money instead of love and will easily leave when more money is offered. It is playing into the stereotype that women are “gold-diggers.” This then leads men to begin to monitor and control their significant others, to ensure they are not talking to anyone else or even getting money from anyone else.

The over-sexualization of women is a very big theme with the camera focusing on the woman’s body for long periods of time while she is wearing revealing clothing. The woman is seen as a sexy being and the camera angles make sure to capture the erotic energy and poses being given off by the woman. The intoxication of a woman is shown to the point where she does not recollect anything of the night before and finds herself waking up in a complete stranger’s house, romanticizing the concept of not remembering your love thus making them into a mysterious being. The shaming of women is also seen with various indirect camera angles and headshakes from characters in the videos. It is subtle but at a point a woman covers her young son’s eyes in order for him not to see the protagonist of the video in her dress. It is as though she is shielding her son from being corrupted by the “promiscuous” woman. Showcasing a woman suffering is also a theme explored in the videos. The woman is seen bleeding and in obvious agony, but her suffering appears justified because she left her man.

For my fourth music video I chose the video for the song “Fuiste Mía” by Gerardo Ortiz. The song describes a woman the protagonist loves and questions how she can so easily control him. He asks her, implying that she has been unfaithful, to tell him when she was truly only his. The song on its own is not violence-heavy nor graphic in any way. That is what makes the music video that much more shocking. In the music video Ortiz can be seen kissing a woman we can infer is his significant other. In another scene we see him catching her being unfaithful with another man in their home. Ortiz grabs a gun and kills the man while the woman runs to hide.

Ortiz finds her hiding in the bathroom and drags her out of there. In the last scene we see Ortiz putting her in the trunk of his car. He is then shown smoking a cigarette, which he throws to the ground. The cigarette lights a fire trail to the car, ultimately engulfing the car in flames. Ortiz was arrested in 2016, year in which the song and video were released, when the Jalisco Prosecutor’s Office “issued an arrest warrant against him on the grounds that he ‘advertised violent actions against women and encouraged the practice of these actions’” (BBC News Mundo). The video is extremely graphic, not only in terms of explicit violence, but also for overly sexualizing the woman, a theme previously mentioned to be consistent with the other music videos.

*Snuff Films / Pornography Showing Degradation or Roleplaying Abuse*

Pornography has become very accessible nowadays in a way that would never have been thought of before. Previously, it was watched through VHSs, in sex stores, or magazines. Now, it is literally at your fingertips via the internet. While many individuals may claim that pornography is a healthy way to explore one’s sexuality, it also has very serious repercussions when the type of genres watched are overtly explicit. The misogynistic practices in the videos could ultimately shape the way an individual thinks and cause them to want to recreate what they have seen in the video, whether it puts someone’s life at risk or not. High levels of dehumanizing acts are shown in popular pornographic videos which can ultimately increase the dehumanization of everyday individuals (Mecham et al., 2019, p. 41). Pornography tends to increase unethical behavior, based on the videos watched such as the ones being described in this section, which also leads to the dehumanization of others (Mecham et al., 2019, p. 49). This is also true with the genre of snuff films. The blatantly explicit content can not only shape a person’s mindset but also change their moral standings on sensitive topics such as abuse towards women. Men who have high hostile masculinity, sexual promiscuity, and pornography use are more likely to report sexual aggression against women as opposed to men who do not possess these characteristics (Fisher & Barak, 2001, p. 316). Snuff films and pornography are important and impact femicides by continuing to cater to the misogynistic ideals of men having complete control over women, even having the right to kill them for sexual gratification.

In 1988 Andrea Dworkin and Catharine MacKinnon defined pornography as the “graphic sexually explicit subordination of women through pictures and/or words” (Radford & Russell, 1992, p. 207). This can be if the woman is portrayed or presented as a dehumanized sexual object, portrayed as completely submissive while also enjoying abuse, etc. (Radford & Russell, 1992 p. 207). I previously mentioned that certain genres are overtly explicit. This genre of videos is classified as “aggressive pornography” and are “X-rated images of sexual coercion in which force is used or implied against a woman in order to obtain certain sexual acts, as in scenes of rape and other forms of sexual assault” (Donnerstein & Linz, 1986, p. 2). Something that is important to note about these images is that there is a “reliance upon ‘positive victim outcomes,’ in which rape and other sexual assaults are depicted as pleasurable, sexually arousing, and beneficial to the female victim” (Donnerstein & Linz, 1986, p. 2).

Snuff films are on the extreme side of the spectrum of the aggressive pornography genre. The films labeled “snuff” began when a movie titled *Snuff* showed the “actual murder and dismemberment of a young woman” (Radford & Russell, 1992, p. 189). This movie then influenced the naming of films that showcased women being murdered in front of the camera as “snuff” films. These films are directed for “a select pornography audience that requires death rather than mere sex as an aphrodisiac” (Radford & Russell, 1992, p. 189). The creation of this pornographic genre has caused an addition to the definition of pornography. The definition has now shifted from being a general sexual representation to showcasing literal male dominance over women (Johnson & Schaefer, 1993, p. 56). Snuff films are not easily found or accessed. Many of the films reside in the dark web where countless of other explicit themes and content can be found.

Although pornography websites do not generally include snuff films, you can find a number of different genres as soon as you enter the website. They can range from bondage to role play which then contains subgenres. In these videos there can be explicit scenes of rape role playing or extreme bondage in which the male takes complete and utter control over their submissive female costar. In the genre of domination many videos showcase the female being slapped, chocked to the point to where they are gasping for air, and degraded to an extreme. As previously mentioned, many times at the end of the acts the female will show a form of pleasure or be praised by the male. This leads the viewer to believe that such actions are appropriate and acceptable. They expect their sexual partner, whether consensual or not, to demonstrate the same pleasure and satisfaction as the woman in the video. In these cases, “pornography actually is sexual violence, a document of actual degradation, rape, torture, and even murder (as in the snuff film)” (Radford & Russell, 1992, p. 203).

Since pornography has become so easily available, with little to no age restrictions, it is difficult to monitor what any individual is watching at any given time. Minors can easily enter these websites and be exposed to the overly explicit videos without knowing just how serious the topic of abuse is. These explicit videos of “aggressive pornography” can easily shape their beliefs and moral standing regarding abuse. This is not only true for young individuals but also for adults. Research has shown that “exposure to aggressive pornography may alter the observer’s perception of rape and the rape victim” and seeing a “positive” reaction from the victim in an explicit rape scene can ultimately increase the acceptance of rape and violence against women which in turn can increase the possibility of they themselves committing rape (Donnerstein & Linz, 1986, p. 4). Many can argue and say that is not true and they remain only as dark fantasies but “there is now considerable consensus among psychologists...that viewers of pornography can develop arousal responses to depictions of rape, murder, child sexual abuse, or other assaultive behavior” (Diana E.H. Russell, 1988, p. 51). It has also been reported that a high percentage of nonincarcerated rapists and child molesters say that they have been incited by pornography to commit crimes; a group of preselected normal, healthy male students said they are more likely to rape a woman after only one exposure to violent pornography (Diana E.H. Russell, 1988, pp. 68-69). By continuing to believe that watching pornographic videos that depict “dark desires” or “forbidden fantasies” is completely harmless is completely wrong. Individuals need to be much more careful with the videos they decide to watch and how they perceive the topic being portrayed.

*Social Media and General Public Remarks*

Victim-shaming and -blaming have become a very popular trend among the public. At times it is easier to blame the victim for a crime committed against them than to accept that a very real problem exists in the community that could ultimately affect them or a loved one. Blaming the victims, their family members, or going as far as shaming them only takes away from the importance of the crime and helps people distance themselves and their communities from it. Essentially, victim-blaming/shaming helps people ignore, or even continue justifying, violence against women. It now doesn’t become a topic of life or death but a topic of one unfortunate girl being in the wrong place at the wrong time. Minimizing the actual crime and epidemic of femicide plaguing the streets in which these women reside is the worst possible way to deal with the death of a woman. By publicly victim-shaming/blaming victims of femicide and their relatives the misogynistic idea that women are to blame for their murder continues to endure in the minds of individuals.

The death of Ingrid Escamilla is an example of how social media and the general public can minimize the issue of femicide. Ingrid was killed by her husband and was skinned while also having some of her organs removed. The scene was extremely gory, but this did not deter a sensationalist tabloid newspaper from leaking pictures of her mutilated body with the headline “It was cupid’s fault” (Valero, 2020). By labeling it as “cupid’s fault,” Ingrid’s death is seen as a “crime of passion” (for which the murderer cannot be held responsible) rather than a premeditated, savage murder. The photos leaked showed Ingrid’s body gutted and skinned. This led to people making “jokes and memes about her death on social media sites, some as gruesome as depicting her as a ‘cabrito’ – a north Mexican dish of roasted young goat cut open down the middle with the insides exposed” (Valero, 2020). The jokes and memes minimized Ingrid’s horrific death and created a spectacle out of it. Her death was no longer a desolate topic, but rather a joke.

The people blaming femicide victims are not only the general public but also the government and officials placed to protect said women. In May 2017 Lesvy Osorio was murdered on the Universidad Autonoma de Mexico campus in Mexico City. The Mexico City Public Prosecutor’s office proceeded to tweet various statements blaming Lesvy’s death on herself and on her lifestyle (Damasio, 2017). The tweets were deleted almost immediately afterwards, but not before being captured by other users of Twitter. The tweets read, “She was an alcoholic and a bad student,” “She had left home and was living with her boyfriend,” and, “She had been taking drugs with friends” (Damasio, 2017). By bringing her personal life into the mix, the prosecutor’s office not only violated her privacy but also justified her killing by blaming her lifestyle.

A similar situation occurred in 2017 when Mara Fernanda Castilla was murdered by her Cabify driver. Following her murder, “the president of Madero University in Puebla, Job César Romero said that gender-related crimes were caused by ‘social decomposition and the current liberties that girls have to go out until very late...because they now have more autonomy to travel alone in their cars or in any other means of transport’” (Rodriguez-Dominguez, 2017, p. 2). These remarks come from a very antiquated, misogynistic way of thinking in which women are subordinate and should be watched by men at all times and not allowed to be out, alone.

Women also have to deal with victim-blaming and -shaming from authorities. Many times, women “face unjustified delays, lack of forensic testing essential for the investigation, unjustified interference in their private lives and many times are blamed or disqualified by the authorities” (Católicas por el Derecho a Decidir, 2012, p. 4). This is also due to the fact that “unlike many other interpersonal crimes such as robberies or muggings, victims of sexual assault are particularly vulnerable to being blamed for their attack” (Gravelin et al., 2019). This constant dismissal of sexual assault crimes can ultimately lead to femicides being committed. The constant action of blaming victims comes, as previously mentioned, from a very misogynistic mindset that women should remain at home and if something were to happen to them it is because they refuse to stay put.

Not only have the public victim-blamed, but they have gone as far as chalking up femicides as a myth and comparing them to folklores. For example, as Serviss (2013, p. 612) explains, “The stories of many women of Juárez femicides...were quickly linked to two cultural myths...La Llorona...[and] La Malinche.” La Llorona is the story of a woman who drowns her children in order to run off with a lover and leave her husband, she is an adulterer. La Malinche is said to be the first traitor by becoming Hernán Cortés’s lover, collaborating with the Spanish conquest, and giving birth to the first mestizos, or Mexicans. She has gone down in history as a traitor to her people. The main thing to note is that “these two myths are often placed in opposition to figures of the Virgen of Guadalupe” (Serviss, 2013, p. 612). The victims of femicide are being portrayed in the same light as the two “ungodly” women in the myths mentioned. This causes femicides to become just a cautionary story when in reality it is something women deal with daily. The importance is minimized tremendously becoming nothing more than a bedtime ghost story.

*Media Portrayals Calling for an End to Femicides*

Although there are various forms of media portrayals that reproduce the pervasive culture of misogyny, as seen in the previous section, there are also media portrayals calling for an end to femicides. I chose four songs, all in Spanish, that not only openly or subtly call for an end to femicides, but also touch on a subject rarely acknowledged or openly spoken about in public. I chose certain lyrics from the songs and translated them into English. Although I did not utilize the songs in their entirety, this does not mean that the rest of the lyrics do not in some way or another call to the end of femicides or misogyny, which was previously explained to in turn shape femicides. This is also true with the music videos chosen. The case studies and interviews I speak about and analyze all come from media outlets that reported on femicides, victims of femicides, and how this has impacted and continues to impact the lives of their family members and the female population in Mexico in general. These media outlets range from documentaries to news reports to social media posts. Utilizing a wide range of outlets is important and impactful because it reaches many more individuals, not only those who are on social media or who listen to certain songs. In the same way that songs can continue to perpetuate misogynistic ideals that shape femicides, they can also bring awareness to the issue and continue to call for its resolution.

*Music and Music Videos*

*Ni Una Menos – Rebeca Lane*

Rebeca Eunice Vargas, stage name Rebeca Lane, is not new to speaking out and fighting against injustices. She began her activism by getting involved in organizations of family members of people kidnapped or killed by the military government (About - Rebeca Lane). This activism led her to become interested in other movements. She has shown her support through various forms of media and “as a poet she’s been committed to her liberation as a woman and the heterosexual roles imposed on her body, and the colonization and militarization of the land she’s been born in” (About - Rebeca Lane). It is no surprise then that she chose to write such a powerful song made to bring awareness to such a taboo topic. In the song “Ni Una Menos” (“Not One [Woman] Less”) Lane is fighting back against the violence that is seen and lived in her home country of Guatemala. Her song openly calls out the violence against women and, at one point, also calls out the church, which in Latin America is very much respected. The song’s title is the slogan and the name given to the Latin American feminist movement that fights against gender-based violence.

Lane touches on many aspects of misogyny and fears that women in Latin America live with every day. Being a woman is not easy or safe. At one point in the song, Lane mentions that women are “aggressive” because that is the way they defend themselves, by being aggressive to strangers and looking angry in order to avoid unwanted attention from others, including catcalls from men. In the song, Lane says she does not have any type of privilege that will ultimately keep her safe. Being a man provides a huge advantage; men are not specifically targeted like women are, nor are they seen as vulnerable beings. Women are seen as simple, weak individuals, and that is why men take advantage of them.

In the next section of the song, Lane cites different examples of the types of abuse women have endured and continue to endure in their daily lives. She sings about domestic violence, sexual abuse, and the power of the clergy in legal decision-making. Each of these instances that she cites play a big part in femicides and in injustices towards women. Domestic violence is a very big factor in femicides, with the domestic violence ultimately escalating into the murder of the woman. In 2020, according to the federal Interior Secretariat, there was an almost 50 percent increase in emergency distress calls reporting domestic violence in the first six months of 2020 (Hootsen, 2020). Lane also sings about a girl who is only nine years old and is pregnant due to being raped, but she is forced to have the baby, because abortion is not an option due to it being seen as a sin. In many Latin American countries, the church has a big say in laws regarding abortion and whether or not it should be legalized or given as an option to women, even where it is legal.

I will be analyzing the following lyrics:

*English Spanish*

“count us properly in the streets, “cuéntanos bien en las calles somos miles

we are thousands, from Mexico to desde México hasta Chile y en el planeta

Chile and in the entire world entero en pie de lucha porque vivas nos

stand to fight because we want queremos / no tenemos miedo no queremos

us alive / we have no fear, we don’t a ni una menos”

want not a woman less”

(Rebeca Lane - Ni una menos lyrics + English translation)

The fight against femicides is taking place not only in Mexico but throughout Latin America as a whole. The social movement, “Ni una menos,” has organized protests all throughout Latin America to protest femicides, unfair treatment, and violence against women. Awareness of this issue and social action have grown tremendously throughout the last few years, and this is what Lane is singing about. She states that women are not scared and will fight in order to avoid losing another woman to the hands of men.

*Paren de Matarnos – Miss Bolivia*

Paz Ferreyra, stage name Miss Bolivia, is an Argentine singer and songwriter. She received her psychology degree from the Universidad de Buenos Aires and began performing in 2008 (Facultad Latinoamericana). The song I chose from her oeuvre translates to, “Stop Killing Us” (“Paren de Matarnos”). The lyrics include specific situations and acts women have experienced throughout their lives, from going missing to being shamed and blamed.

In Mexico is it very common for women to leave for the day and never return. Many believe only older women go missing but is not true. A seven-year-old girl named Fátima was kidnapped February 11, 2020 outside her school in southern Mexico City while she waited to be picked up by her mother (Mexico News Daily, 2020). Sadly, her body was found four days later in a plastic bag showing signs of sexual abuse (Cervantes, 2020). Families look for their loved ones with little to no results. Twitter and other social medias as well have become a huge platform to call for an end to femicides and to broadcast the severity of the situation.

I will be analyzing the following lyrics:

*English Spanish*

“They say that I went missing because I “Dicen que desaparecí porque estaba

was alone somewhere / because I wore my sola por ahí / porque usaba la falda

skirt too short / they keep blaming me /... muy corta / se la pasan culpandome a

from sun to sun, from night to morning mí /... de sol a sol, de noche y de

they kill me and all my sisters die / my mañana me matan y mueren todas

body and guts hurt / I don’t want you to mis hermanas / me duele el cuerpo y

touch me, dude, I don’t feel like it” las entrañas / no quiero que me toques, chabón, no tengo ganas”

(Miss Bolivia - Paren de matarnos lyrics + English translation)

In these lyrics, we see Miss Bolivia singing about victim-blaming and -shaming. They blame the victim for being alone, traveling alone, or for the clothes they were wearing. The people blaming the victims are not only the general public but also the judges. In 2017 a judge let a man who was accused of raping a student go free in Veracruz, Mexico because, according to the judge, the victim did not resist the sexual act, nor did she prove why she didn’t resist (Angel, 2017). It is important to note that the abuse was recorded by friends of the accused and in the video the victim is seen in a state where her body is laying limp and she seems drugged or inebriated. Miss Bolivia also sings in these lyrics that women are killed from sun to sun with nothing being done to stop it.

The ending of the song comes off as a cry for unity. The phrases “ni una menos” (not one less) and “vivas nos queremos” (we want us alive) are sung. These phrases are said in many if not all protests against femicides. It can be said that the phrases have been coined as battle cries for the women fighting to end the epidemic of femicides. This is exactly what Miss Bolivia’s song is, a battle cry to end the killing of women.

*Canción Sin Miedo – Vivir Quintana ft El Palomar*

Viviana Monserrat Quintana Rodriguez, stage name Vivir Quintana, is a 35-year-old Mexican singer from Coahuila, Mexico. She was at first an elementary school teach in Mexico before quitting her teaching job and focusing herself 100% in her career. When Vivir was in college in Coahuila, one of her classmates was killed and this precise act is what propelled Vivir to write the song “Canción Sin Miedo” (Song Without Fear) (Carrión, 2020). In this version of the song Vivir is being joined by the musical group El Palomar (dovecote). This group is made up of more than 60 female singers from different parts of Latin America (Barberena, 2020). All these individual singers were brought together by Chilean singer Mon Laferte.

This song is very strong and powerful as it is sung in acapella with only Vivir playing the guitar. The voices of El Palomar come through and echo through your ears as you can hear their pain and anger with every lyric they sing. It begins with a declaration to let the judges and the judiciary tremble because the women are now going to fight back. It includes a direct request to the president to not forget all the women that have been killed. It has been said many times that President Andrés Manuel López Obrador of Mexico does not truly acknowledge or take seriously the topic of femicides. In March of 2020 Mexico’s government said in an official announcement that the country’s emergency call centers were flooded with more than 26,000 reports of violence against women (Kitroeff, 2020). When asked about the surge of calls the president responded by saying that 90% of calls received by the hotline are fake comparing the calls to fake sabotage or bomb threats (Kitroeff, 2020).

Vivir goes on to mention specific Mexican states that experience a large number of femicides and violence against women. She dedicates this song to all the women fighting in these dangerous states in which femicides have become a new norm. There are certain parts in the song in which Vivir stops playing her guitar and allows El Palomar to scream out the word. This happens in various parts of the song but the first time El Palomar screams that they are screaming for every single disappeared woman. This is powerful because they are giving a voice to those who have been silenced.

I will be analyzing the following lyrics:

*English Spanish*

“I’m Claudia, I’m Esther and I’m Teresa / “Soy Claudia, soy Esther y soy Teresa /

I’m Ingrid, I’m Fabiola and I’m Valeria / Soy Ingrid, soy Fabiola y soy Valeria /

I’m the girl that you took by force / I’m Soy la niña que subsite por la fuerza /

the mom that now cries for her dead / and Soy la madre que ahora llora por sus

I’m the one who will make you pay” muertas / Y soy esta que te hará pagar

las cuentas”

(Canción Sin Miedo (part. El Palomar) – Vivir Quintana)

In this section of the lyrics Vivir sings the name of various women who have been victims of femicides. This is showing that they have not been forgotten and justice continues to be demanded for them. By saying “I’m” before each name is a very personal way in which to bring awareness to their deaths. Anyone who sings along or read the lyrics is identifying themselves with each victim. Not only does she name victims of femicide but also brings awareness to young girls being kidnapped and to mothers who now mourn their daughters that have passed. She then states that she is the person who will make the people committing femicides pay and will bring justice.

In the last section of the song, Vivir reiterates that women are no longer afraid, they are angry and ready to fight because they have had enough. The phrase “nos queremos vivas” is once again sung, in this song’s case the phrase is shouted by El Palomar. The direct call for the people committing femicides to be brought to justice is echoed. In the song the term “sororo” is mentioned. This is a way of saying sister and being part of a bigger sisterhood (sororidad), which is the sisterhood of women fighting against femicides.

*Feminicidio – Alexis Chaires*

Ángel Alexis Chaires Narváez, stage name Alexis Chaires, was born in Monterrey Nuevo León, Mexico. He began singing when he was 12 years old and has now become one of the top underground rap singers in Mexico (Alexis Chaires Spotify). The song I chose from Alexis is titled “Feminicidio” (Femicide) and in his song he takes a slightly different route than in the past songs analyzed, in that he openly calls for a violent punishment for abusers and perpetrators.

Alexis makes a strong call right in the beginning of his song. He states that every rapist should be killed because jail just isn’t enough anymore. On September 9, 2005...the government of President Vicente Fox abolished the Death Penalty and any kind of torture in Mexico during the presentation of his First Report of Execution of the National Human Rights Program (Delgadillo, 2020). It’s very interesting that Alexis would call for the death of rapists when it is not a legal option in Mexico. Notably, citizens in certain communities in Mexico have taken it upon themselves to take justice and action into their own hands, excluding any real legal authority in the punishment. Alexis also states that the government and authorities do not care about what is happening to women; therefore, the women need to raise their voice and demand action, or else they will continue to be overlooked.

I will be analyzing the following lyrics:

*English Spanish*

“Don’t stay quiet because time passes “No te quedes callada que el tiempo pasa

quick / you can scream for those who veloz / tú puedes ser el grito de las que no

do not have a voice / 60,000 women die tienen voz / 60,000 mujeres mueren de esto

because of femicide every year / what if cada año / que tal que si a la que más amas

this happens to the woman you most love” recibe este daño”

(Alexis Chaires – Feminicidio Lyrics)

Alexis calls out to women telling them not to quiet down or stop the fight. They are the voice for those who do not have one. They continue to fight and legacy of women who have died due to femicides. He then calls out not only to women but to everyone. He tries to connect to the male audience by asking what would happen if one day a woman that disappears or is murdered is one of their loved ones. This is a way to personalize the struggle to men and try to get them to sympathize with the movement.

In the final section of the song, Alexis once again calls for the death to people who commit femicides. He goes as far as saying that cash bail or paying for bail is a lie. He calls women to turn their powerlessness into rage and to continue to fight because their lives and their bodies are worth so much. Their fight and their resilience help to avoid this happening to any other woman and that is worth the fight. Alexis ends his song by reiterating that emotional violence also exists. This comes in forms of extreme jealousy, being prohibited from doing certain activities, and being verbally abused. It is important to acknowledge this form of violence and to give it the importance and awareness it deserves.

The music videos for these four songs follow a very similar theme. Footage of women protesting and raising awareness for different causes is very apparent in the music videos. The causes range from demanding legal abortions for everyone to brining attention to the case of the hashtag NosDuelen56. In March 2017 56 girls were locked up and burned in a state home in Guatemala where “41 died as a result of this femicidal crime and 15 survived with serious injuries” (Rivera, 2017). This action prompted the #NosDuelen56 to bring attention and memory to the 56 girls who were victims of this femicidal attack.

We also see the theme of unity and standing up to the patriarchy. The videos show clips of women of all ages standing together to fight back against femicides and other injustices against women. The power behind women coming together is also showcased as prominent theme. The sheer power of seeing all these women coming together to fight and say enough is enough is extraordinary. One of the videos also showcases a scene in which a young woman is kidnapped by two men who, in the beginning of the video, were seen catcalling her and verbally harassing her. By acting out a very possible scenario of a danger women in reality can face at any time is making the issue become more real for the viewers.

*Femicide* *Cases and Interviews*

There are countless of cases of femicides that have been published throughout the years. Many believe that by publishing the cases and their graphic content it is disrespecting the victim or making the victim lose their identity to their form of death. I believe otherwise. By publishing the murder of each victim, with their name, it is giving them identity. If the victim is not individually mentioned they then become just another statistic in the number of femicides. By not giving the identity and importance to each individual case, the victims lose their individuality, and this makes it much more difficult for the public to take the murders personal. For this reason, I have chosen to mention various victims of femicide in order to give them their individuality back and give a face to the statistics mentioned. Femicide cases and interviews are important media portrayals of femicides because they bring awareness to the issue and call for an end to femicides by giving each victim their individuality back. With these media portrayals an individual is able to know how relatives of femicide victims are also impacted by their deaths.

In the first two months of 2020 Mexico had three femicides occur. The first case involved Isabel Cabanillas, “a 26-year-old artist and feminist who was murdered in Ciudad Juárez, Chihuahua on January 18, 2020 while riding her bike” (McGinnis, 2020). Only weeks later on February 9 the body of 25-year-old Ingrid Escamilla, the case mentioned in a past section, was discovered murdered in northern Mexico City. The third case is one that caught the attention of the general public and caused a national outcry. This case was the murder of 7-year-old Fatima Cecelia Aldrighett Anton. Fatima went missing on February 11 in Santiago Tulyehualco, Xochimilco. It is believed that she was “abducted at school, where she was left outside and unsupervised as she waited for her mother (McGinnis, 2020). Her naked body was discovered on February 15, 2020 in a plastic bag near Los Reyes, Tlahuac” (McGinnis, 2020).

As I was writing this paper, three femicides took place a week apart from each other. A 35-year-old woman was murdered inside of a building in the Condesa neighborhood in Mexico City. She was identified as Lucía Delgado originally from the State of Mexico and was found with her hands and feet tied on March 6 (Anónimo, March 6, 2021). A few days after the women’s march on March 8, a young woman, identified as Indra “H”, with burns on her legs and signs of sexual abuse was found dead in the streets (Anónimo, March 13, 2021). Another woman, identified as Erika “N”, was found shot by her partner, Raymundo “R” who then attempted to commit suicide, on March 13 (Anónimo, March 13, 2021). There are no reports as to why Lucía or Indra were murdered. Erika was murdered because Raymundo had suspicions she had been unfaithful.

Cadena 3, a news station in Mexico, interviewed family members of victims of femicide and published the short three-minute video on video-sharing platform YouTube. Before showing the footage of the family member’s remarks the name of the victim, their age, the date and cause of death, and where the perpetrator is now was shown on the screen. Serymar 25-years-old was run over on February 4, 2017; her perpetrator is currently in jail serving a 46-year sentence (Cadena3Noticias, 2019). Fátima 12-years-old was tortured, abused, stabbed, and buried alive on February 5, 2017; one of her perpetrators has been sentenced while the other one, because they are a minor, can be released in a year and the third perpetrator is awaiting sentencing (Cadena3Noticias, 2019). Campira 31-years-old was asphyxiated on December 31, 2016; her perpetrator is in jail. Celence 28-years-old was shot five times on March 9, 2018; her perpetrator is in jail awaiting sentencing (Cadena3Noticias, 2019). Karen 22-years-old was strangled on June 9, 2018; her perpetrator is on the run (Cadena3Noticias, 2019). Ashley 19-years-old was stabbed on December 12, 2017; two suspects have been detained (Cadena3Noticias, 2019). Lupita 21-years-old was stabbed 17 times, slaughtered, and stoned on July 6, 2017; her perpetrator is in jail.

The family members of each one of these women gave remarks on how their lives have been changed due to their femicide. A general consensus is that they are all completely heartbroken. They are filled with anger and sadness at the loss of their loved one. Fátima’s father said at times he wanted to kill himself after seeing what they did to his daughter and solely for being a man (Cadena3Noticias, 2019). The sense of hopelessness looms over each one of them because they were unable to prevent the murder of their family member. Ashley’s mother stated that she now is asking for justice because her daughter cannot and was not given justice when she begged her murderers not to kill her (Cadena3Noticias, 2019). In a different interview, Ligia Canto, the mother of Emma Gabriela, a woman who was murdered at the entrance of her house by order of her ex-husband, said the last 12 years she has been in an endless fight to bring her daughter’s murderer to justice (Roldán, 2020). Ligia says at times she cries, curses everyone for the murder of her daughter, and even fights with God but knows she must continue with the fight for justice (Roldán, 2020). The lives of the victim’s families have all been changed and they suffer daily due to their loss.

*News Articles*

In many news outlets the topic of femicide continues to be a daily occurrence. Whether it be news outlets on the web or on the TV, the broadcasting of femicide is extremely important to bring awareness to the topic. Without them knowing just by broadcasting the news they are helping to expose just how much a serious topic the epidemic of femicide is. Since many femicides are not included in the official femicide count for each state, news outlets are truly showing just how many femicides are occurring by reporting on them. They are also reporting on movements fighting back against femicides which also brings awareness to the movement. I focus on reports that have been published on online news outlets. News articles are an effective media outlet to bring awareness to femicides because they can reach various individuals, even those that do not have access to social media.

When I looked up “femicides in Mexico” and clicked on the news tab I was met with numerous news articles reporting on femicides. Scrolling through I decided to click on the website for the newspaper Milenio. I was met with numerous stories about femicides. One title I noticed was “En CdMx, detienen a hombre ligado a feminicidio de su esposa e hija en Milpa Alta” (“In Mexico City a man was detained who is suspected to be linked to the femicide of his wife and daughter in Milpa Alta”) published on March 19, 2021 (Milenio 2021). Another title I saw was “Hallan cadaver putrefacto de mujer con cabeza y manos calcinadas en Tepexco” (“Rotten corpse of woman with charred head and hands found in Tepexco”) published on March 19, 2021. Another newspaper I found is El País. I was once again met with numerous stories about femicides. One title I saw was “No hay paz para las madres de las hijas asesinadas de Ciudad Juárez” (“There is no peace for the mothers of the daughters killed in Ciudad Juárez) published on February 24, 2020 (El País, 2020). They not only report on murders but also on movements and protests regarding femicides. On February 15, 2020 they published the article titled “Una marcha contra la prensa que “hace espectáculo” con los feminicidios en México” (“A march against the press that “makes a show” of femicides in Mexico”) (El País, 2020).

As I mentioned earlier, these news reports are not only reporting on the murders but also on social movements as well as laws put into place to support the fight against femicides. US News reported on March 7, 2021 on the women’s march and protests against femicides in Mexico. The article titled “Activists Paint Barriers With Names of Female Victims of Violence in Mexico” states how “the names of women victimized by violence were painted late on Saturday on metal barriers erected around Mexico's national palace ahead of a major women's march as activists turned the fencing into a makeshift billboard for their movement” (Alire Garcia & Ramirez, 2021). When an activist was asked why they were painting the names of victims she responded “’It's absolutely fundamental that they're written down because our struggle is for them’” (Alire Garcia & Ramirez, 2021). A news article reported on the *Ingrid Law.* This law was approved in the Mexico City Congress and would penalize with two to six years in prison or a fine to any individual who disseminates images of fatal victims, especially femicides, or would use the photos to trade information (Morán, 2021). Although this is a huge step to stop femicides, we must also note that “a year later...the Escamilla case continues today with no known resolution” regarding the disseminated photos (Morán, 2021). News articles are a very useful way to bring awareness to femicides and are also easily available to the general public.

*Social Media*

With so many social media platforms available today it is easier to spread awareness for so many causes such as femicides. Although, as seen in the previous section, social media can play a hurtful part by victim blaming and disseminating hurtful photos, it can also be a huge platform for activists. The awareness posts range from photos, tweets, posts, etc. The platform not only serves as a connection for activists but also as a form to conduct own research on murders and disappearances. By posting pictures, information, etc. it is a very useful way to find information on crimes that may be going unnoticed by official authorities. Social media is widely used today and is the outlet used by individuals to stay up to date with news. It is an extremely easy way to reach thousands of people and continue to bring awareness to the issue of femicides and call for an end to it.

Instagram is a very popular social media platform. In this app you can share photos as well as videos with captions. Many causes have begun using it to share photos of their cause and links to more information. This is exactly what two young girls have begun doing. The two organizers are women in their early 20s who have kept their anonymity as to not distract attention from the cause. They created the project “No estamos todas” (@noestamostodas) which translates to “We are not all here”. This project is “dedicated to raising awareness about femicide in Mexico with original illustrations of victims...they sought to present each slain woman as more than just a crime statistic” (Marido, 2018). Each illustration that is uploaded varies in style, but every single post has the caption “No estamos todas, nos falta...” (“We are not all here, we are missing...), the phrase is then followed by the victim’s name, age, and city of origin (Marido, 2018). Following the women’s march on March 8 I came across a page on Instagram “Women on fire” (@womensonfire). This particular page has many posts denouncing femicide with footage of the women’s march in different states in Mexico. It also has posts with information on workshops regarding domestic violence. It is a very powerful page that openly combats femicide.

Twitter has also become a very popular social media outlet used by activists. In 2017, after Lesvy Osorio’s death that was previously mentioned, women throughout Mexico were angered by the victim-blaming she encountered. This anger set out a wave on Twitter with women in Mexico City beginning to tweet using the hashtag #SiMeMatan (IfTheyKillMe) “describing how they might be blamed in their own murder” and soon that very hashtag began trending “in Mexico and beyond as tens of thousands of women across Latin America joined the protest” (Knoll Soloff, 2017). Twitter is also used to investigate murders and disappearances. Frida Guerrera is a journalist who dedicates much of her time hunting down men who have committed femicides. Every day Guerrera “trawls national and regional news outlets, identifies femicide cases and catalogues victims’ age, location and the method of their murder on a spreadsheet...then selects a few cases to write up on her blog” (Beatley, 2021). This is not all that she does, she also “posts missing person notices on her Twitter and Facebook pages and asks her tens of thousands of social media followers to help find the women or the men who targeted them” (Beatley, 2021). Many may believe this is a waste of time but “the prosecutor’s office for Mexico State, where Guerrera is based, confirmed she has helped to resolve a number of murder cases” (Beatley, 2021).

*Documentaries*

The documentary genre is ideal for those who prefer to receive information visually. They are able to hear testimonials, as well as portrayals that allow them to better understand and sympathize with the victim and the victim’s family. In the documentaries I speak about, the thoughts and point of view of the family members is represented as well as the point of view of an individual that has committed femicides. The documentaries, although some short in time, are very informative and eye opening. Many times, the families of the victims are not given a platform to express their feelings and just how their lives have been impacted since the death of their loved one. These documentaries give those families and the victims their platform. It is a media outlet and portrayal of femicide that truly give the individual a first-person perspective on the reality of femicides and why it is so important to bring an end to it.

*The Femicide Crisis in the State of Mexico* interviews family members of victims of femicide and follows them on their fight for justice. The reporter in the documentary states he tried multiple times to interview journalists, politicians, and other figures familiar with femicides, but they all refused. When he asked a source that agreed to speak with him, but requested to keep his anonymity, why so many people refuse to speak about the topic he stated it is because they are afraid of the repercussions they might suffer. These families are fighting for justice daily and refuse to give up. Irinea Buendia Cortez, mother of Mariana Lima Buendia, states she continues to fight because authorities have lied of how her daughter died. Mariana’s death was ruled a suicide when Irinea argues that is not possible. Having done her own research and having had contacted various sources and lawyers Irinea fought to have her daughter’s case reopened. At the end of the documentary, we see Irinea succeeded in having her daughter’s case reopened and hopes for justice to be made.

The documentary titled *Women are Being Killed With Impunity in Mexico* contains interviews with victims of domestic violence. The women are asked why they stay or why they have experienced violence. Their responses vary but ultimately all fall under the same problem: they have nowhere else to go. With their partner being the sole source of income, these women are ultimately dependent of the men hurting them. A man who had attempted to kill his wife by suffocating her with a pillow said he only did that to scare her and never truly intended on killing her. When he was asked why he had resorted to violence he responded because he was jealous. The reporter was able to interview a contract killer who said he has killed numerous women and continues to be able to murder women because the police is corrupt.

The third documentary is titled *The Three Deaths of Marisela Escobedo*. It follows the Marisela Escobedo as she fights to bring justice for her daughter Rubí Marisol Frayre Escobedo who was murdered, burned, and thrown in a landfill. Her romantic partner Sergio Barraza Bocanegra is the one who murdered Rubí. Sergio’s trial is shown in the documentary. During trial, Sergio openly apologizes to Marisela for having caused her such deep pain but is ultimately absolved of the crime and let free. Marisela continues to fight and demand justice. This led to her death on December 16, 2010. The three deaths of Marisela are when her daughter was taken from her, when Sergio was let free, and her untimely death.

These documentaries, although very difficult to watch, bring awareness to the topic of femicide in a very unique way. By showing the pain and anguish the family member’s go through the general public is snapped back to reality that although the victim is dead their family continues to live and fight for justice. They are no longer just statistics but are now shown as what they were: mothers, daughters, sisters, aunts, and friends.

***Conclusion***

The epidemic of femicide continues to grow at an alarming rate. Throughout this thesis I analyzed femicides while supporting my point that media is a strong influencer of society and has been used to foment misogyny and ultimately femicides. The examples of popular song lyrics showed an undeniably misogynistic message, such as in the songs by Maluma, Ramon Ayala and others. Article evidence was provided to show that snuff films serve to fetishize violent acts against women, including their murder. I presented unfortunate cases in which social media was used to victim blame, such as in the case of a Public Prosecutor’s office tweeting various statements blaming Lesvy’s death on herself and on her lifestyle.

The idea that media plays an important role in shaping the perspective of people was further evidenced by the use of it from anti-femicide groups. The three documentaries from the point of view of the families showed how the entire community as well as the loved ones of women like Mariana Lima Buendia and Rubí Marisol Frayre Escobedo. It was clear to see from the femicide cases and how they have been handled by the general public and the media that there is much work to be done when it comes to proper handling of femicide cases. Lastly, the language used by examine news articles and videos ranging from 1990 to the present in which femicide is mentioned or reported about. In my research I have found that there is a glorification of violence against women, fomented by the misogynistic culture prevalent in the country. These advocates against femicide have come to realize the influence of the media and are taking charge of that power by using it to create a conversation surrounding femicides in order to incite people to begin to speak out against femicides and demand a solution.

There are countless ways in which media portrayals can reproduce the pervasive culture of misogyny as well as call for an end to femicides and work as an activist platform. Through social media, music, documentaries, and news outlets we have seen how awareness is being brought to the epidemic of femicide. My hope is that with my research the importance of media impact on femicides is accepted and supported. Groups that are fighting tirelessly against femicide can draw on my research in order to support their use of media to promote a counternarrative to the misogynistic message. Additionally, I hope we no longer permit the impunity of those men committing femicides, and that something is done to stop it.

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