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TAKING WOMEN SERIOUSLY: A FEMINIST APPROACH TO THE STUDY OF COLONIAL VIOLENCE

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Abstract
Since the end of official empire postcolonial research has changed our image of colonialism to foreground the multiple forms of violence that lay at the heart of it. Drawing on increasingly critical feminist research approaches, I argue that this understanding must and can be extended to our conception of white women's role in colonialism. In order to push this research further, this paper advocates for a more systematic approach to the study of European women in colonial violence. Therefore, using case studies of both German and British empires, a theoretical argument is made to show how we can conceptualise white women's violence in empire. Then, the paper proposes a systematic approach to how such studies of European women's role in colonial violence may be undertaken by combining feminist International Relations scholarship and postcolonial feminisms with Bourgois' continuum of violence.
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Introduction

Postcolonialism has drastically changed our understanding of what empire looked like. One of these changes has been to show us just how violent colonialism was, that violence took many forms within imperialism, and that the violence did not stop with the official end of empire. Meanwhile, feminist scholars have shown the role of women within empire. At times, colonial spaces are figured as ones of emancipation for white women – although this framing has been successfully contested as an ideal that was sold to women but rarely matched their lived realities.[1] More often, feminists have highlighted the nooks and crannies which empire afforded white women for agency, how they fought to expand them and consolidate white women's significance within the nationalist enterprise that imperialism undoubtedly was.[2] More critical feminist postcolonial scholars have shown the intricate connections between hierarchies of race, class, and gender that were navigated by white women in imperial spaces.[3] Often, these reveal how white women used bourgeois norms and racial hierarchies to advance their personal position in settler colonies. This scholarship often indicates and includes the interaction of such negotiations with violence. Rarely, however, is violence the sole focus of such research and even less frequently is it systematically analysed.

This, I argue, needs to change. Since the end of official empire our understanding of empire has changed to foreground the multiple forms of violence that lay at the heart of imperial enterprises. I show how this understanding can be extended to our conception of white women's role in colonialism by a more systematic approach to categories of violence. In this paper I therefore make a theoretical argument to show how we can conceptualise white women's violence in empire and demonstrate its applicability using case studies of both German and British colonialism.

First, I draw on feminist International Relations scholarship to show that women must be taken seriously (Cynthia Enloe), which includes their violent behaviour (Laura Sjoberg and Caron E. Gentry).[4] The relevance of this approach

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1 Katharina Walgenbach, "Emanzipation als koloniale Fiktion: Zur sozialen Position Weißer Frauen in den deutschen Kolonien," *L'Homme* 16, no. 2 (2005): 47–67.

2 Lora Wildenthal, *German Women for Empire, 1884–1945* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2001).

3 Anne McClintock, *Imperial Leather: Race, Gender, and Sexuality in the Colonial Contest* (New York: Routledge, 1995); Ann Laura Stoler, "Tense and Tender Ties: The Politics of Comparison in North American History and (Post) Colonial Studies," *The Journal of American History* 88, no. 3 (2001): 829–865, doi: 10.2307/2700385.

4 Cynthia Enloe, *Seriously! Investigating Crashes and Crises as If Women Mattered* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2013); Cynthia H. Enloe, *Globalization and Militarism: Feminists*

has been shown in postcolonial feminist scholarship, which has frequently highlighted the role of white women in perpetuating racialised hierarchies. Feminist IR is central to my argument, as this is the space in which theoretical arguments have been made to demonstrate the significance of understanding women as violent actors. One of the most important, albeit seemingly obvious, arguments is that only if we understand all of those involved in violence can we understand violence in its full scope.[5] Clearly, this must therefore involve research on women's violent actions, which are frequently left out. Alternatively, those women whose violent actions are not simply ignored are often depicted in such a way that they are not taken seriously as political actors but instead are seen as unnatural women or driven by uniquely feminine urges.[6] Thus, feminist International Relations sets the agenda for studying women's violent actions as both significant to the overall study of violence and as legitimate acts of political agency.

These insights will be connected to postcolonial feminist scholarship, which has increasingly proven the significance of white women in shaping colonial contexts, cultures, and violence, but has not sufficiently nor systematically addressed their role in colonial violence.[7] This leaves a gap in our understanding of the violent cultures of empire and reasserts our gendered understandings of violence and colonialism as dominantly masculine spaces. Building further on feminist IR, I show that the project of taking women seriously in colonial contexts is twofold: firstly, understanding that women are capable of the same things as men, whilst secondly also being aware that their gendered role in colonial society will have shaped the motivations, scope, and form of women's actions.

Thus, I theoretically argue for embedding research on violent women in the colonies in a detailed discussion of women's role in empire. This is crucial to understand the potential motivations behind white women's violence in empire, but also to understand the spheres of agency that were open to women and in

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Make the Link (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2016); Laura Sjoberg and Caron E. Gentry, *Mothers, Monsters, Whores: Women's Violence in Global Politics* (London: Zed Books, 2013); Caron E. Gentry and Laura Sjoberg, *Beyond Mothers, Monsters, Whores: Thinking about Women's Violence in Global Politics* (London: Bloomsbury, 2015).

5 Patricia Pearson, *When She Was Bad: Violent Women & the Myth of Innocence* (New York: Viking, 1997); Jean Bethke Elshtain, "On Beautiful Souls, Just Warriors and Feminist Consciousness," *Women's Studies International Forum* 5, no. 3–4 (1982): 341–348, doi: 10.1016/0277-5395(82)90043-7.

6 Sjoberg and Gentry, *Mothers, Monsters, Whores*, 2–3.

7 McClintock, *Imperial Leather*; Stoler, "Tense and Tender Ties," 829–865; Anna M. Agathangelou and Heather M. Turcotte, "Reworking Postcolonial Feminisms in the Sites of IR," in *Handbook on Gender in World Politics*, ed. Jill Steans and Daniela Tepe-Belfrage (Cheltenham: Edward Elgar Publishing, 2016), 41–49.

which they could exercise their influence violently. I will finish this section by outlining how these concepts fit to both German and British colonial contexts, highlighting overarching similarities and differences in their roles in empire and how this could impact their spheres of violent action.

Secondly, I combine feminist approaches with Bourgois' continuum of violence to provide a roadmap to conceptualise white women's role in colonial violence.[8] This establishes a balance between seeing women as capable of the same violence as men, whilst leaving room for the significance of other, non-physical forms of violence more in the scope of women's permitted agency in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. I will therefore briefly outline the scope of violence that women may have been engaged in, ranging from normative, cultural, and discursive violence to private and everyday violence or forms of engagement with state violence. Indeed, the fact that mainstream depictions of violence rarely include women as violent actors is perhaps because dominant conceptions of perpetration are more suitable for male than female actors. Underlining this will be the theoretical argument that all forms of violence are significant. Even if women's violence was often less physical, it is nevertheless important to study and understand.

Thus, my suggested approach allows an embedding of and research into the entanglements of multiple forms of violence. In order to understand the interconnected relationships of various forms of violence I make the case for studying both non-physical and physical forms of violence together. At the end of this section, I will again reflect on German and British imperial contexts to demonstrate how the proposed approach represents a valuable avenue of research in both instances.

Women and Violence: Depicting Violent Women

Prior to discussing women as violent actors, it merits delving into the origins of the construction of women as innately peaceful, as well as the methods used to uphold them as such even when the evidence points against it. This uniquely informs us about the gendered construction of women in the context of violence, which is a crucial first step in helping to deconstruct such norms as well as appreciating the ways in which gendered constructions will have shaped women's actions, including violent ones.

[8] Philippe Bourgois, "The Power of Violence in War and Peace: Post-Cold War Lessons from El Salvador," *Ethnography* 2, no. 1 (2001): 5–34.

A theoretical shift within feminism occurred in the late 1980s and 1990s. Previously, feminists drew on the stereotypical image of women as inherently peaceful to legitimate their political agency and peace activism on a global scale.[9] By the end of the twentieth century, some feminists began critically questioning the claim of women's innate peacefulness and how that functioned to silence and exclude women's violent actions. Jean Bethke Elshtain is famous for bringing scholarly attention to the way women are constructed in the context of conflict and militarism as "beautiful souls" that are inherently innocent and averse to violence, yet in need of just warriors to protect them from wars caused by others.[10] As such, women are simultaneously construed as the victims of the conflict as well as its cause. In both factors, woman's passivity is central to her role as it secures her innocence both in the violent conflict and underlies her virtue as a "beautiful soul".[11] Notably, as wars are thereby fought in the name of protecting women's "beautiful souls", they become noble and just causes. Thus, whilst feminist peace activists could use the concept of women as "beautiful souls" inherently desiring peace to legitimise their actions, the dichotomy of (feminine) beautiful souls and (masculine) just warriors could also be utilised effectively by proponents of war. Indeed, this narrative of war based along the lines of "beautiful souls" in need of saviour by "just warriors" has been used to justify numerous global conflicts, ranging from World War I, the Cold War, and the First Gulf War to the conflict in former Yugoslavia and the war on terror.[12] Notably for this paper, the relevance of the construct of "beautiful souls" has been highlighted specifically for women's role in the British empire, where their purported virtue and purity lay at the heart of their position in the colonies.[13] Its application in a variety of contexts speaks of the widespread strength of the narrative and therefore also of the shared investment of powerful actors in the continuation of this gendered construction.

The concept of "beautiful souls", whereby women's virtue relies on her passivity and this is in turn a powerful justificatory narrative for conflict, helps explain the demonisation of women who do not fit the gendered mould, in particular when it comes to conflict. Laura Sjoberg and Caron E. Gentry have

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[9] Mona L. Siegel, *Peace on Our Terms: The Global Battle for Women's Rights after the First World War* (New York City: Columbia University Press, 2021).

[10] Elshtain, "On Beautiful Souls."

[11] Sikata Banerjee, *Muscular Nationalism: Gender, Violence, and Empire in India and Ireland, 1914–2004* (New York: NYU Press, 2012), 8.

[12] Laura Sjoberg and Sandra Via, "Introduction," in *Gender, War, and Militarism: Feminist Perspectives*, ed. Laura Sjoberg and Sandra Via (Santa Barbara, CA: Praeger, 2010), 1–13, here 4–5.

[13] Banerjee, *Muscular Nationalism*, 8.

outlined that women involved in violence are treated both in the media and within academia separately from men and that violent women are construed as outliers.[14] Yet they powerfully argue that "women have always been, and continue to be, among the people engaged in violence in the global political arena".[15] Rather than being taken seriously as political actors who may also use violence as a form of agency – in the way that violent men are understood – Sjoberg and Gentry show that violent women are depicted as aberrant. Specifically, they find that violent women are categorised either as mothers, monsters, or whores, each of which foregrounds their gender in understanding their violent actions and denies women any political agency or individual meaning in the violence and its underlying motivation. Instead, depicting all violent women as mothers, monsters, or whores subsumes their violent actions into feminised images of women. The image of violent women as mothers insinuates that her motivations are driven purely by maternal instincts. The category of whore, on the other hand, makes the violent action seem driven purely by a woman's relationship to a male in her life, once again making the woman passive. The category of monsters relies on the belief that violent women are breaking with the idealised image of women as innately peaceful and virtuous and thereby constructing them as unnatural and monstrous. This reveals that violent women are not only censored and potentially feared due to their violent actions, but first and foremost for the gender transgression such actions mean they committed. All categories deny women any complex reasoning for their actions, reassert the gendered expectations of women, and limit any understanding of women's actions to their gender. Thus, understanding women's violent actions as rational, based on their own agency, and a decision to be taken seriously, offsets prevalent misconceptions both in the media and academia and underlies this paper's feminist approach to violent women in the colonies.

Patricia Pearson was one of the first to prominently challenge the myth of innocent women, by showing how women that committed rape and murder in the USA were often able to blame their actions on premenstrual syndrome, battered women syndrome or postpartum depression.[16] This corroborates Sjoberg and Gentry's argument, as the women were able to obscure their violent actions by highlighting gendered elements of their existence. Pearson argues: "Perhaps above all, the denial of women's aggression profoundly undermines our attempt

[14] Sjoberg and Gentry, *Mothers, Monsters, Whores*.
[15] Gentry and Sjoberg, *Beyond Mothers, Monsters, Whores*, 2.
[16] Pearson, *When She Was Bad*, 33–63.

as a culture to understand violence, to trace its causes and to quell them."[17] Thus, taking women's violent actions seriously is not just a matter for feminism, but also for peace and conflict studies. Only by studying the actions of *all* violent people can we truly understand cultures of violence and therefore begin to counteract them. Clearly, this must also be applied to colonial contexts, where women settled, worked, and lived, but have as of yet largely been ignored in research focusing on colonial violence.

How to Take Women Seriously

Cynthia Enloe has written multiple ground-breaking books to show how significant feminism is to understanding and studying the world, as well as outlining several useful approaches for how to do so.[18] As the basis of this paper I will be applying key concepts as proposed in *Seriously! Investigating Crashes and Crises as if Women Mattered*, as Enloe therein lays the groundwork for any feminist study on women's roles and actions.[19] The first step is, indeed, to acknowledge the continuous privileging of masculinities in the subject areas that are deemed serious and worth studying. The innocuous and normalised privileging of male subjectivities and subjects works in both ways, as it not only erases women as serious subjects but also erases the male gender of the studied subjects. As Enloe puts it: "because I did not take women seriously, I did not see these men as men".[20] This once again points to the significance of feminism to any subject area, because it highlights gender as an important factor in any context, regardless of who is being studied. When considering violence, this approach is vital, as the inclusion of women highlights gender as an important influence for all people whose violent actions are being studied. Too often, the exclusion of women from violence (apart from as victims) makes gender an invisible and overlooked force shaping violence. This, in turn, reinforces masculinised conceptions of violence and further buttresses the previously outlined image of violent women as aberrant from the norm.

Enloe therefore argues that this is based on a long tradition whereby the feminisation of any subject area or person makes the research or person be taken less seriously. Between individuals, "feminization is a potent weapon in the

[17] Ibid., 243.
[18] See for example Cynthia H. Enloe, *The Curious Feminist Searching for Women in a New Age of Empire* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2004).
[19] Enloe, *Seriously!*.
[20] Ibid., 2.

masculinized contest between men over who will be taken seriously".[21] Enloe further claims "that most social commentators, contractors, and policy makers still do not think deeply about women unless they are pushed to do it".[22] Therefore, taking women seriously can become the heart of any feminist agenda with the aim of unapologetically placing gender at the centre of one's research. One thereby demonstrates the relevance of gender and women to a subject area and does so not by applying masculinised norms to women in order to prove their relevance, but by making space for women's agency. Enloe thus defines: "To be taken seriously does not mean to be liked or to be admired. Rather, to be taken seriously means to be listened to, to be carefully responded to, to have one's ideas and actions thoughtfully weighed. It means that what one does or thinks matters – that is, significant consequences flow from it."[23]

In the context of violence, this means first of all understanding that women's ideas and actions matter because they have significant consequences. Rather than applying masculine notions of significant actions being purely physical violence, I therefore propose including various forms of actions as long as they significantly contributed to violence. This establishes a symbiosis with current trends in perpetrator studies, which lay the focus on acts of perpetration rather than definitive labels such as perpetrator or bystander.[24] A useful approach is proposed by genocide scholar Timothy Williams, as he suggests focusing on single actions by individuals and analysing them for their consequences.[25] As such, one can also highlight the complexity of individuals, who may at times engage in violence and at other times protect people from violence. From a feminist perspective, this also enables one to move beyond images of perpetration as acts of physical violence, to focus – as Enloe suggests – on the consequences of actions.

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[21] Ibid., 6.

[22] Ibid., 3–4.

[23] Ibid., 5.

[24] See for example Scott Straus, "Studying Perpetrators: A Reflection," *Journal of Perpetrator Research* 1, no. 1 (2017): 28–38, doi: 10.21039/jpr.v1i1.52; Christian Gudehus, "Gewalt als Handlung," in *Zwischen Tätern und Opfern*, ed. Philipp Batelka, Michael Weise, and Stephanie Zehnle (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2017), 23–46, doi: 10.13109/9783666300998.23; Christian Gudehus, "Some Remarks on the Label, Field, and Heuristics of Perpetrator Research," *Journal of Perpetrator Research* 2, no. 1 (2018): 3–8, doi: 10.21039/jpr.2.1.20; Christian Gudehus, "Action Action Action," *Journal of Perpetrator Research* 3, no. 1 (2020): 188–195, doi: 10.21039/jpr.2.1.35; *Perpetrators and Perpetration of Mass Violence. Action, Motivations and Dynamics*, ed. Timothy Williams and Susanne Buckley-Zistel (New York: Routledge, 2018).

[25] Timothy Williams, "Thinking beyond Perpetrators, Bystanders, Heroes: A Typology of Action in Genocide," in *Perpetrators and Perpetration of Mass Violence. Action, Motivations and Dynamics*, ed. Timothy Williams and Susanne Buckley-Zistel (New York: Routledge, 2018), 17–35.

I propose that such an approach can help move us beyond masculinised images of perpetration and to display the significant role of women in cultures of violence by documenting the violent consequences of their actions.

Cynthia Enloe shows how "in narratives of wartime and revolution, women are presumed to be confined to 'the home front.' They are (merely) 'the protected.' They are the (silent) 'grieving.' They are the (voiceless, idea-less) 'victims.' They are the symbols of 'the nation,' not its makers."[26] These images of women clearly reassert gendered stereotypes of dependent women whilst further highlight their insignificance in matters of war, conflict, and violence. Rather than accepting such gendered notions, this strand of critical feminist research interrogates them and highlights the agency women wielded despite being depicted as dependent on men and solely symbolic to the nation. One way in which this has been done has been to document the private space as political.[27] What this does is to show that spaces of agency not even acknowledged as significant – due to masculinised understandings of what is to be taken seriously – can and must be taken seriously. Moreover, studying spaces in which women rather than men tend to have a strong influence foregrounds the significance of women's actions whilst demonstrating how their agency is inevitably shaped by gendered expectations. Ultimately, it shows how taking an approach that actively includes women to what spaces and actions are deemed relevant broadens our understanding of how politics and society function. As Enloe summarises: "when we take women seriously we have to wonder about the pressures on them to be feminine – or sometimes to pass as manly."[28] This, I argue, must also be done to include women's role in violent cultures, such as those of empire.

This approach followed by a significant strand of feminist IR scholarship reveals a relevant symbiosis with some postcolonial feminisms. Postcolonial feminisms have shown how feminist scholarships have always been contested and multiple, as some understood the need to address all forms of inequality, whilst others sought solely to address the subjugation of women.[29] This highlights the common critique levied against first and second wave feminist

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[26] Enloe, *Seriously!*, 11.

[27] See for example ibid., 39–52; Christopher Nelson, "The Domestic Is Political, and the Political Is Gendered: An Analysis of Veiled Subjects, Gendered Epistemologies, and Muslim Bodies," *Islamophobia Studies Journal* 3, no. 1 (2015), doi: 10.13169/islastudj.3.1.0106; Linda J. Nicholson, "'The Personal Is Political': An Analysis in Retrospect," *Social Theory and Practice* 7, no. 1 (1981): 85–98.

[28] Enloe, *Seriously!*, 17.

[29] Vron Ware, "To Make the Facts Known: Racial Terror and the Construction of White Femininity," in *Feminist Postcolonial Theory* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2003), 103–34; Chandra

as a singularly white project of emancipation. Thus, both the above outlined feminist IR scholarship and many postcolonial feminist scholars foreground the need to understand the world through an intersectional gaze, whereby not only gender but also categories such as race or class establish significant hierarchies.[30] Following on from this insight is the somewhat evident yet for a long-time overlooked understanding that white women also played an important function in upholding a racialised world order. As Agathangelou and Turcotte argue: "In doing so, postcolonial feminisms intervene in the project of feminism as a homogenous, unified area of study. They complicate the subject of 'woman' within their transnational attention to inequitable distributions of power, gender, race, class, religion and sexuality."[31] An attention to intersectionality therefore allows a critical interrogation into white women's roles, both in the past and present.

Moreover, postcolonial feminisms interact with the strand of feminist IR theory outlined above, by similarly arguing for the relevance of looking beyond purely physical forms of violence. Thus, just as some feminist IR theories highlight the private and intimate spaces as significant for understanding violence, postcolonial feminisms "focus on the embodiment of the *personal-as-political* and the site in which to name racial, gender, sexual and geographic inequities as a process of rewriting a violent system".[32] Scholars such as Stoler and McClintock, whose work I will outline in more detail later, have demonstrated what this can look like for studies of white women in the colonies.[33] Thus, postcolonial feminisms have specifically engaged with white women's critical role in violence against people of colour both historically and in the present. For example, Haggis has criticised how "the white woman, by her own accounts, is rendered irresponsible, a victim of the white male colonising adventure, who, through this exclusion, is uniquely positioned, nevertheless, to forge a different, more benevolent, colonial relation with her 'native' sisters in the interstices

Talpade Mohanty, *Feminism Without Borders: Decolonizing Theory, Practicing Solidarity* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2003).

30 Mohanty, *Feminism Without Borders*; Vron Ware, *Beyond the Pale: White Women, Racism, and History* (London, New York: Verso, 1992).

31 Agathangelou and Turcotte, "Reworking Postcolonial Feminisms," 43.

32 Ibid., 44.

33 Ann Laura Stoler, "Sexual Affronts and Racial Frontiers: European Identities and the Cultural Politics of Exclusion in Colonial Southeast Asia," in *Tensions of Empire: Colonial Cultures in a Bourgeois World*, ed. Frederick Cooper and Ann Laura Stoler (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1997), 198–237; McClintock, *Imperial Leather*.

of the masculine project".[34] She further argues that "such recuperative histories of white women risk colonising gender for white men and women rather than gendering colonialism as a historical process".[35] This body of postcolonial feminist work has continuously shown the significance white women played within the private space in colonialism and indicated its violent forms. Yet such research has not yet been extended to a more systematic approach to understanding violence, which I propose can be done by integrating feminist IR and the continuum of violence.

Perpetration by Women

Women must therefore also be considered as people capable of perpetrating violence. I argue that to do so, we can apply Cynthia Enloe's methodology of taking women seriously. Drawing on research on violent women, I propose a two-step approach for taking women seriously in the context of colonial violence. First, we must understand that women are capable of the same things as men. When considering violence, this means analysing and looking for forms of perpetration that are usually ascribed to men, such as murder or other forms of physical violence. The second step, however, reiterates Enloe's call to understand and investigate the relevance of gender. As such, I argue that researchers must enquire into the ways in which gendered norms inherently shaped women's actions and therefore made female agency different to that of male agency. In the case of violence, I propose that one must delve into the context in which violence occurred and thereby understand the limitations within which women were acting. Then one can extrapolate and analyse how such gendered expectations shaped the forms of violence women were able to engage in. The significance of their actions can nonetheless still be demonstrated through highlighting the violent consequences of them. Just because women were not always acting in the same violent manner as men does not mean that their actions were not violent. I will therefore conclude this section by examining how the colonial context shaped women's agency within German and British empire and show how this can function as the groundwork for analysing women's role in colonial violence as well as their motivations.

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[34] Jane Haggis, "White Women and Colonialism: Towards a Non-Recuperative History," in *Feminist Postcolonial Theory* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2003), 161–189, here 163–164, doi: 10.1515/9781474470254-008.

[35] Ibid., 164.

Feminists have recently increasingly studied women as perpetrators to highlight that female perpetrators exist and must be studied just as much as male perpetrators.[36] On the one hand, this approach questions the status quo image of male perpetration. On the other hand, by including women it enables a deeper and more comprehensive understanding of what perpetration looks like. Alette Smeulers conducted an extensive explorative study of women perpetrators, based on an understanding of perpetration that focuses on physical violence and criminal acts[37] – arguably an approach which endorses masculine understandings of what violence looks like. Yet even when applying such a definition from the outset, Smeulers was able to conclude that "women have played a much larger role than we have generally assumed so far and that women can be just as evil as men".[38] Whilst women are shown to be capable of the same physical violence and crimes as men, Smeulers' findings nonetheless indicate that, in general, more men than women are involved in mass atrocities.[39] At the same time, Smeulers goes to lengths in her paper to show that more "passive" roles within violent cultures and regimes, often ones fulfilled by women, are essential to enabling and upholding such violent cultures. Among such more "passive" roles she describes bystanders, supporters of the regime, and administrative and supporting personnel.[40] Many of these are often overlooked in their significance, as they take place in the private sphere or do not entail criminal responsibility. These roles, the actions they include and their consequences, are "far more important than we tend to think".[41]

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[36] Elissa von Joeden-Forgey, "Women and the Herero Genocide," in *Women and Genocide: Survivors, Victims, Perpetrators*, by Joyce W. Warren and Elissa Bemporad (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2018); Claudia Koonz, *Mothers in the Fatherland: Women, the Family and Nazi Politics* (London: Routledge, 2013); Elissa Bemporad, "Memory, Body, and Power: Women and the Study of Genocide," in *Women and Genocide: Survivors, Victims, Perpetrators*, ed. Joyce W. Warren and Elissa Bemporad (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2018); Martha Mamozai, *Schwarze Frau, weiße Herrin* (Hamburg: rororo, 1989); Wendy Lower, *Hitler's Furies: German Women in the Nazi Killing Fields* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2013); Sara E. Brown, *Gender and the Genocide in Rwanda: Women as Rescuers and Perpetrators* (London: Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group, 2018); Alette Smeulers, "Female Perpetrators: Ordinary or Extra-Ordinary Women?," *International Criminal Law Review* 15, no. 2 (2015): 207–253, doi: 10.1163/15718123-01502001; Kathleen M. Blee, *Women of the Klan: Racism and Gender in the 1920s* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1991).

[37] Smeulers, "Female Perpetrators."

[38] Ibid., 207.

[39] Ibid., 207.

[40] Ibid., 211–15.

[41] Ibid., 211.

These findings reassert the relevance of Enloe's approach, demonstrating that the spaces and roles taken seriously when researching violence are starkly gendered, and that a feminist approach delving precisely into these spaces and women's positions will provide for a deeper understanding, in this case, of colonial violence. Furthermore, Smeulers' research highlights the need to both conceptualise women as capable of the same violence as men, whilst also considering how gendered norms will have shaped women's roles in violent cultures. This reflects the findings of feminist authors in a variety of violent contexts. Studying the role of women in the Rwandan genocide, Sara E. Brown highlights the significance of the "deeply entrenched patriarchal system that limited their agency".[42] Whilst acknowledging the constrained agency of women due to the influence of a patriarchal social order, Brown finds that although women may have committed less crimes than men, those they committed were nonetheless "similar to those perpetrated by men".[43] She conceptualises the violence as direct violence, which necessitate the use of physical force, and indirect violence "that may not require physical force".[44] One main reason she finds for the prevalence of women's indirect rather than direct violence is their limited agency, as women were not allowed to enter the primary groups tasked with murder due to their gender.[45] This finding underscores the willingness of women to act violently, frequently resulting in physical violence, but that their constrained agency often shaped the outlet of such violent urges to by indirect rather than direct. Similar to Enloe's emphasis on consequences, Brown argues that "indirect violence is no less dangerous or murderous than direct violence".[46]

Research on women in Nazi Germany further highlights women's agency, as the "women who followed Hitler, like the men, did so from conviction, opportunism, and active choice".[47] Just as in Rwanda, the violent nature that this active choice to support a violent movement took was shaped by context and ranged from committing murder, everyday violence against prisoners in concentration and death camps, to enabling and supporting the violence of their husbands and sons.[48] Notably, historian Wendy Lower shows the significance of imperial

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[42] Brown, *Gender and the Genocide in Rwanda*, 1.
[43] Ibid., 94.
[44] Ibid., 95.
[45] Ibid., 95.
[46] Ibid., 100.
[47] Koonz, *Mothers in the Fatherland*, 5.
[48] Elissa Mailänder Koslov, *Female SS Guards and Workaday Violence: The Majdanek Concentration Camp, 1942–1944* (East Lansing, MI: Michigan State University Press, 2015); Lower, *Hitler's Furies*.

ideologies in shaping women's actions. Focusing on the multiple types of violence committed by German women in eastern Europe, including outright and public murder, she highlights their role as "agents of Nazi empire-building".[49] This position was only assigned to them due to their gender and thus equation with a civilising force, yet conversely also provided them with an unusual scope for physical violence, as civilising and destruction are inherently connected in any empire. The role of gender in (racialised) ideologies of violence is reiterated in Kathleen Blee's study of the significance of women in the Ku Klux Klan. Thus, she finds that "the women's Klan of the 1920s was not only a way to promote racist, intolerant, and xenophobic policies but also a social setting in which to enjoy their own racial and religious privileges".[50] Not only does Blee underscore the unique agency and power that racialised and patriarchal ideologies provide for white women, but also that women used this to play a significant role in shaping the Klan's activities and recruitment, enabling them to assert their own political agenda.[51] Precisely the multiplicity of contexts from which these insights stem highlights the relevance of gendered and racialised ideologies and contexts for understanding how women shaped their own roles within violent cultures, including empires.

This paper is therefore shaped by Smeulers' conclusion: "it is important that it (research) is gender sensitive but not stereotyped. We, in other words, need to take the context and specifics of the context in which women operate into account. This context can constrain their choices (just like it does for men) but that does not mean that they lack agency."[52] This points to a certain ambiguity, which is difficult to grasp but is precisely therefore necessary to grapple with the complex relationship between women and violence. Going forward, both women's ability to act as violently as men and a consciousness of their actions within constrained spaces of agency will be at the heart of this proposed research approach. Thus, the context of empire and a deep understanding of women's position within it must function as the basis of any research into women's role in colonial violence. In my proposed approach, I suggest building on top of that foundation using Bourgois' and Scheper-Hughes' concept of the continuum of violence, which serves as a framework to conceptualise the multiple types of violence women in the colonies were engaged in and the complex interactions of such violent actions.

[49] Lower, *Hitler's Furies*, 7.
[50] Blee, *Women of the Klan*, 1.
[51] Ibid., 3–4.
[52] Smeulers, "Female Perpetrators," 251.

Women's Role in the Colonial Context: *Kulturträgerin* and the White Woman's Burden

Prior to delving into the conceptual framework for dealing with acts of violence, this section is dedicated to the groundwork of feminist work, which highlights women's ability to act like men whilst acknowledging their constrained agency. This section will therefore outline women's role in the colonial context and show how this shaped women's spaces for agency and thus also their role in colonial violence. Whilst the former is based on existing research, using the case studies of British and German empires, the latter is largely based on logical conclusion I draw from this research, as no studies have yet been dedicated to researching women's role in colonial violence. As such, the considerations of the impact of women's constrained agency on their role in colonial violence is imagined as mapping out logical spaces for future enquiries on women's violence in empire.

Feminist postcolonial scholars like Vron Ware have pointed out the need to analyse and historically understand the construction of white femininity through deconstructing its relationship to racialised hierarchies of difference.[53] With this in mind, it becomes obvious how women's roles in the colonies were deeply engrained with racial fears and hierarchies. As postcolonial literary scholar Edward Said famously pointed out, the Other is often depicted not in order to understand the Orient, but rather to serve as a foil for the Occident, whiteness, and European self-identification.[54] Thus, racial hierarchies also lay at the foundation of establishing women's role in the colonies, as they were given a special position in colonial ideologies based on the purportedly inherent feminine characteristics of upholding civility and culture. Their reproductive capacity to bear white children further strengthened white women's position in the colonies based on racialised fears and hierarchies.

German women who went to the colonies were described as *Kulturträgerinnen*, which translates literally as (female) carriers of culture.[55] By the end of the nineteenth century, culture in German had a twofold meaning and was semantically connected to race, as biological-Darwinist conceptions of race had

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[53] Vron Ware, "Moments of Danger: Race, Gender, and Memories of Empire," *History and Theory* 31, no. 4 (1992): 116–137, doi: 10.2307/2505418.

[54] Edward W. Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1978).

[55] Lora Wildenthal, "Race, Gender, and Citizenship in the German Colonial Empire," in *Tensions of Empire: Colonial Cultures in a Bourgeois World*, ed. Frederick Cooper and Ann Laura Stoler (California: University of California Press, 1997).

become entwined with anthropological-cultural interpretations of it. Thus, it was commonly believed that culture was racially determined.[56] The role of *Kulturträgerin* thus held both a racialised and a cultural determination, positioning women as carriers and protectors of German civilisation, culture, and racial markers, namely whiteness. Evidently, this position reasserts patriarchal gender norms, as it draws on the image of women engaged in arts and culture, as inherently civilised and peaceful, and as responsible for domesticity. Moreover, it highlights their role as procreators, including as mothers and thus educators of future German sons. Very similar features are drawn on in the construction of British women's role in empire, which relied on their apparently innate cultural facilities and whiteness figured in terms of purity.[57]

One significant difference between the two contexts is, however, that whilst British women drew on their purportedly unique cultural power to forge spaces for themselves as a civilising force in the colonies, German women never did.[58] This distinguishing feature is further revealed by Antoinette Burton's description of British women's imagined role in empire in terms of the "white woman's burden"; she thereby draws on the phrase "white man's burden" famously coined by Rudyard Kipling to describe the duty of the coloniser to "uplift" and "civilise" the allegedly inferior colonised populations.[59] German woman's role as *Kulturträgerin* saw them as merely maintaining German culture for Germans in their colonies, not as spreading it to indigenous populations. Whilst German women

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[56] Peter Walkenhorst, *Nation – Volk – Rasse: Radikaler Nationalismus im Deutschen Kaiserreich 1890–1914* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2011).

[57] McClintock, *Imperial Leather*, 6; Jeffrey Cox, *Imperial Fault Lines: Christianity and Colonial Power in India, 1818–1940* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2002), 17; Sheryl Nestel, "(Ad) Ministering Angels: Colonial Nursing and the Extension of Empire in Africa," *Journal of Medical Humanities* 19, no. 4 (1998): 257–277, here 265, doi: 10.1023/A:1024908110021; Antoinette M. Burton, "The White Woman's Burden: British Feminists and the Indian Woman, 1865–1915," *Women's Studies International Forum* 13, no. 4 (1990): 295–308, here 295–297, doi: 10.1016/0277-5395(90)90027-U; Jane Haggis, "Gendering Colonialism or Colonising Gender? Gendering Women's Studies Approaches to White Women and the History of British Colonialism," *Women's Studies International Forum*, 13, 105–115, here 106.

[58] Catherine Hall, *Civilising Subjects: Colony and Metropole in the English Imagination, 1830–1867* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002); Rhonda Anne Semple, *Missionary Women: Gender, Professionalism, and the Victorian Idea of Christian Mission* (Rochester, NY: Boydell Press, 2003); Susan Thorne, *Congregational Missions and the Making of an Imperial Culture in Nineteenth-Century England* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1999); Jane Rendall, "The Condition of Women, Women's Writing and the Empire in Nineteenth-Century Britain," in *At Home with the Empire: Metropolitan Culture and the Imperial World*, ed. Catherine Hall and Sonya O. Rose (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 101–121, here 106.

[59] Burton, "The White Woman's Burden"; See also Haggis, "Gendering Colonialism or Colonising Gender?,"161.

were involved in missionary activities, mainstream German activists never drew on the same legitimation of spreading civilisation as British ones did.[60] Regardless of this difference, both British and German contexts relied heavily on gendered expectations of women in creating their purported role in their respective colonies.

Lora Wildenthal's research has shown how colonial women's organisations and individual activist women based in Germany used the gendered role assigned to women to elevate their agency in matters of empire.[61] Similar arguments have been made for British colonialism, as women were also shown to elevate their gendered role in empire by highlighting racialised stereotypes.[62] The centrality of racialised hierarchies to European women's power in the colonies becomes evident, as their idealised role as protector of German or British culture and white racial purity can only ever be significant in the context of racialised fears. Specifically, Wildenthal documents how colonial activist women in Germany found agency for women in the German empire by highlighting the alleged threat posed by contact between white men and indigenous populations. The fear that they drew on are epitomised by the terms *verkaffern* ("going native"), "degeneration", and "miscegenation".[63]

Notably, each of these fears is found in essentially all European colonial contexts, with similarities being shown here between British and German empires. The concept of *verkaffern*, akin to the phrase "going native" in British colonial contexts, refers to the fear that Europeans would become less European and more like the racially inferior indigenous populations through long stays in the colonies and too much contact to European culture and civilisation.[64] "Degeneration" refers to a similar fear but was often connected to theories on climate

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[60] Lora Wildenthal et al., "Forum: The German Colonial Imagination," *German History* 26, no. 2 (2008): 251–271, doi: 10.1093/gerhis/ghn005.

[61] Wildenthal, *German Women for Empire, 1884–1945*; Lora Wildenthal, "Rasse und Kultur: Frauenorganisationen in der deutschen Kolonialbewegung des Kaiserreichs," in *Phantasiereiche: Zur Kulturgeschichte des deutschen Kolonialismus*, ed. Birthe Kundrus (Frankfurt am Main: Campus, 2003), 202–219; Wildenthal, "Race, Gender, and Citizenship in the German Colonial Empire."

[62] Rendall, "The Condition of Women"; Burton, "The White Woman's Burden."

[63] Wildenthal, "Rasse und Kultur," 278–279.

[64] Walgenbach, "Emanzipation als koloniale Fiktion," 61; Eva Bischoff, "'Heimischwerden deutscher Art und Sitte' – Power, Gender, and Diaspora in the Colonial Contest," *Itinerario* 37, no. 1 (2013): 43–58, here 46–47, doi: 10.1017/S0165115313000259; Anette Dietrich, *Weisse Weiblichkeiten: Konstruktionen von 'Rasse' und Geschlecht im deutschen Kolonialismus* (Bielefeld: Transcript, 2007), 200; Felix Axster, "Männlichkeit als Groteske. Koloniale (Un-)Ordnung auf Bildpostkarten um 1900," Themenportal Europäische Geschichte, 2017, accessed February 2, 2022, http://www.europa.clio-online.de/essay/id/fdae-1708; Ann Laura Stoler and Frederick Cooper, "Between Metropole and Colony: Rethinking a Research Agenda," in *Tensions of Empire: Colonial Cultures in a Bourgeois*

and how lengthy exposures to more southerly climates leads to degeneration amongst white people; due to the influence of Darwinist racial thought, this was often figured as becoming more like People of Colour. In the British empire, this often resulted in parents sending their children back to Britain for their schooling and the belief that one must regularly return to Britain to avoid "degeneration".[65] "Miscegenation" describes the racist fear related to children being born from sexual relations between white and indigenous populations, as these caused difficulties for strictly binary racialised hierarchies.[66] In both British and German imperial contexts strict laws were put into place to try and stop such sexual relations. Often, these came at a similar time as European women's arrival in the colonies, as it could then be argued that white men could and thus should only have sexual relations with white women in order to safeguard the continued racial purity of the colonisers.[67] For example, "in the mid-eighteenth century, up to 90 per cent of British men in India were married to Indians or Anglo-Indians, but, by the mid-nineteenth century, intermarriage had virtually ceased".[68]

World, ed. Frederick Cooper and Ann Laura Stoler (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1997), 1–56, here 5; von Joeden-Forgey, "Women and the Herero Genocide," 318.

65 McClintock, *Imperial Leather*, 232–257; Harald Fischer-Tiné and Susanne Gehrmann, "Introduction: Empires, Boundaries, and the Production of Difference," in *Empires and Boundaries: Rethinking Race, Class, and Gender in Colonial Settings*, ed. Harald Fischer-Tiné and Susanne Gehrmann, Routledge Studies in Cultural History (New York: Routledge, 2009), 1–22, here 12; Bischoff, "'Heimischwerden deutscher Art und Sitte'," 46; Anna Davin, "Imperialism and Motherhood," in *Tensions of Empire: Colonial Cultures in a Bourgeois World*, ed. Frederick Cooper and Ann Laura Stoler (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1997), 87–151; Nestel, 265; J. Howell and others, "Nursing the Tropics: Nurses as Agents of Imperial Hygiene," *Journal of Public Health*, 35.2 (2013), 338–341, here 339, doi: 10.1093/pubmed/fdt016.

66 Nicola J. Cooper, "Gendering the Colonial Enterprise: La Mère-Patrie and Maternalism in France and French Indochina," in *Empires and Boundaries: Rethinking Race, Class, and Gender in Colonial Settings*, ed. Harald Fischer-Tiné and Susanne Gehrmann (New York: Routledge, 2009), 129–145, here 134–135; Adele Perry, *On the Edge of Empire: Gender, Race, and the Making of British Columbia, 1849–1871* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2001), 3–7, 139; Fischer-Tiné and Gehrmann, "Introduction," 12; Walkenhorst, *Nation – Volk – Rasse*, 102–103; Jürgen Zimmerer, *Deutsche Herrschaft über Afrikaner: staatlicher Machtanspruch und Wirklichkeit im kolonialen Namibia* (Münster: Lit, 2001), 70–81; Walgenbach, "Emanzipation als koloniale Fiktion," 49–50; Krista O'Donnell, "Home, Nation, Empire: Domestic Germanness and Colonial Citizenship," in *The Heimat Abroad: The Boundaries of Germanness*, ed. Krista O'Donnell, Renate Bridenthal, and Nancy Ruth Reagin (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 2005), 40–57; Willeke Sandler, "Deutsche Heimat in Afrika: Colonial Revisionism and the Construction of Germanness through Photography," *Journal of Women's History* 25, no. 1 (2013): 37–61, here 46, doi: 10.1353/jowh.2013.0000.

67 Bischoff, "'Heimischwerden deutscher Art und Sitte'," 46–47.

68 Alison Blunt, "Imperial Geographies of Home: British Domesticity in India, 1886–1925," *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers* 24, no. 4 (1999): 421–440, here 426, doi: 10.1111/j.0020-2754.1999.00421.x.

European women were able to underscore the significant role they could play in the colonies by drawing on patriarchal gender norms and elevating their significance through racialised fears based on cultural or sexual contact between indigenous and European people in colonial spaces. Indeed, Ann Laura Stoler has pointed out that sharp contrasts between different European colonial powers and their racial policies are outlined in conventional historiography, but that their striking similarities in racial discourse are often overlooked.[69] Thus, whilst German and British empires were different, the racialised fears European women drew on in order to forge spaces of agency for themselves in the colonies are remarkably similar.

In Germany, women's role in the colonies was thereby described as *Kulturträgerin* – (female) carrier of culture. In Britain, women were similarly depicted as uniquely able to carry and uphold British civilisation and whiteness in a beleaguered colonial context. In both cases European women therefore relied on racial fears and hierarchies to maintain their role in empire.[70] These insights reveal how central racism was to women's position in the colonies. One can therefore extrapolate that women undoubtedly played a significant role in strengthening and shaping racialised fears, as these were one of the main sources of agency for white women in the colonies. This must be understood in the context of colonial violence. Both in German and in British empire racism legitimated and inherently shaped all forms of colonial violence, ranging from different legal systems to everyday, cultural, state, and settler violence.[71] Therefore, studying women's role

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[69] Stoler, "Sexual Affronts and Racial Frontiers," 199.

[70] Wildenthal et al., "Forum: The German Colonial Imagination," 263–264.

[71] See for example Partha Chatterjee, *The Nation and Its Fragments: Colonial and Postcolonial Histories* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993); Radha Kumar, "Seeing like a Policeman: Everyday Violence in British India, c. 1900–1950," in *Violence, Colonialism and Empire in the Modern World*, ed. Philip Dwyer and Amanda Nettelbeck (Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018), 131–149; Kim A Wagner, "Savage Warfare: Violence and the Rule of Colonial Difference in Early British Counterinsurgency," *History Workshop Journal* 85 (Spring 2018), 217–237, doi: 10.1093/hwj/dbx053; Deana Heath, "Colonial Violence," in *Using Primary Sources: A Practical Guide for Students*, ed. Jon Hogg (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2021); Michael T. Taussig, *Shamanism, Colonialism, and the Wild Man: A Study in Terror and Healing* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1986); Richard N. Price, "The Psychology of Colonial Violence," in *Violence, Colonialism and Empire in the Modern World*, ed. Philip Dwyer and Amanda Nettelbeck (Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018), 25–52; Philip Dwyer and Amanda Nettelbeck, "'Savage Wars of Peace': Violence, Colonialism and Empire in the Modern World," in *Violence, Colonialism and Empire in the Modern World*, ed. Philip Dwyer and Amanda Nettelbeck (Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018), 1–22; Zimmerer, *Deutsche Herrschaft über Afrikaner*; Marie A. Muschalek, *Violence as Usual: Policing and the Colonial State in German Southwest Africa* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2019); Thorne, *Congregational Missions*; George Steinmetz, *Devil's Handwriting: Precoloniality and the German Colonial State in Qingdao, Samoa, and Southwest Africa* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press,

in shaping, reiterating and strengthening racialised hierarchies in the context of their gender is an important step to understanding their role in colonial violence.

At the same time, the role assigned to women in the colonies relied on maintaining idealised images of women as peaceful, cultured, and important for maintaining their husband's well-being.[72] For this reason, their space of endorsed agency was less likely to fall amongst physical violence, but rather in other forms of violence that enabled women to maintain their purported purity. Whilst women certainly did not always act wholly in accordance to patriarchal expectations, they had to be aware that their physically violent actions were more likely to be criticised. In German South-West Africa, for example, a German woman was put on trial for the murder of an indigenous servant and received great public backlash for her actions, unlike any that similar crimes of German men received.[73] Thus, as Sjoberg and Gentry would point out, women were certainly able to act in the same violent manner as men in the colonies, but the risk they took by doing so was significantly greater as they were more likely to become ostracised. This was not because their actions resulted in the suffering of indigenous people, but solely because their actions did not conform to gendered expectations.

Boundaries and Border Guards

Due to the role of women in upholding racial hierarchies in colonial contexts, their function in marking, maintaining, and policing racialised boundaries between coloniser and colonised has often been highlighted. In particular in Ann Laura Stoler and Frederick Cooper's work the concept of boundaries has been picked up to describe colonial relationships and their significance to colonial politics and policies.[74] Central to their work is the acknowledgement that racialised boundaries were frequently depicted as rigid to reinforce idealised images of a colonial order. These depictions however did not reflect the complex lived reality in the colonies, where the tenuous nature of racialised boundaries lay at the heart of colonial fears and violence.[75] The edited volume *Empires and*

2007); Jürgen Osterhammel, *Kolonialismus: Geschichte – Formen – Folgen*, 6th ed. (München: Beck, 2009); Matthias Häussler, *Der Genozid an den Herero: Krieg, Emotion und Extreme Gewalt in "Deutsch-Südwestafrika"* (Weilerswist: Velbrück Wissenschaft, 2018); Klaus Bachmann, *Genocidal Empires: German Colonialism in Africa and the Third Reich* (Berlin: Peter Lang, 2018).

[72] Haggis, "Gendering Colonialism or Colonising Gender?," 105.

[73] Martha Mamozai, *Komplizinnen* (Reinbek bei Hamburg: Rowohlt, 1990), 66.

[74] Stoler and Cooper, "Between Metropole and Colony."

[75] *Tensions of Empire: Colonial Cultures in a Bourgeois World*, ed. Frederick Cooper and Ann Laura Stoler (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1997).

Boundaries: Rethinking Race, Class, and Gender in Colonial Settings showcases in multiple contexts how imperial order was sought to be established through rigid hierarchies that ran along racial, class, and gendered lines.[76] Precisely because other factors like gender and class also influenced hierarchies, racial hierarchies became a source of power for white women in the colonies. Furthermore, their prescribed role as *Kulturträgerin* or protector of Britishness in the colonies depended on their maintenance of strict racialised boundaries, as their bodies and actions became markers for racialised boundaries. Women's role was therefore to strictly delineate and uphold boundaries that were, in fact, inevitably tenuous due to the close and regular contact between indigenous and European populations in the colonies.[77]

In the case of Germany, the edited volume *The Heimat Abroad: Boundaries of Germanness* details the significance of boundaries in particular in the liminal spaces of a nation, including linguistic enclaves or colonies.[78] In the multiple case studies therein discussed it becomes apparent how the setting of boundaries and attempts at upholding them in colonies makes them the ideal locus for setting the boundaries on Germanness. This is because their geographic distance from the centre of the German homeland and the inevitable close contact with other population groups makes it possible to demarcate difference and thus delineate what makes somebody German. Thus, boundaries must be understood as something particularly relevant in the colonies and of great significance to national identity. German women's importance in setting boundaries, due to their role as keepers of whiteness and German culture, therefore elevated their position within the nation and the colonies and became a central source of their power.

Catherine Hall studied the role of intersectional hierarchies in the making of the English Imagination, in a reference to Benedict Anderson's theory on the imagined community.[79] She claims that whilst class and gender were certainly crucial, "questions of race and ethnicity were also always present in the nineteenth century, foundational to English forms of classification and relations of power".[80] By tracing connections between the colony and the so-called

[76] Harald Fischer-Tiné and Susanne Gehrmann, eds., *Empires and Boundaries: Rethinking Race, Class, and Gender in Colonial Settings* (New York: Routledge, 2009).
[77] Stoler, "Sexual Affronts and Racial Frontiers."
[78] *The Heimat Abroad: The Boundaries of Germanness*, ed. Krista O'Donnell, Renate Bridenthal, and Nancy Ruth Reagin (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 2005).
[79] Hall, *Civilising Subjects*; Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, rev. ed (London: Verso, 1983).
[80] Hall, *Civilising Subjects*, 8.

"metropole", Hall finds that "identities are constructed within power relations, and that which is external to an identity, the 'outside', marks the absence or lack which is constitutive of its presence".[81] This Saidian approach underscores how marking difference, in this case racial, was crucial to forming an English identity. Just as in the German case, establishing and maintaining difference through boundaries therefore became a national imperative and one in which women's role as child-bearers and civilising force gained importance.[82] It can therefore be conjectured that women were deeply invested in upholding, maintaining, and policing racialised boundaries in order to reinforce their position in the colonies. The establishment and daily reiteration of these boundaries almost certainly required violence, whether on a discursive, everyday, or physical level.

Thus, European women's bodies in the colonies have been conceived as boundary markers and their actions as those of border guards. In the German context, Eva Bischoff argued that "both the colony's administration as well as the activists regarded German women as corporeal boundary markers, who would physically police the borders of the settlers' body politic".[83] This was to be done through their mere presence, which should reacquaint German men with German culture and prevent them from having sexual relations with anyone but white women. Looking at Empire in India, Sikata Banerjee describes muscular nationalism, whose "focus on the purity and chastity of female bodies stems from their role as border guards. By border guards I mean the notion that the boundaries separating 'we the people' from 'them' are represented by chaste women's bodies".[84] This is related closely to Elshtain's conception of "beautiful souls" and its prevalence in Western thought. Women's mere presence certainly does not make them violent. Yet, I would argue that European women were deeply aware that racialised boundaries provided them with their main source of power in the colonies and that they were willing to act violently to publicly demonstrate their role. However, as their spaces of agency were limited in particular due to their reliance of a gendered vision of idealised womanhood, this violence was unlikely to frequently have taken overt physical forms. Rather, it was likely to have taken on non-physical forms, either through discursive

[81] Ibid., 9.
[82] Catherine Hall and Sonya O. Rose, "Introduction: Being at Home with the Empire," in *At Home with the Empire: Metropolitan Culture and the Imperial World*, ed. Catherine Hall and Sonya O. Rose (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 1–31.
[83] Bischoff, "'Heimischwerden deutscher Art und Sitte'," 47.
[84] Banerjee, *Muscular Nationalism*, 7–8.

violence or by legitimating or calling for physical violence by men. Additionally, the violence will likely have occurred within the home, a space deeply connected to feminine agency and responsibility.

How the Private Is Political: Forging Domesticity in the Colonies

One of the main ways in which class played a role in forging hierarchies was by providing a roadmap for what British or German civilisation and culture should look like, and therefore also the way in which domesticity was to be performed in the colonies. Thus, upholding bourgeois norms was an imperative for legitimating a woman's role in the colonies and was largely measured by the way in which her household was maintained. Both in German and in British contexts, there were clear images of how a bourgeois household should look and the role of women in the colonies was to replicate the German or British household to reassert national sentiments and legitimate racial superiority.[85] Thus, in both contexts class played a role in which women were actively supported in moving to the colonies, whether as missionaries or as settlers.[86] The household therefore became a political space, as it was where national identities and therefore also colonial legitimacy was cemented. Home life in the colonies has therefore been described as "a microcosm of the state and society",[87] a concept taken further

[85] Walgenbach, "Emanzipation als koloniale Fiktion"; Dietrich, *Weisse Weiblichkeiten*; Nancy Reagin, "The Imagined Hausfrau: National Identity, Domesticity, and Colonialism in Imperial Germany," *The Journal of Modern History* 73, no. 1 (2001): 54–86, doi: 10.1086/319879; Bischoff, "'Heimischwerden deutscher Art und Sitte'"; Volker Langbehn, "The Visual Representation of Blackness During German Imperialism Around 1900," in *German Colonialism and National Identity*, ed. Michael Perraudin and Jürgen Zimmerer (New York: Routledge, 2011), 90–100; O'Donnell, "Home, Nation, Empire"; Blunt, "Imperial Geographies of Home"; Christian Geulen, "'The Final Frontier...' Heimat, Nation und Kolonie um 1900: Carl Peters," in *Phantasiereiche: Zur Kulturgeschichte des deutschen Kolonialismus*, ed. Birthe Kundrus (Frankfurt am Main: Campus, 2003), 35–55; *At Home with the Empire: Metropolitan Culture and the Imperial World*, ed. Catherine Hall and Sonya O. Rose (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006); Clare Midgley, "Bringing the Empire Home: Women Activists in Imperial Britain, 1790s–1930s," in *At Home with the Empire: Metropolitan Culture and the Imperial World*, ed. Catherine Hall and Sonya O. Rose (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 239–250; Elizabeth Dillenburg, "Domestic Servant Debates and the Fault Lines of Empire in the Early Twentieth-Century South Africa and New Zealand," in *New Perspectives on the History of Gender and Empire: Comparative and Global Approaches*, ed. Ulrike Lindner and Dörte Lerp (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2018), 179–207; Thorne, *Congregational Missions*; Patricia Grimshaw and Peter Sherlock, "Women and Cultural Exchange," in *Missions and Empire*, ed. Norman Etherington (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 173–193.

[86] Grimshaw and Sherlock, "Women and Cultural Exchange," 184–185; Midgley, "Bringing the Empire Home," 241; Dietrich, *Weisse Weiblichkeiten*, 308–309.

[87] Dillenburg, "Domestic Servant Debates," 184.

by Eva Bishoff's claim that "notions of home and domesticity fulfilled a similar function: they separated European colonists from their colonial subjects, both physically and socially".[88]

Due to gendered norms, the private sphere was the woman's domain of responsibility; in colonial contexts, this meant that European women were responsible both for maintaining bourgeois standards and racial boundaries within the home. As postcolonial feminist scholars have shown, we must extend the spaces of enquiry into colonial violence beyond the public and into the private sphere.[89] The imperative of maintaining racialised boundaries and a bourgeois household – both reliant on the subservience of indigenous people and servants – almost certainly bred a variety of forms of violence. This is particularly to be expected, as the domestic was a space of intimate contact between the coloniser and the colonised, one where boundaries were most likely to be blurred and thus most rigidly reasserted.[90] Ann Laura Stoler thus prefers the terms "intimate sphere", as this highlights that the interactions occurring between colonisers and indigenous servants, labourers, and child-carers within the home were more personal and vulnerable, away from the overt public gaze even whilst the home was understood as a space where national identities were forged.[91] Notably, Stoler has indicated that these were the spaces where "domination was routinized and rerouted in intimacies".[92] Clearly, the household was a politically significant space in the colonies due to its imperative for reasserting racialised boundaries. As such, it was a space where German and British women were expected to mark, police, and enforce racial domination on a daily basis. The household or, as Stoler calls it, the "intimate sphere", is therefore a crucial space to investigate not only women's agency – which has been done extensively – but also women's role in colonial violence.

The Continuum of Violence

Thus far in this paper, two types of violence have largely been discussed: physical violence (often falsely connoted solely with men) and non-physical

[88] Eva Bischoff, "Being at Home: Intersections of Race, Class, and Gender in Settler Colonial Australia," in *New Perspectives on the History of Gender and Empire: Comparative and Global Approaches*, ed. Ulrike Lindner and Dörte Lerp (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2018), 209–238, here 209.
[89] Agathangelou and Turcotte, "Reworking Postcolonial Feminisms," 44.
[90] Stoler, "Tense and Tender Ties," 842–843.
[91] Ann Laura Stoler, "Matters of Intimacy as Matters of State: A Response," *The Journal of American History* 88, no. 3 (2001), 893–897, doi: 10.2307/2700391.
[92] Stoler, "Tense and Tender Ties," 864.

types of violence. Drawing on Enloe's method of taking women seriously, I have argued that women in the colonies must be seen on the one hand as being capable of the same violence as men, whilst on the other hand acknowledging the ways in which their constrained agency likely changed the forms of violence they were committing. Subsequently, I demonstrated how their role as *Kulturträgerin* (in Germany) or idealised image as a beautiful soul (in Britain) meant their violence was deeply connected to intersectional imperial hierarchies and thus likely to have been committed in order to maintain racialised boundaries – which, in turn, reasserted white women's significance to a colonial order. Additionally, I showed how the role assigned to them in a patriarchal society meant their agency and significance lay in the domestic sphere, wherefore it is important to look at precisely this space when researching women's colonial violence. Now that I have outlined how context should shape research on women's colonial violence – in terms of motivating factors, likely forms, and spaces of violence – I will next propose how to categorise and interpret such violence.

In order to conceptualise multiple types of violence and highlight their significance, the continuum of violence outlined by anthropologists Nancy Scheper-Hughes and Philippe Bourgois is instructive.[93] Their concept leaves space for the opaque nature of violence, whilst embracing the ability to name and research specific forms of violence and its relation to other violence. Thus, their explanation of the concept begins with the insight that, "violence is a slippery concept – nonlinear, productive, destructive, and reproductive. It is mimetic, like imitative magic or homeopathy. 'Like produces like,' that much we know. Violence gives birth to itself. So we can rightly speak of chains, spirals, and mirrors of violence – or, as we prefer – a continuum of violence."[94] At the centre of their conceptualisation is the belief that all forms of violence impact other forms of violence. This elevates the importance of each type of violence, inculcates each form of violence with a unique position in the continuum of violence, and reiterates the necessity to see violence as inevitably connected in complex ways to other violence. Scheper-Hughes and Bourgois are therefore unsurprisingly proponents of understanding violence in its broadest sense, arguing: "Violence can never be understood solely in terms of its physicality – force, assault, or the infliction of pain – alone. Violence also includes assaults on the personhood, dignity, sense

[93] Nancy Scheper-Hughes and Philippe Bourgois, "Introduction: Making Sense of Violence," in *Violence in War and Peace: An Anthology*, ed. Nancy Scheper-Hughes and Philippe Bourgois (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2004).

[94] Ibid., 1.

of worth or value of the victim. The social and cultural dimensions of violence are what gives violence its power and meaning."[95]

Hence, the continuum of violence enables the concretisation of research into multiple connected forms of violence beyond the simple dichotomy of physical and non-physical violence. In this way, all types of violence and their consequences can be researched in depth and the significance of under-researched forms of violence highlighted. In particular this latter element aligns with the previously discussed feminist agenda that seeks to move research on perpetration beyond masculinised conceptions of physical violence. In the colonial context, the continuum of violence therefore shows a symbiosis with my proposition to focus on women's roles in establishing and maintaining racialised boundaries and violence occurring in the "intimate sphere". Indeed, the continuum of violence has been usefully applied to multiple feminist research agendas – even if largely to investigate gender-based violence.[96] This application has rested on the acknowledgement that various types of violence must all be taken seriously and inform other types of violence. This connection is important for feminist agendas focusing on violence against women, as it shows how often neglected or subtler forms of violence – such as discursive, structural, or symbolic violence – are important to understanding how more obvious forms of violence like femicide or sexual violence occur. I will demonstrate how the continuum of violence is not only useful to comprehend violence against women, but can be used as a conceptual framework to understand women's role in colonial violence.

Just as feminists do in the context of violence against women, I argue that these subtler forms of violence are more likely to be committed by women and yet must also be understood as deeply significant to colonial violence. Whilst studies focused on violence against women may focus on the denigration of women in a patriarchal order, I propose that research into colonial violence must actively integrate existing research on the denigration of a specific group – in this

[95] Ibid., 1.

[96] Lorraine Bayard de Volo and Lynn K. Hall, "'I Wish All the Ladies Were Holes in the Road': The US Air Force Academy and the Gendered Continuum of Violence," *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 40, no. 4 (2015): 865–889, doi: 10.1086/680328; Denisa Kostovicova, Vesna Bojicic-Dzelilovic, and Marsha Henry, "Drawing on the Continuum: A War and Post-War Political Economy of Gender-Based Violence in Bosnia and Herzegovina," *International Feminist Journal of Politics* 22, no. 2 (2020): 250–272, doi: 10.1080/14616742.2019.1692686; Ulrike Krause, "A Continuum of Violence? Linking Sexual and Gender-Based Violence during Conflict, Flight, and Encampment," *Refugee Survey Quarterly* 34, no. 4 (2015), 1–19, doi: 10.1093/rsq/hdv014; Jacqui True, "Continuums of Violence and Peace: A Feminist Perspective," *Ethics & International Affairs* 34, no. 1 (2020): 85–95, doi: 10.1017/S0892679420000064.

case indigenous populations – to legitimate and reinforce violence in a colonial context. Evidently, the continuum of violence functions as a lynchpin, demonstrating the significance in studying each type of violence on its own, whilst highlighting the importance of each type of violence through its impact on other forms of violence. I therefore argue that more research on women's role in colonial violence must systematically analyse multiple forms of violence and then, in turn, research the complex entanglements of such violence. I propose a more comprehensive approach to violence which always places interconnections at the centre of any research agenda. As I will show in selected examples of German and British colonial contexts, this is particularly relevant to understanding how violent colonial cultures formed and changed over time.

The Private Is Political Also Concerns Colonial Violence

As I have already shown, the phrasing of the term "the private is political" also pertains to violence in the colonies. Thus, I propose that European women's roles can be figured as border guards who functioned largely within the private domain, as that was their locus of agency. The ways in which women established, maintained, and policed boundaries of difference can be understood through a continuum of violence. Firstly, women likely re-asserted and shaped hierarchies of difference that underlay and legitimise other forms of colonial violence. This likely involved multiple forms of non-physical violence. In the context of the British feminist movement and its engagement with British India, Antoinette Burton reminds us that "historians must not lose sight of the fact that feminism is and always has been as much a quest for power as a battle for rights".[97] The conclusion Burton draws is that the quest for white women's power "included the construction and domination of Indian women as the female Other by white western feminists".[98] As critical feminists have shown, we must extend this to not only include the repression of the Indian woman, but also of the Indian man, whose usurpation by white woman demonstrated even more clearly that race rather than gender was the most significant ordering hierarchy in the colonies.[99]

Due to the dependence of women on their racial and class identities, they relied on racism to ensure their own space and agency within colonies. The next

[97] Burton, "The White Woman's Burden," 106.
[98] Ibid., 106.
[99] Blunt, "Imperial Geographies of Home," 429–433.

critical reflections that must be drawn from this insight are twofold. Initially, the construction of racialised hierarchies must in and of itself be understood and analysed as a form of violence. Depending on the research area and approach, the establishment and maintenance of racialised hierarchies can be seen as epistemic, normative, or discursive violence. These three forms of violence are all deeply intertwined and relevant to the study of racism, as they highlight that norms, knowledge and belief systems, and the language which transmits these can all be violent in and of themselves. As Claudia Brunner has argued for the case of German colonialism, epistemic questions quickly regress to the shadows as soon as the discussion turns specifically to violence. Yet rather than placing it in the background, researchers must understand the ways in which epistemic violence "makes connections between knowledge, violence, and domination on a global scale recognizable, nameable, and plausible, without appearing as a magic formula of analysis or even of overcoming all violence".[100] The concept of the continuum of violence therefore seems particularly pertinent to the study of colonial structures, as it can help unearth precisely these often overlooked connections between non-physical and physical forms of violence. In this example, the fact that the construction of racialised hierarchies as a non-physical form of violence impacted and legitimated other, physical forms of violence.

The second insight must be that European women did not simply parrot existing discourses, but actively shaped discourses, knowledge, and belief systems, including in the construction of racialised hierarchies. This is particularly likely, because their role in the colonies was so deeply dependent on racialised hierarchies as well as expectations of class and gender. As European women sought to forge a space for themselves in the colonies, they must therefore also have shaped racialised hierarchies in such a way as to profit their own position in the colonies. For German and British empire, much research has already been conducted based on the writings and publications of European women who settled there.[101] Rather than simply seeing such textual documents as a space from

[100] Claudia Brunner, *Epistemische Gewalt: Wissen und Herrschaft in der kolonialen Moderne* (Bielefeld: transcript, 2020), 12, translation by author.

[101] See for example Dillenburg, "Domestic Servant Debates," 186; McClintock, *Imperial Leather*, 252; David Ciarlo, "Picturing Genocide in German Consumer Culture, 1904–10," in *German Colonialism and National Identity*, ed. Michael Perraudin and Jürgen Zimmerer (New York: Routledge, 2011), 69–89, here 69; Jörg Lehmann, "Fraternity, Frenzy, and Genocide in German War Literature, 1906–36," in *German Colonialism and National Identity*, ed. Michael Perraudin and Jürgen Zimmerer (New York: Routledge, 2011), 115–125, here 120; Jürgen Zimmerer, "Kolonialismus und kollektive Identität: Erinnerungsorte der deutschen Kolonialgeschichte," in *Kein Platz an der Sonne: Erinnerungsorte der deutschen Kolonialgeschichte*, ed. Jürgen Zimmerer and

which to extract information, researchers could see these publications as spaces of knowledge production and therefore also of discursive or epistemic violence.

Reminiscent of critical whiteness approaches, Jane Rendall's study of women's writing in nineteenth-century Britain for example shows how women constructed the Other in order to forge a clearly defined space of agency for themselves. Rendall writes:

> These representations were part of the construction of white British middle-class femininity in the early nineteenth century. From the mid-1770s onwards, representations of savage and "Eastern" women were used to signal the superiority of white British femininity by differentiating it from its "others" in the prescriptive literature addressed to young women.[102]

Similarly, Nancy Reagin has shown how German women in German Southwest Africa (GSWA) "included descriptions of their African servants and the African dwellings, which usually surrounded the German homestead and provided a sharp contrast to German housekeeping".[103] Descriptions of the homes of indigenous populations were actively derogatory and contrasted with European domestic spaces to underscore the significance of European women's role in the colonies. Existing research has therefore already indicated that British and German women engaged with and shaped racialised hierarchies of difference in order to foreground their own purportedly innate strengths as white woman. Significant research, as outlined above, has taken the first step in taking women seriously, acknowledging the violence they were a part of, and researching the ways in which such violence shaped and reinforced racialised hierarchies and physical violence in the colonies. Of course, further research in particular into the complex entanglements with other forms of violence would be fruitful to more systematically trace the connections between different forms of violence.

Much recent research has admittedly considered the intersections of race, gender, and class in both German and British empire, highlighting women's

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Marianne Bechhaus-Gerst (Frankfurt am Main: Campus Verlag, 2013), 9–37, here 30; Reagin, "The Imagined Hausfrau"; O'Donnell, "Home, Nation, Empire"; Jean Comaroff and John L. Comaroff, *Of Revelation and Revolution: Christianity, Colonialism, and Consciousness in South Africa*, vol. 1 (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991), 37; Rendall, "The Condition of Women."

102 Rendall, "The Condition of Women," 104.

103 Nancy Reagin, "German Brigadoon? Domesticity and Metropolitan Germans' Perceptions of Auslandsdeutschen in Southwest Africa and Eastern Europe," in *The Heimat Abroad: The Boundaries of Germanness*, ed. Krista O'Donnell, Renate Bridenthal, and Nancy Ruth Reagin (Ann Arbor, MI: The University of Michigan Press, 2005), 248–266, here 251.

relevance to constructing racialised hierarchies – these studies have simply not actively considered women's actions and texts as forms of violence. Yet when it comes to state or structural violence in the colonies, women appear almost non-existent. This is despite European women's undeniable presence in the colonies and therefore also their inevitable engagement with structures of violence, in particular in their daily encounters with indigenous labourers in their homes. Many forms of state violence enabled or structured violence in the household and therefore inevitably involved women's participation.

In GSWA, for example, strict laws introduced after the Herero and Nama genocide (1904–1908) meant that the behaviour and movement of indigenous labourers was rigidly controlled by their employers. As German husbands often had to leave their German wives at home for long stretches whilst on business trips, this meant that they were responsible for maintaining rigid rules of behaviour in their absence. Marie Muschalek's detailed work on the German police force in GSWA has shown the arbitrariness of law as well as the many options open to settlers to use violence against their indigenous labourers. The forms open to them included "a penalty in a criminal case, a disciplinary measure within a military or state institution, or a paternal chastisement (*väterliches Züchtigungsrecht*), that is a civil, customary right".[104] Additionally, the police could be called on to discipline the workers for the settlers or to hunt down indigenous people staying in remote areas to avoid being forced into the colonial labour market.[105] These are all ways in which violent colonial structures were deeply embedded in the everyday running of a settler household, as these depended on the control of an indigenous labour force. As such, the involvement of German women in these structures seems inevitable, due to their role in running a settler household, but has as of yet not been researched. This would not only be taking women seriously and adding women into the picture of state violence, but would help uncover the complex, everyday, and violent workings of a settler society, wherein state and settlers had both competing and overlapping interests in particular regarding relations to the indigenous population.

A further form of violence which has gained increasing attention in postcolonial literature is the extreme physical violence in the colonies directed against indigenous peoples. Research on the psyche in particular of settler men has uncovered how racialised fears and uncertainties in new living environments together with a sense of being left to fend for their own interests by the colonial

[104] Muschalek, *Violence as Usual*, 135.
[105] Ibid., 137–139.

state introduced a violent dynamic to many settler societies. This research has underscored the extreme physical brutality that white men settling in the colonies committed.[106] Yet it has as of yet not introduced women into the picture. Individual cases have however cropped up in detailed readings of secondary literature that indicate the relevance of women to this research area. Some commentators on British India suggest that European women's arrival in the colony triggered a shift towards a more violent settler colony, thereby demonstrating the importance of women's role in creating cultures of violence.[107] A case in GSWA similarly suggests that women's presence may have been important for racial antagonisms and violent cultures. The case of the Cramer family became famous both due to a well-reported court case, memoirs, and then also due to its inclusion in the Blue Book published by the British to report of German mismanagement of GSWA after the First World War.[108] In this case, the torture of indigenous servants by the Cramer family, largely due to their belief of being threatened by their servants, highlighted how the wife, Adelheid Cramer, aided the torture of the servants. This included both in her support of the violence, as well as actions such as taking off the clothes of the servants prior to their torture. It therefore seems that considering European women's role in supporting acts of physical violence is an important avenue of research. It would further develop a continuum of violence by intertwining multiple forms of physical and non-physical violence.

Keeping in mind Enloe's approach to taking women seriously, I argue that it is just as important to consider physical violence perpetrated wholly by European women in the colonies. Martha Mamozai has pointed out that there are documented cases of German women single-handedly murdering indigenous people, such as the cases of farmer Elisabeth Ohlsen or Maria von Weiherr.[109] Mentioned as a side note by Mamozai, these cases merit deeper research and demonstrate the need for further research into physical violence perpetrated by European women in the colonies.

Conclusion

Women have not been completely ignored in research on colonialism in the last centuries, as multiple feminisms have demonstrated the complex

[106] Price, "The Psychology of Colonial Violence"; Häussler, *Der Genozid an den Herero*.
[107] Blunt, "Imperial Geographies of Home," 423.
[108] Jeremy Silvester and Jan-Bart Gewald, *Words Cannot Be Found: German Colonial Rule in Namibia: An Annotated Reprint of the 1918 Blue Book* (Leiden: Brill, 2003).
[109] Mamozai, *Komplizinnen*, 66.

entanglements of race, gender, and class for empire. There is a rich resource of feminist scholarship that critically analyses white women's role in colonial violence, which demonstrates the importance of this research. It also, however, reveals the many complexities that shape the field and therefore require more dedicated critical scholarship. I suggest that a fruitful avenue for future research would be a systematic approach to the study of white women's violence, which combines postcolonial feminisms with feminist IR.

Drawing in particular on Cynthia Enloe's work, I argue that taking women seriously in the context of violence means understanding that context will inevitably have left women with a constrained agency that shaped the violence they committed, whilst at the same time acknowledging that women were capable of the same violence as men. This opens up an ambiguous space that I believe we must embrace to understand the complexity and multiplicity of white women in empire. Future theoretical contributions to unpack this ambiguity might be able to do so by integrating scholarship from the field of perpetrator studies, which negotiates complex and overlapping roles of individuals within violence.

Research on white women in the colonies has shown that their role was deeply dependent on the construction and maintenance of rigid racialised hierarchies and the creation of bourgeoisie domesticity in a colonial space. I therefore suggest that these present important spaces for research into women's role in colonial violence, as they provided both their space of agency and what their agency depended on. The concept of the continuum of violence lastly functions as a structuring device for further research, highlighting long-term trends and impacts, the importance of studying a multitude of different forms of violence, and the complex connections that exist between them. Drawing on examples from German and British colonialism, I have shown how this conceptual framework opens up spaces for research on women's role in colonial violence in non-physical, state, and physical forms of violence. This solely presents a roadmap or starting point, a suggestion of avenues for future research and a conceptual framework for how such research can usefully be structured for a more comprehensive view on violence, colonial spaces, and women as perpetrators.