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A Queer(er) Genocide Studies

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A Queer(er) Genocide Studies

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How can I continue living in such a town with such people, waiting for someone to beat me or even kill me? You can't even go out on the street without someone giving you mean looks or shouting something at you just because you are not wearing high heels or a short dress.

—Sanja, a lesbian woman from Bosnia and Herzegovina, 2015.¹

Introduction

Since the end of the country's genocide in 1996, life has been difficult for queer people in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Eight people were injured by homophobic protesters at the country's inaugural gay pride festival in 2008. In 2014, a hate group attacked Sarajevo's Queer Film Festival, wounding three. Two years later, a group of men stormed a popular gay bar yelling homophobic slurs, throwing bottles, and threatening to detonate a bomb.²

Anecdotal evidence gathered throughout my travels in the country during 2015, 2016, and 2017 suggests homophobia has steadily worsened since 1996. People I spoke with linked the increasing violence to an uptick in nationalism following the genocide. However, it is difficult to begin confirming their suspicions because little research on the connection between queerness and genocide exists. Matthew Waites' 2018 article "Genocide and Queer Politics" constitutes the most significant contribution to queer understandings of genocide to date. Waites describes his article as "the first systematic critical analysis of genocide with respect to queer politics."³ Waites uses queer theory, specifically as drawn from Foucault and postcolonial studies, to destabilize understandings of groups in genocide discourse. He concludes that if we include sexual orientation and gender identity in our understandings of protected groups, then violence against queer people in Nazi Germany, Uganda, and the Gambia can accurately be described as genocidal.⁴ Waites discusses the heteronormative foundations of both genocidal violence and genocide discourse, but most other research on queer politics and genocide does not go beyond the questions of whether violence against queer people constitutes genocide and if sexual orientation and gender identity should be included in the definitions of vulnerable groups.⁵ While this is a worthwhile discussion, I am also interested in how queerness interacts with and is implicated in genocides already clearly defined as such according to the law, i.e. those directed at racial, religious, national, and ethnic groups. As such, in this paper, I pose the following question: How can scholars of Genocide Studies learn from the queer theory-Genocide Studies nexus?

¹ Masha Durkalić, *My Voice Echoes...* (Sarajevo: CURE Foundation, 2015), 60–61, accessed February 19, 2020, http://fondacijacure.org/uploads/my_voice2_final_print_poslano.pdf.

² "Attack in Art Cinema Kriterion: Prosecutor's Office Must Urgently Prosecute Homophobic Attacks," *Sarajevski Otvoreni Centar*, March 5, 2016, accessed July 27, 2019, <http://soc.ba/en/attack-in-art-cinema-kriterion-prosecutors-office-must-urgently-prosecute-homophobic-attacks/>.

³ Matthew Waites, "Genocide and Global Queer Politics," *Journal of Genocide Research* 20, no. 1 (2018), 64, accessed March 1, 2019, <https://doi.org/10.1080/14623528.2017.1358920>.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 55.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 50; Sue E. Spivey and Christine M. Robinson, "Genocidal Intentions: Social Death and the Ex-Gay Movement," *Genocide Studies and Prevention: An International Journal* 5, no. 1 (2010), 68–88, accessed March 1, 2019, <https://www.utpjournals.press/doi/abs/10.3138/gsp.5.1.68>.

To answer, I demonstrate how three distinct queer theory concepts can be layered with Genocide Studies to reveal novel insights into some of the field's preeminent questions. Specifically, I draw on queer intellectual curiosity, heteronormativity, and reproductive futurism. I begin this article by briefly introducing queer theory. Then, in section one, I contend that Genocide Studies should pay more attention to the empirical experiences of queer people during episodes of genocide. In section two, I argue that when we deploy heteronormativity as an analytic in Genocide Studies, we can improve our understanding of how genocide unfolds and what makes it possible. Finally, in section three, I use reproductive futurism to critique definitions of genocide that obscure queer life. I conclude that connecting queer theory with Genocide Studies yields empirical, analytical, and normative insights into the latter. Deploying queer theory concepts in Genocide Studies ensures the field pays attention to queer lives, something all academic disciplines should strive for, and advances the field's understanding of genocide as a phenomenon.

An Introduction to Queer Theory

Queer theory emerged from LGBT Studies and Women's Studies during the 1990s. In popular culture and conversation, "queer theory" is sometimes used to describe a cogent and cohesive school of thought. However, queer theory lends its name to a group of diverse and, at times, contradictory ideas. As Lauren Berlant and Michael Warner, two of the original queer theorists write, "it [queer theory] cannot be assimilated to a single discourse, let alone a propositional program."⁶ All queer theories and queer theorists, however, share a certain queer sensibility. What do I mean when I say *queer*? Eve Sedgwick defines queer as "the open mesh of possibilities, gaps, overlaps, dissonances and resonances, lapses and excesses of meaning when the constituent elements of anyone's gender, of anyone's sexuality aren't made (or can't be made) to signify monolithically."⁷ Queer is not synonymous with LGBT. Queer is more expansive and, hopefully, travels across time and culture more easily (though not perfectly). Berlant and Warner go on to describe the aspirations of queer theorists to open space for "publics that can afford sex and intimacy in sustained, unchastening ways; publics that can comprehend their own differences of privilege and struggle; publics whose abstract spaces can also be lived in, remembered, hoped for."⁸ I have made it the goal of this paper to contribute to the opening of spaces for queer publics in Genocide Studies.

As I mentioned, queer theory is not one monolithic idea. Thus, I have specified three queer theory concepts I am weaving with Genocide Studies in this paper. I hope that others, upon seeing the utility of building bridges between queer theory and Genocide Studies, bring other queer theories and theorists into the field as well. In section one, I explore queer intellectual curiosity, a term borrowed from International Relations (IR) scholar Cynthia Weber, which she defines as

a method that refuses to take for granted the personal-to-international institutional arrangements, structures of understanding, and practical orientations that figure 'homosexuality' and the 'homosexual.' It investigates how these figurations—these distillations of shared meanings in forms or images—powerfully attach to and detach from material bodies and are powerfully mobilized in international politics, challenging the common assumption that (homo)sexuality is trivial in international politics.⁹

⁶ Lauren Berlant and Michael Warner, "What Does Queer Theory Teach Us About X," *PMLA* 110, no. 3 (1995), 343.

⁷ Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, *Tendencies*, (New York: Routledge, 1998), 8.

⁸ Berlant and Warner, *Queer Theory*, 344.

⁹ Cynthia Weber, *Queer International Relations: Sovereignty, Sexuality and the Will to Knowledge* (Oxford University Press, 2016), 19.

Weber's queer intellectual curiosity is inspired by Cynthia Enloe's feminist curiosity, which lead Enloe to ask: "Where are the women?"¹⁰ When Enloe first posed this question in her 1990s IR classic *Bananas, Beaches, and Bases*, she was interrogating why women and their lives did not appear in research on international politics, and attempted to address this gap. Thankfully, feminist IR has (sort of) moved beyond the issue of empirically including women in scholarship. Queer IR has not. I am not faulting queer IR. To the contrary, I am pointing out the necessity of doing empirical work to answer the question: Where are the queers?¹¹

In section two, I apply the concept of heteronormativity to genocide. Lauren Berlant and Michael Warner named the concept of heteronormativity in their 1998 article "Sex in Public." Heteronormativity identifies the heterosexual couple as the "referent or the privileged example of sexual culture."¹² However, heteronormativity extends beyond the realm of sexual and romantic behavior. All parts of society, its institutions, and its understandings privilege and make compulsory heterosexuality and a binary understanding of gender. "Contexts that have little visible relation to sex practice, such as life narrative and generational identity, can be heteronormative...while in other contexts forms of sex between men and women might not be."¹³ As perceived failures or successes of heteronormativity attach themselves to subjects beyond the sexual and romantic, queerness has the potential to morph and "mutate" into a "metonym" for race, nationality, and religion.¹⁴ Through this process queerness and heteronormativity become integral to the social construction of groups targeted for genocide.

Finally, section three builds from Lee Edelman's concept of reproductive futurism, which he lays out in his 2004 book *No Future*. Of the concepts I am borrowing, reproductive futurism is the most contested amongst queer theorists.¹⁵ Edelman argues "the politics of reproductive futurism" is "the only politics we're permitted to know."¹⁶ While Edelman agrees with other queer theorists that the heterosexual couple holds a privileged role in society, he adds that the Child that that couple produces holds the most privileged position because "the Child has come to embody for us the telos of the social order and come to be seen as the one for whom that order is held in perpetual trust."¹⁷ Our politics and social order are not designed to benefit us, but a future and imaginary Child. We often make extreme sacrifices in the name of the Child. Edelman deems that which subverts the logic of reproductive futurism, queer.¹⁸ Edelman urges readers to adopt what he calls "queer negativity"¹⁹ in order to challenge this social order in which the future is "always purchased at our expense."²⁰

¹⁰ Cynthia H. Enloe, *Bananas, Beaches and Bases: Making Feminist Sense of International Politics*, 2nd ed. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2014), 1.

¹¹ The following pieces include calls for more empirical work and exemplify the potential of queer empirical work in IR and related disciplines: Jamie J. Hagen, "Queering Women, Peace and Security," *International Affairs* 92, no. 2 (2016), 313–332; Melinda W. Moore and John R. Barner, "Sexual Minorities in Conflict Zones: A Review of the Literature," *Aggression and Violent Behavior* 35 (2017), 33–37; Manuela Lavinias Picq and Markus Thiel, eds., *Sexualities in World Politics: How LGBTQ Claims Shape International Relations* (New York: Routledge, 2015); Meredith L. Weiss and Michael J. Bosia, eds., *Global Homophobia: States, Movements, and the Politics of Oppression* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2013).

¹² Lauren Berlant and Michael Warner, "Sex in Public," *Critical Inquiry* 24, no. 2 (1998), 1, accessed May 12, 2019, <https://www.journals.uchicago.edu/doi/10.1086/448884>.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 15.

¹⁴ Rahul Rao, *Out of Time: The Queer Politics of Postcoloniality* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2020), 9.

¹⁵ For an alternate and opposing perspective see José Esteban Muñoz, *Cruising Utopia: The Then and There of Queer Futurity* (New York: New York University Press, 2009).

¹⁶ Lee Edelman, *No Future: Queer Theory and the Death Drive* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2004), 134.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 11.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 3.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 4.

²⁰ *Ibid.*

“Where are the Queers?”: The Need for Empirical Research

An Empirically Grounded Field

Genocide scholars have long relied upon collecting first-hand accounts of events from victims, perpetrators, and bystanders. Along with individuals' narratives, researchers use legal documents, military records, and government communications to reconstruct how and why genocide takes place. Thus, the experiences of witnesses to and victims of genocide carry tremendous weight in both the study of genocide and normative attempts to address it. As the field of Genocide Studies has matured, more scholars have begun to recognize the importance of disaggregating the experiences of people occupying different social positions.²¹ Yet, the unique and specific experiences of queer people during genocide remain absent from this type of research, limiting our understanding of genocidal processes and our ability to support recovery.

While Genocide Studies does not lack more theoretical contributions, empirically based findings currently constitute the bulk of research in the field.²² In large part, this can be attributed to the field's tendency to focus on a series of case studies, primarily from the twentieth century, including the Armenian Genocide, the Holocaust, Cambodia, Rwanda, and the former Yugoslavia.²³ The first generation of genocide scholars attempted to explain the Holocaust using more universal theories. Newer texts focus on case-specific interactions at multiple levels of analysis. Genocide scholars today typically build theoretical insights from “knowledge gained in the archives and in the field.”²⁴ A growing consensus believes genocide is contingent, casting doubt on the need to create a general theory and highlighting the importance of context-specific knowledges.²⁵

Three core texts in Genocide Studies exemplify this tendency: Christopher Browning's *Ordinary Men*, Eric Weitz's *A Century of Genocide*, and Scott Straus' *The Order of Genocide*. In *Ordinary Men*, Browning argues that Germans were driven to commit extreme violence due to the pressures of group socialization. Browning supports this contention with excerpts from the pretrial interrogations of 210 former members of Reserve Police Battalion 101. These records allowed him to analyze demographic information, like age and Nazi party membership, about the members of the battalion. Additionally, 125 of the testimonies were “sufficiently substantive” to allow Browning to reconstruct a detailed narrative of the events that unfolded when Germany ordered Reserve Police Battalion 101 to the killing fields of Poland.²⁶ Weitz similarly relies on the testimonies of individuals in his book. However, he chooses to draw from the “memoirs, literature, and trial transcripts”²⁷ of victims rather than perpetrators. Unwilling to separate narrative from analysis, Weitz argues that “convey[ing] the sheer brutality and horror that people experience as victims,” represents an important part of explaining genocide.²⁸ Turning once again to the perpetrators, Scott Straus' account of the Rwandan Genocide contends that far fewer civilians took part in the violence than previously believed. He bases his findings on in-depth interviews with over 200 convicted perpetrators. Straus

²¹ Peter Balakian, *The Burning Tigris: The Armenian Genocide and American's Response* (New York: HarperCollins e-books, 2003); Adam Jones, “Gendecide and Genocide,” in *Gendecide and Genocide*, ed., Adam Jones (Nashville: Vanderbilt University Press, 2004), 1–38.

²² Martin Shaw, *Genocide and International Relations: Changing Patterns in the Transitions of the Late Modern World* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 26.

²³ Alexander Laban Hinton, “Critical Genocide Studies,” *Genocide Studies and Prevention: An International Journal* 7, no. 1 (2012), 6, accessed February 3, 2019, <http://dx.doi.org/10.3138/gsp.7.1.4>.

²⁴ *Ibid.*

²⁵ Scott Straus, “Second-Generation Comparative Research on Genocide,” *World Politics* 59, no. 3 (2007), 492, accessed February 3, 2019, <https://doi.org/10.1017/S004388710002089X>; Donald Bloxham and A. Dirk Moses eds., *The Oxford Handbook of Genocide Studies* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 5.

²⁶ Christopher R. Browning, *Ordinary Men: Reserve Police Battalion 101 and the Final Solution in Poland* (New York: Harper Perennial, 1998), xvii.

²⁷ Eric D. Weitz, *A Century of Genocide: Utopias of Race and Nation* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2003), 15.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, xiii.

argues that their accounts provide “the best method for generating theoretically relevant information about perpetrators.”²⁹ Plenty of other important works in Genocide Studies rely on individual accounts, like interviews and memoirs, to support their arguments. These works demonstrate the critical role people’s experiences play in shaping how scholars conceptualize and attempt to understand genocide.

Researchers have begun to pay more attention to the ways in which people’s genocide narratives differ according to their social positionings. The difference between male/female, men’s/women’s, masculine/feminine experiences has inspired the most scholarship.³⁰ Within the past thirty years, a sub-field examining “gendered” experiences of genocide has emerged. These scholars’ make the central argument that examining the different ways men and women participate in genocide leads to insights into gender politics and improves our ability to identify genocide.³¹

Studies that look at the empirical differences between men’s and women’s experiences serve two primary functions. First, they draw attention to the disparate ways perpetrators attack men and women, making previously hidden patterns of suffering visible and improving humanitarian responses. Scholars first noticed these patterns during the 1990s genocides in Rwanda and Bosnia and Herzegovina. Women were systematically raped in both countries. In Bosnia and Herzegovina, for instance, it is estimated that perpetrators raped 50,000 women in the first year of the violence alone.³² The systematic nature of sexual violence against women in Bosnia and Herzegovina and Rwanda led many genocide scholars to conclude that rape constitutes a strategy of genocide.³³ In 1998, the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda issued a precedent-setting decision—they convicted former government official Jean-Paul Akayesu of crimes of genocide, including rape.³⁴ These findings never would have emerged without research that paid special attention to the experiences of women. Similarly, in the 1990s, researchers discovered a pattern of violence unique to men’s and boys’ experiences. Men and boys are often separated from the rest of the population and massacred. There are at least fifteen cases of genocide in which this pattern of events has unfolded.³⁵ Highlighting men’s experiences as unique, as opposed to the norm, revealed an important facet of genocide.

Second, the ways perpetrators treat men and women according to their sex/gender says something interesting about the causes and mechanics of particular genocides and genocide more broadly.³⁶ Even when men and women face similar outcomes of genocidal violence, the ways in which they are targeted reveal how genocidaires conceptualize their goals. Many people, including scholars, perpetrators, and victims, consciously or sub-consciously interpret

²⁹ Scott Straus, *The Order of Genocide: Race, Power, and War in Rwanda* (New York: Cornell University Press, 2006), 99.

³⁰ When I use the terms “men” and “women” in the rest of this section I am referring to the heteronormative understanding of gender and sex as unified and binary that is hegemonic in most of the world and that is inaccurate and violent to trans and non-binary people. Unfortunately, this is how sex and gender are commonly conceptualized in most of the locations discussed and in much of the research. I have adopted their terminology for clarity. I think we can still learn from this research. But it further demonstrates the need to interrogate where queer people, and specifically trans people and nonbinary people, have been obscured in Genocide Studies.

³¹ Adam Jones, ed., *Gendercide and Genocide* (Nashville: Vanderbilt University Press, 2004); Elisa von Joeden-Forgey, “Gender and Genocide,” in *The Oxford Handbook of Genocide Studies*, ed. Donald Bloxham and A. Dirk Moses. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 61–68; Amy E. Randall, ed., *Genocide and Gender in the Twentieth Century: A Comparative Survey* (London: Bloomsbury, 2015).

³² Alexandria Stiglmayer, “The Rapes in Bosnia-Herzegovina,” in *Mass Rape: The War against Women in Bosnia-Herzegovina*, ed. Alexandria Stiglmayer (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1993), 82.

³³ Lisa Sharlach, “Rape as Genocide: Bangladesh, the Former Yugoslavia, and Rwanda,” *New Political Science* 22, no. 1 (March 2000).

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 93.

³⁵ Jones, *Gendercide and Genocide*, 6–9.

³⁶ R. Charli Carpenter, “Beyond ‘Gendercide’: Operationalizing Gender in Comparative Genocide Studies,” in *Gendercide and Genocide*, ed., Adam Jones (Nashville: Vanderbilt University Press, 2004), 237.

genocide as a process of destroying the reproductive potential of a group.³⁷ This became most obvious when men's and women's experience were examined separately. A pattern emerged in which individuals are attacked per their gender role in the family and society, a phenomenon labeled relational violence by Elisa von Joeden-Forgey.³⁸ Perpetrators target women as mothers, wives, daughters, and sisters and men as fathers, husbands, sons, and brothers, centering ideas of family and reproduction in the genocide discourse.

Collecting empirical evidence about sexed/gendered experiences of genocide moved the common sense thinking in the discipline forward. If the discipline generally accepts that sex/gender differences matter empirically, it should not be much of a stretch to imagine that differences in gender identity and sexual orientation matter too. However, despite a common sense in the discipline that should encourage empirical investigation into queer experiences of genocide, this type of research has historically been limited.

Here are the Queers: Past and Future Empirical Research

Virtually all of the existing empirical research into queer experiences of genocide concerns gay men in Nazi Germany. While the campaign against homosexuals appears briefly in many texts about the Nazis, the first sociological and statistical account of the Nazis' persecution of homosexuals was not published until 1977. Carried out by a team of German researchers led by Rüdiger Lautmann, the report analyzed documents from the thirteen camps that incarcerated homosexuals.³⁹ A decade later, Richard Plant utilized Nazi records and camp archives to compile a historical account of the Nazi campaign against homosexuals.⁴⁰ In 1995, Gad Beck published *An Underground Life*, a memoir about his life as a gay Jewish man in Nazi Germany. His represents the most thorough first-hand account of these events.⁴¹ These texts reveal that queer people were intentionally targeted for incarceration, torture, and death by the Nazi regime. From 1933–1944 between 50,000 and 63,000 men were convicted of homosexuality.⁴² Researchers estimate anywhere from 5,000 to 15,000 of them perished in concentration camps.⁴³

Many people have conceptualized the Nazi campaign against homosexuals as separate from and unrelated to the regime's genocides of Jews, Roma and Sinti, and Slavs. The Nazi campaign against homosexuals appears fairly often in research on Nazi Germany, but not commonly in research on the Nazis' genocides. Research on persecution of homosexuals typically circumvents the word genocide, while genocide research on Nazi Germany tends to avoid mention of violence against homosexuals.⁴⁴ However, the evidence suggests persecution of queer people was intimately linked to the Nazis' genocidal campaigns. Nazi records show that homosexuals were murdered and imprisoned in the name of purifying the German race and punishing those who failed to produce Aryan children. The "campaign against Germany's homosexuals must be understood...as but one part of the larger war on eugenic inferiors."⁴⁵ Violence against queer people was the other side of the coin of violence against Jewish people and ethnic minorities. On May 14, 1928, the Nazi Party published its clearest statement on homosexuality.

It is not necessary that you and I live, but it is necessary that
the German people live. And it can only live if it can fight, for

³⁷ von Joeden-Forgey, *Gender and Genocide*, 62.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 73.

³⁹ Rüdiger Lautmann, *Seminar: Gesellschaft und Homosexualität* (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp Verlag, 1977).

⁴⁰ Richard Plant, *The Pink Triangle: The Nazi War against Homosexuals* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1988).

⁴¹ Gad Beck and Frank Heibert, *An Underground Life: Memoirs of a Gay Jew in Nazi Berlin*, trans. Allison Brown (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2000).

⁴² Plant, *The Pink Triangle*, 149.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 154.

⁴⁴ Waites, *Genocide and Global Queer Politics*, 53.

⁴⁵ Plant, *The Pink Triangle*, 101.

life means fighting. And it can only fight if it maintains its masculinity. It can only maintain its masculinity if it exercises discipline, especially in matters of love. Free love and deviance are undisciplined. Therefore, we reject you [homosexuals], as we reject anything that hurts our nation. Anyone who thinks of homosexual love is our enemy.⁴⁶

Empirical evidence from Nazi Germany indicates that the persecution of queer people was an important part of the Nazis' genocides. Without empirics about the treatment of queer people during other genocides, no comparative work can be done on this topic. Leaving us unable to discern for certain if persecution of queer people was unique to the Nazis, or if it is a common feature of many genocides (though, as I will argue subsequently, it is most likely the latter).

Moreover, queer victims may face continued persecution following genocide. In West Germany, for example, homosexuality continued to be illegal until 1969.⁴⁷ Some gay men were liberated from the concentration camps only to be transferred to jails. Most were rejected by their families and communities. As Plant concludes, "for homosexuals, the Third Reich did not fully end with its defeat."⁴⁸ Queer people facing continued violence after the end of a genocide require special protection and dedicated humanitarian assistance. However, without further empirical research into queer experiences of genocides, we have no idea what this protection and assistance should look like, or even how dire the need for it is. If Nazi Germany serves as any indication, there may be dozens of other ways queer people uniquely suffer during and after genocide. New empirical research would go a long way towards making their suffering known—the first step to addressing it. Gendering Genocide Studies also led to new ideas about the mechanics of particular genocides and genocide as a phenomenon. The next section discusses in depth how queering the field has the potential to do the same.

Research on the fate of queer people in Nazi Germany did not appear until more than thirty years after end of World War II, in large part due to a taboo on discussing queer history. The archival material was available during almost that entire period, but researchers were uninterested.⁴⁹ I fear that our current lack of empirical research may, at least in part, be attributable to similar reasons. However, valid reasons exist besides anti-queerness that explain why we are lacking empirical evidence. In the first place, researchers face many challenges when conducting empirical genocide research of any kind. Countries in the midst of and emerging from genocide are challenging to access and often pose a danger to researchers. Second, in many post-genocidal countries people put themselves at risk by being public about their queerness. This may be due to laws banning homosexuality or societal attitudes. Thus, it may be difficult, and perhaps even unethical, to identify willing research partners. Finally, queerness as an identity does not travel easily. Labels like "LGBTQ" and "queer" emerged from Western countries and do not always fit post-colonial contexts; nor should they be made to fit.⁵⁰ Unfortunately, due in large part to the legacies of colonialism, many recent genocides occurred in formerly colonized countries. Creating a complicated ethical and theoretical situation for researchers attempting to do comparative work on queerness in genocide. Ignoring indigenous understandings of sex, sexuality, and gender or forcing labels created in settler-colonial states onto people would not advance the field but reproduce the violence we are attempting to address. I raise these concerns not to discourage empirical research about queer people during

⁴⁶ Ibid., 50.

⁴⁷ Ibid., 13.

⁴⁸ Ibid., 181.

⁴⁹ Ibid., 15.

⁵⁰ Matthew Waites, "Critique of 'Sexual Orientation' and 'Gender Identity' in Human Rights Discourse: Global Queer Politics beyond the Yogyakarta Principles," *Contemporary Politics* 15, no. 1 (2009), accessed January 27, 2019, <https://doi.org/10.1080/13569770802709604>.

genocide, but to acknowledge the necessity of practicing critical self-reflection as scholars and as a Genocide Studies community before we engage in this research.

There are several places where I think empirical research into queer experiences of genocide would be revealing. As mentioned in the introduction, an increase in homophobic violence seems to have followed the genocides in Bosnia and Herzegovina and Kosovo. If a connection between new anti-queer attitudes and the genocides exists, it is likely that anti-queer attitudes and actions were also prevalent during the genocides. As such, empirical research in the former Yugoslavia could be enlightening. Moreover, because the countries in the region do not outlaw homosexuality, queer activist groups operate in most countries, and some people are publicly out, it would be less dangerous to interview queer people in the former Yugoslavia. Empirical work is also needed in Chechnya. Some scholars contend the two brutal wars waged against Chechnya by the Russians during the 1990s constitute genocide.⁵¹ In the aftermath, Chechen nationalism and adherence to traditional identities and values experienced a resurgence. State-directed homophobic violence broke out in 2017. The Chechen government began arresting, detaining, torturing, and murdering people suspected of homosexual activity.⁵² Researchers should investigate whether or not a connection exists between the genocide of the 1990s and the current homophobic violence. While researching in Chechnya would be logistically and ethically challenging, researchers could draw upon the large Chechen diaspora, which includes queer people who have recently sought refuge outside of Chechnya.

In this section, I argued that genocide scholars have built the discipline's most important scholarship from empirical research. More recently, scholars have begun to disaggregate experiences of genocide according to various differences, including sex/gender. We must build on these methodological norms in the discipline and empirically investigate queer experiences of genocide. The existing empirics, drawn from Nazi Germany, suggest this research would teach us much about what occurs inside a genocide and how to better assist the most vulnerable in its aftermath.

Heteronormativity as an Analytical Lens for Understanding Genocide

Existing Theories of Sex/Gender and Genocide

Beyond empirically appearing queer people in Genocide Studies, borrowing the concept of heteronormativity from queer theory can help us better understand the conditions that make genocide possible. Heteronormativity gives rise to genocidal violence against queer communities *and* the ethnic, religious, national, and/or racial groups targeted. Scholars like Adam Jones and Elisa von Joeden-Forgey who have gendered Genocide Studies have drawn attention to the way genocidaires utilize hegemonic gender roles, particularly as they relate to family, to enact their crimes. I agree with Jones and von Joeden-Forgey but argue that we must include the concepts of sexuality and gender identity in their analysis. Heteronormativity makes possible the gender roles and familial hierarchies that support genocidal processes. Heteronormativity has already been deployed as a lens to analyze nationalism, and what is genocide if not nationalism in extremis? Thus, it should not be too much of an intellectual leap to apply heteronormativity to genocide. After running through this analysis, it will become evident that we must further investigate the various and nuanced ways heteronormativity provides structure and logic to genocide.

Genocide discourse has long been dominated by straight, cisgender men from the United States and Europe, allowing "patriarchal power and heteronormativity" to mark the boundaries of the discourse.⁵³ However, the word heteronormativity made its first appearance in the Genocide Studies literature in Adam Jones' 2006 article "Straight as a Rule:

⁵¹ Adam Jones, *Genocide: A Comprehensive Introduction*, 2nd ed. (New York: Routledge, 2010), 228–229.

⁵² Human Rights Watch, "'They Have Long Arms and They Can Find Me': Anti-Gay Purge by Local Authorities in Russia's Chechen Republic," June 6, 2017, accessed July 7, 2019, <https://www.hrw.org/report/2017/05/26/they-have-long-arms-and-they-can-find-me/anti-gay-purge-local-authorities-russias>.

⁵³ Waites, *Genocide and Global Queer Politics*, 48.

Heteronormativity, Gendercide, and the Noncombatant Male.” Rather than provide an analysis of how heteronormativity functions in the context of genocide, Jones focuses on the way the existence of hegemonic masculinities contributes to high mortality rates amongst noncombatant males during genocide.⁵⁴ He argues that in a culture in which military masculinity marks the hegemonic ideal, unarmed men of battle-age represent a “failure and/or rejection of masculinity.”⁵⁵ However, feminized noncombatant men constantly possess the ability to pick up arms, (re)adopt a hegemonic model of masculinity, and pose a threat to their enemy. This contradiction—at once disgustingly feminine and frighteningly masculine—explains the ire and violence directed at noncombatant men.⁵⁶ While early on in his article Jones briefly discusses heteronormativity, he constructs his argument around the “deeply gendered”⁵⁷ identities men and women embody in times of genocide. As I will discuss further after introducing von Joeden-Forgey’s argument, hegemonic gender constructions are not synonymous with heteronormativity, nor do they offer a complete picture of the concept.

In her 2010 article, “The Devil in the Details: ‘Life Force Atrocities’ and the Assault on the Family in Times of Conflict,” Elisa von Joeden-Forgey elaborates on the concept of relational violence and introduces the term “life force atrocities.” While her article does not include a single mention of heteronormativity or heterosexuality, I believe it still brings us closest to an existing theory of heteronormativity and genocide. She argues that “while directed at the destruction of large groups, [genocide] is inextricably tied to families.”⁵⁸ More than any other social institution, by producing children, educating children in the group’s religious and cultural norms, and serving as the affective center of daily life, families organize and perpetuate groups.⁵⁹ As such, destruction of the group requires destruction of its life force—the family. Von Joeden-Forgey defines life force atrocities as violent acts that either invert the “proper hierarchies and relationships within families and thereby irrevocably break sacred bonds” or mutilate and desecrate “symbols of group production.”⁶⁰ Examples of life force atrocities include forcing family members to murder or torture each other, injuring genitals, rape, and killing infants and pregnant women. While these cruelties seem strange and perverse, which of course they are, they appear in genocide after genocide.⁶¹ Using the examples of the Armenian genocide, the Rwandan genocide, and the Holocaust, von Joeden-Forgey concludes that “the inversion and desecration of sacred familial hierarchies are the primary organizing principles of the violence...genocidal cruelty aims precisely at the ties that bind men and women together.”⁶² Yet, this analysis lacks an explanation of why family serves as the organizing unit of most groups and how perpetrators so easily exploit existing family hierarchies and gender roles.

Integrating the concept of heteronormativity, and with it an attention to sexuality and a non-binary understanding of gender, into Jones’s and von Joeden-Forgey’s analysis strengthens both of their arguments. Jones defines heteronormativity as “culturally hegemonic heterosexuality.”⁶³ However, as the originators of the term explain, heteronormativity goes beyond heterosexuality vs. homosexuality.⁶⁴ Heteronormativity represents a constellation of

⁵⁴ Adam Jones, “Straight as a Rule: Heteronormativity, Gendercide, and the Noncombatant Male,” *Men and Masculinities* 8, no. 4 (2006), 451.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 455.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 457–458.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 458.

⁵⁸ Elisa von Joeden-Forgey, “The Devil in the Details: ‘Life Force Atrocities’ and the Assault on the Family in Times of Conflict,” *Genocide Studies and Prevention: An International Journal* 5, no. 1 (2010), 1, accessed on January 20, 2019, <https://doi.org/10.1353/gsp.0.0042>.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 6.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 2.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 3.

⁶² *Ibid.*, 3–7.

⁶³ Jones, *Straight as a Rule*, 451.

⁶⁴ Berlant and Warner, *Sex in Public*.

practices, impacting people of all sexualities, that serve as a “tacit but central organizing index of social membership.”⁶⁵ While heteronormativity begins with the privileging of heterosexual sex as normal and right, “[heteronormativity] is produced in almost every aspect of the forms and arrangements of social life: nationality, the state, and the law; commerce; medicine; and education; as well as in the conventions and affects of narrativity, romance, and other protected spaces of culture.”⁶⁶ The form of hegemonic masculinity Jones draws upon and the family hierarchies von Joeden-Forgey centers only exist because of heteronormativity. Heteronormativity rests first and foremost on a gender/sex binary separating men and women. From this binary, men and women adopt distinct and correct roles within sexual and familial relations. “Evident in most conceptualizations of gender is an assumption of heteronormativity. In other words, to become gendered is to learn the proper way to be a woman in relation to man, or feminine in relation to the masculine.”⁶⁷ Heteronormativity not only leads to divisions between men and women, but to the subordination of women to men.⁶⁸ And, importantly, the oppression of people perceived as not correctly performing masculinity or femininity. As such, heteronormativity produces the hegemonic masculinities, and subordinate masculinities and femininities, and family hierarchies that enable genocidal violence against noncombatant men and life force atrocities. We cannot fully understand genocide when we end our analysis at gender, for doing so takes heteronormativity, gender’s organizing institution, for granted.⁶⁹

Applying Heteronormativity to Genocide Studies

At this point, after arguing that heteronormativity has been absent from Genocide Studies to the determinant of the field, I would like to provide an example of what deconstructing genocide’s heteronormative foundations might look like. I use queer Nationalism Studies as my entry for the following argument. However, I do not begin to believe my approach is the only way to use heteronormativity to better understand genocide. Forays into queer Genocide Studies could be made from the perspective of Security Studies, Military Studies or Terrorism Studies—all of which have adopted the use of heteronormativity as an analytical lens.⁷⁰ The purpose of the next section is not to present a definitive understanding of how heteronormativity functions in a genocidal context, but to demonstrate one way in which heteronormativity proves useful in analyzing genocide. This section poses an open question and issues an invitation to further investigate the connections between queer theories and genocide.

Nationalism constitutes a form of political identity containing two interlinking objectives. One is territorial—to maintain or achieve statehood. The second is ideological—to secure a belief in a collective identity. Nationalists ultimately strive to align the ideological

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 5.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*

⁶⁷ Chrys Ingraham, “The Heterosexual Imaginary: Feminist Sociology and Theories of Gender,” *Sociological Theory* 12, no. 2 (1994), 215, accessed July 17, 2019, <https://doi.org/10.2307/201865>.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 214.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 216.

⁷⁰ Laura J. Shepherd and Laura Sjoberg, “Trans- Bodies in/of War(s): Cisprivilege and Contemporary Security Strategy,” *Feminist Review* 101, no. 1 (2012), 5–23, accessed December 3, 2018, <https://doi.org/10.1057/fr.2011.53>; Hagen, *Queering Women, Peace and Security*; Jamie J. Hagen, “Queering Women, Peace and Security in Colombia,” *Critical Studies on Security* 5, no. 1 (February 2017), 125–129, accessed May 10, 2019, <https://doi.org/10.1080/21624887.2017.1294835>; Aaron Belkin, *Bring Me Men: Military Masculinity and the Benign Façade of American Empire, 1898–2001* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2012); Adi Kuntsman, “The Soldier and the Terrorist: Sexy Nationalism, Queer Violence,” *Sexualities* 11, no. 1–2 (2008), 142–170, accessed May 14, 2019, <https://doi.org/10.1177/1363460707085468>; Jasbir K. Puar, *Terrorist Assemblages: Homonationalism in Queer Times* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2007).

community and the territorial state.⁷¹ International Relations takes a particular interest in nationalism because IR scholars are interested in the construction of and conflict between states.⁷² Feminist IR scholars have revealed the ways in which “group reproduction—both biological and social—is fundamental to nationalist practice, process, and politics.”⁷³ After all, in order for the nation-state to exist and continue to do so, there must be members of the nation. Group reproduction in the modern nation-state is heteronormative because non-reproductive sex threatens the nation/state building project. States discipline non-reproductive sex “by insisting that the bedroom is heterosexual and that a primary purpose of family life is sexual reproduction.”⁷⁴ Built on a presupposed natural binary of female/feminine and male/masculine, nationalist understandings of biological and social reproduction construct “heterosexual coupling as the basis of sexual intimacy, family life, and group reproduction.”⁷⁵ We cannot extricate heteronormativity from nationalism and state building. As a result, nationalism more often than not results in the exclusion and oppression of queer people.⁷⁶

It is not too far of a leap practically or intellectually from nationalism to genocide. Nationalism always poses a threat to “those whose identity is at odds with the projected image of homogenous national identity,” namely other national minorities.⁷⁷ In times of extreme nationalism or nationalist conflict, the result has often been murderous.⁷⁸ Of course, not all nationalist projects turn genocidal, but one has difficulty imagining a case of genocide that was not preceded by nationalist sentiments. In fact, some argue that the advent of the nation-state and its supporting ideology—nationalism—is what makes genocide possible.⁷⁹ Whether or not one believes genocide predates the nation-state, the similarities between nationalism and genocide are undeniable.

As such, if nationalism is heteronormative, and genocide is one nation/nationalism attempting to eradicate another nation/nationalism, then genocide can be conceived of as competing heteronormativities. As explained previously, heteronormativity supports the nation-state and nationalist agendas. Thus, the perpetrators of genocide attempt to perform the best heteronormativity and weaken the heteronormative foundations of their targets. In defense, groups targeted for genocide have an interest in safeguarding their own heteronormative foundations. As a result, heteronormativity becomes strengthened on all sides during episodes of genocide. This helps explain the gendered/sexed violence identified by Jones and von Joeden-Forgey as well as increased violence against queer members of the perpetrator and victim groups.

As a result of genocide’s heteronormative foundations, perpetrators of genocide persecute queer people within their own group in the name of strengthening the nation and encouraging group reproduction. During the bloody breakup of the former Yugoslavia, the nationalist and genocidal governments of Croatia and Serbia both adopted staunchly anti-queer stances. In Croatia, an increased attachment to Catholicism accompanied rising nationalism.

⁷¹ Joane Nagel, “Masculinity and Nationalism: Gender and Sexuality in the Making of Nations,” *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 21, no. 2 (1998), 247, accessed November 1, 2018, <https://doi.org/10.1080/014198798330007>; V. Spike Peterson, “Sexing Political Identities/Nationalism as Heterosexism,” *International Journal of Feminist Politics* 1, no. 1 (June 1999), 35.

⁷² Peterson, *Sexing Political Identities*, 36.

⁷³ *Ibid.*, 39.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 45.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 39.

⁷⁶ Nagel, *Masculinity and Nationalism*, 246, 252, 256–261; Peterson, *Sexing Political Identities*; Bernadette C. Hayes and John Nagle, “Ethnonationalism and Attitudes towards Same-Sex Marriage and Abortion in Northern Ireland,” *International Political Science Review* 40, no. 4 (May 2018), 455–469, accessed November 3, 2018, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0192512118775832>.

⁷⁷ Peterson, *Sexing Political Identities*, 35.

⁷⁸ Nagel, *Masculinity and Nationalism*, 248.

⁷⁹ Jones, *Genocide*, 64–66; Mark Levene, *Genocide in the Age of the Nation State: The Meaning of Genocide* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2005).

Traditional Catholic morals, including heteropatriarchal gender roles, became more important. To be a good man meant being a warrior defending homeland and family. Women were meant to produce children and support male soldiers.⁸⁰ People who deviated from these assigned roles and their associated sexualities were demonized, particularly lesbians, who “were labelled as dangerous and destructive for the new Croatian state and its moral values.”⁸¹ While Orthodox Christian Serbia did not see the same ascendance of Catholicism, queer people faced similar changing attitudes. Lepa Mladjenovic, a lesbian activist living in Belgrade during the genocide, recounts being attacked during an action with the anti-war lesbian group Labris.

He pushed me to the wall, broke my glasses and shouted, “You dirty lesbian, I can throw you in this door and kill you – no one would know. Clear off!” When I asked him who he was, he exclaimed, “Don’t you utter your dirty words. The mosque is the place for you.” Lesbians were dirtying his straight male street, just as Muslims were dirtying his straight Serb street.⁸²

Mladjenovic’s story highlights not only the danger queer people face during genocides, but the manner in which they quickly become associated with the other group(s)—ethnic, national, religious, or racial—targeted by the genocidaires. Queers are depicted as traitors to the nationalist cause.

Perpetrators are less interested in attacking queer individuals amongst the victim group(s), but they attack all of their victims in ways connected to heteronormativity. As von Joeden-Forgey explained earlier, genocidaires aim to undo the foundations upon which their victims’ lives are built by attacking familial hierarchies. Typically, both the perpetrators and victims understand family through heteronormative gender roles. Perpetrators exploit these shared understandings to imbue specific acts of violence with symbolic meaning. In other words, they are attempting to damage their target group(s)’s heteronormative structures as a means of weakening their society. During the genocide against Bosnian Muslims, for example, much of the violence consisted of inversions of/attacks on heteronormativity. Mothers were threatened with the murder of their children unless they submitted to being raped, usually in front of their children.⁸³ Men were also subjected to sexual abuse. In one documented instance, a father and son imprisoned together in a camp were forced to perform sexual acts on each other.⁸⁴ It was common for male prisoners to have their genitals mutilated and castrated. A 1994 investigation ordered by the United Nations Security Council found

...one witness saw prisoners forced to bite another prisoner’s genitals...Another incident relayed in an interview involved prisoners lined up naked while Serb women from outside undressed in front of the male prisoners. If any prisoner had an erection, his penis was cut off.⁸⁵

⁸⁰ Sanja Sagasta, “I. Lesbians in Croatia,” *European Journal of Women’s Studies* 8, no. 3, (2001), 360, accessed June 28, 2019, <https://doi.org/10.1177/135050680100800307>.

⁸¹ Ibid.

⁸² Lepa Mladjenovic, “III. Notes of a Feminist Lesbian during Wartime,” *European Journal of Women’s Studies* 8, no. 3 (2001), 388, accessed June 20, 2019, <https://doi.org/10.1177/135050680100800314>.

⁸³ United Nations, *Final Report of the Commission of Experts Established Pursuant to Security Council Resolution 780*, Report of the Commission of Experts Established Pursuant to Security Council Resolution 780, May 27, 1994 (UN Doc. S/1994/674), 55.

⁸⁴ Ibid., 59.

⁸⁵ Ibid.

The guards did not come up with these torturous acts out of nowhere. Rather, the violence becomes intelligible when viewed through the lens of heteronormativity, a social institution shared by the perpetrators and their victims. If the guards were just interested in torturing their prisoners, they might have cut off a hand or a leg. But by cutting off their victims' penises, the guards attacked the part of a man's body that makes him capable of heterosexual sex and reproduction; making him less worthy within a heteronormative context. And the stigma both men and women endure from being raped only functions in a world in which women are valued for their sexual purity and men for their ability to penetrate and not be penetrated.⁸⁶

The examples from the former Yugoslavia demonstrate that heteronormative logics enable violence during genocides against queers and non-queers. Beyond what I have shared, little empirical evidence exists about persecution of queer people or heteronormative violence against non-queer people during genocides—one more reason to pursue empirical work in queer Genocide Studies. Thus, I do not pretend to believe that I have proven anything about genocide's true nature (if that is even possible or a desirable goal). In this section, I argued through existing theory and examples that it is reasonable to believe heteronormativity makes possible genocide and that we can better understand how and why genocide works when we examine both genocide as a phenomenon and individual cases through a heteronormative lens; and if heteronormativity enables genocide, perhaps queerness contains strategies of prevention and mitigation.

Reproductive Futurity and the Erasure of Queer Lives

The Definition of Genocide and an Emphasis on Reproductive Futurity

Since Raphaël Lemkin coined the term genocide in 1944, its definition has been highly contested. In fact, definitional debates dominate much of the existing literature.⁸⁷ However, most definitions of genocide share an emphasis on the impairment of the group's biological and cultural reproduction. I argue that this emphasis excludes those who do not and/or cannot contribute to a group's biological and cultural reproduction, or are perceived as such, namely poorer people and queer people. However, non-reproductive members of groups are still subjected to genocidal violence by perpetrators due to their membership in the targeted collectivity. By obscuring non-carriers of genes and culture, genocide scholars have made the deaths of members of lower economic classes and the queer community somehow seem like less of a crime. A troubling implication of this type of thinking is that the lives and deaths of these people also become less important to the victim group during their collective process of resistance and recovery. Moving forward, genocide scholars should attempt to refrain from replicating the same heteronormative and anti-queer logics that contributes to both wholesale genocide and violence against queer people.

The first definition of genocide appeared in Lemkin's 1944 volume *Axis Rule in Occupied Europe*. Lemkin defined genocide as:

...the destruction of a nation or an ethnic group...Generally speaking, genocide does not necessarily mean the immediate destruction of a nation, except when accomplished by mass killings of all members of a nation. It is intended rather to signify a coordinated plan of different actions aiming at the

⁸⁶ Fascinatingly, Waites argues in his pathbreaking article that the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda's decision in the Akayesu case set a precedent that could be used today to start prosecuting and punishing anti-queer violence committed as part of the destruction of a national, ethnic, racial, or religious group. See Waites, *Genocide and Global Queer Politics*, 58.

⁸⁷ Bloxham and Moses, *Handbook of Genocide Studies*, 7.

destruction of the essential foundation of the life of national groups with the aim of annihilating the groups themselves.⁸⁸

Notice the focus placed not on atrocities committed against a large number of individuals, but on the health of the nation as a whole. Phrases like “the essential foundation of the life of nation groups” highlight this focus. An important facet of the nation’s health, according to Lemkin, is not only its ability to exist, but its ability to continue to exist. Lemkin conceived of destroying, or attempting to destroy, a culture as a distinct and particularly evil crime.⁸⁹ Lemkin’s understanding of genocide as a crime that goes beyond mass killing also appears in the 1948 United Nations’ Convention on the Punishment and Prevention of the Crime of Genocide, which Lemkin played an important role in drafting. Alongside “killing members of the group” and inflicting bodily harm, Article II of the Genocide Convention lists “imposing measures intended to prevent births within the group” and “forcibly transferring children of the group to another group” as crimes of genocide.⁹⁰ This indicates a continued conviction that genocide constitutes a distinct atrocity because it interferes with biological reproduction (preventing births within the group) and cultural reproduction (forcibly transferring children to another group).

As Genocide Studies evolved from Lemkin and the Genocide Convention, many definitions continued to emphasize reproduction. For example, Helen Fein, the founder and first president of the International Association of Genocide Scholars, defines genocide as

...sustained purposeful action by a perpetrator to physically destroy a collectivity directly or indirectly, through interdiction of the biological and social reproduction of group members, sustained regardless of the surrender or lack of threat offered by the victim.⁹¹

Here, Fein clearly highlights the importance of “biological and social reproduction.” Von Joeden-Forgey also states distinctly that, “Genocide is a historical process that is, at its core about group reproduction.”⁹² Philosopher Claudia Card, writing about social reproduction, concurs.

Specific to genocide is the harm inflicted on its victims’ social vitality... When a group with its own cultural identity is destroyed, its survivors lose their cultural heritage and may even lose their intergenerational connections.⁹³

The above collection of genocide definitions demonstrates that the future, and the ability of a group to continue as it presently exists in that future, holds a unique and influential position in the thinking of many genocide scholars and the discipline of Genocide Studies as a whole.

⁸⁸ Raphaël Lemkin, *Axis Rule in Occupied Europe: Laws of Occupation, Analysis of Government, Proposals for Redress* (Washington: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 1944), 79.

⁸⁹ Jones, *Genocide*, 11; A. Dirk Moses, “Raphaël Lemkin, Culture, and the Concept of Genocide,” in *The Oxford Handbook of Genocide Studies*, ed. A. Dirk Moses and Donald Bloxham (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 26.

⁹⁰ United Nations, *General Assembly Resolution 260, Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide*, December 9, 1948 (UN Doc. A/RES/260(III)).

⁹¹ Helen Fein, *Genocide: A Sociological Perspective* (London: Sage Publications, 1993), 23–25.

⁹² von Joeden-Forgey, *The Devil in the Details*, 62.

⁹³ Claudia Card, “Genocide and Social Death,” *Hypatia: A Journal of Feminist Philosophy* 18, no. 1 (2003), 73, accessed May 1, 2019, <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1527-2001.2003.tb00779.x>.

Who Do These Definitions Exclude?

The emphasis on genocide as a crime that interferes with cultural and biological reproduction risks obscuring violence perpetrated against real and perceived non-reproductive group members. Two communities that fall into the category of non-reproductive, real and/or perceived, are poor people and queer people.

Lemkin's and others' definitions of genocide rest on the underlying assumption that distinct cultural groups are intrinsically valuable because they contribute to the richness and progress of human civilization.⁹⁴ Lemkin declared "all our cultural heritage is a product of the contribution of all nations," citing the contributions of people who hailed from groups targeted by the Nazis—people like Einstein, Spinoza, and Chopin.⁹⁵ As his examples demonstrate, Lemkin associated culture and the potential for cultural reproduction with high culture. It was elites and intellectuals, according to Lemkin, not peasants, the working class, or the uneducated who transmitted culture.⁹⁶ Following this logic, Lemkin would find that "the murder of a poet is morally worse than the murder of a janitor" and that the destruction of a library or mosque is more abhorrent than the burning of a home or barn.⁹⁷ Even if unintentional, the classism and elitism inherent in definitions like Lemkin's is apparent.

Much like certain definitions of genocide render the impoverished invisible, conceptualizations of genocide that center the future obscure queer people. In his 2004 polemic, *No Future*, queer theorist Lee Edelman argues that the political as we know it, is built around "the affirmation of a value so unquestioned, because so obviously unquestionable, as that of the Child whose innocence solicits our defense."⁹⁸ There is no room to debate whether or not we should be centering the figure of the Child. All political debate, and "political" here is broadly conceived, centers around how best to protect children. Importantly, these discussions usually center future children, rather than existing, embodied children—hence Edelman's invocation of "the Child." Edelman labels this phenomenon "reproductive futurism," which he defines as

terms that impose an ideological limit on political discourse as such, preserving in the process the absolute privilege of heteronormativity by rendering unthinkable, by casting outside the political domain, the possibility of a queer resistance to this organizing principle of communal relations.⁹⁹

Genocide Studies is heavily invested in reproductive futurism. Historically, victim groups have been conceptualized as organic collectives. Groups eligible for protection from genocide have only included those that can "reproduce and multiply themselves in a manner understood heteronormatively as both natural and good."¹⁰⁰ Genocide scholars define their subject according to reproduction. They also justify their research in the name of preventing genocide and saving future generations (i.e. children) from the scourge of genocide.¹⁰¹

Often times, anti-queer institutions, such as laws banning gays and lesbians from teaching or adopting, are justified as necessary to protect children. Moreover, until recently, in Western culture, the idea of queer parents raising children had been unthinkable. As a result of these logics, Edelman invokes queerness to describe "those not fighting for the children, the

⁹⁴ Moses, *Concept of Genocide*, 23.

⁹⁵ As written by Raphaël Lemkin in a Memorandum Dated June 5, 194 and addressed to Dr. Robert Kempner. See Moses, *Concept of Genocide*, 28, footnote 32.

⁹⁶ Moses, *Concept of Genocide*, 23.

⁹⁷ Jones, *Genocide*, 12; Moses, *Concept of Genocide*, 29.

⁹⁸ Edelman, *No Future*, 2.

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁰ Waites, *Genocide and Global Queer Politics*, 66. See the conclusion of Waites' article for further discussion of Edelman's theories as they relate to groups.

¹⁰¹ Jens Meierhenrich ed., *Genocide: A Reader* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 7.

side outside the consensus by which all politics confirms the absolute value of reproductive futurism."¹⁰² Queerness—both as a refusal of reproductive futurity and as a practice or identity—threatens particular social orders and “social order as such, insofar as it threatens the logic of futurism on which meaning always depends.”¹⁰³ When we cast genocide as abhorrent because it threatens our social order, constructed from a logic of reproductive futurism, we also catch queerness in our net—characterizing it as similarly dangerous and destructive because of the way it calls the future into question.

The implications of this move are three-fold. First, genocide scholars replicate the logic deployed by genocidaires. Second, the deaths of queer genocide victims become less important to both genocide scholars and targeted communities. Third, recovery efforts directed by supposed international experts ignore existing people’s trauma and reify heteronormative and genocidal logics.

Initially, genocidaires and genocide scholars deploy the same logic of reproductive futurism. Perpetrators of genocide take advantage of the norms of reproductive futurism by justifying their atrocities with arguments about ensuring security and prosperity for future generations. For instance, in a 1934 speech to German youth, Adolf Hitler declared: “No matter what we create today and what we do, we will pass away one day. But in you, Germany will live on...We see in you the promise that our work was not in vain.”¹⁰⁴ Additionally, genocidaires understand that their victims also value children above all else and stake their hopes on future generations. This explains why perpetrators target children for death and extreme violence. In Rwanda, the leaders of the genocide specifically directed assailants to murder children. Propagandists frequently reminded people that even the youngest posed a threat. After all, every Tutsi soldier had once been a baby.¹⁰⁵ “Of the bodies exhumed by Physicians for Human Rights at a mass grave in Kibuye province, some 44 percent were of children under the age of fifteen and 31 percent were under ten.”¹⁰⁶

While genocide certainly represents this attitude in the extreme, Edelman argues that reproductive futurism encourages limiting the rights of existing people in the name of protecting future children.¹⁰⁷ The idea that we must sacrifice now for the benefit of our children and our children’s children echoes across many different cultures and throughout history. Though it has strong roots in Protestantism, which, as a consequence of colonialism and imperialism, is an influential cultural force across the globe.¹⁰⁸ It makes sense, then, that genocidal leaders justify gruesome and extreme violence in the name of future generations. Framing genocide as an unfortunate but necessary sacrifice. As discussed earlier, genocide scholars also deploy ideas of reproductive futurism by focusing on children and future generations as the locus of a group’s identity. In doing so, genocide scholars must be wary of reifying, rather than explaining, perpetrator’s behavior.

Next, the reproductive futurism inherent in many definitions of genocide makes queer deaths seem less important, both to scholars and victims. Queer people exist in every group and in every time period. They are inevitably caught up in waves of genocidal violence. However, if preventing the reproduction of culture and people is what makes genocide particularly evil, the logical, though likely unintended, extension of this idea is that killing carriers of culture and genetics is somehow more genocidal than killing perceived non-carriers. While our understandings of what types of families are available to queer people are rapidly changing,

¹⁰² Edelman, *No Future*, 3.

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*, 11.

¹⁰⁴ Adolf Hitler, “To the Youth of Germany,” (speech, Nuremberg, September 8, 1934), accessed August 16, 2019, https://archive.org/stream/AdolfHitlerSpeechToTheGermanYouth1939/AdolfHitlerSpeechToTheGermanYouth1939_djvu.txt.

¹⁰⁵ Human Rights Watch, “IV.CHILDREN ATTACKED,” 2003, accessed August 7, 2019, <https://www.hrw.org/reports/2003/rwanda0403/rwanda0403-03.htm>.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁷ Edelman, *No Future*, 11.

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, 4.

most same-sex couples cannot biologically reproduce and, historically, queer people have been perceived as infertile. Further, when the family is the center of cultural life, which it so often is, queer people without children also do not play as essential of a role in passing down cultural traditions.¹⁰⁹ So, by extension of the logic of futuristic definitions of genocide, the deaths of queer people are less genocidal than the deaths of non-queer people. Perhaps this logical conclusion, even subconsciously, plays a role in why so few genocide scholars have done empirical work with queer victims of genocide.

Moreover, this type of thinking contributes to victim groups turning on or failing to protect queer members of their community. For reasons discussed in section one, we do not know much empirically about how queer members of targeted groups e.g. queer Armenians, queer Tutsis, and so on, are treated by their friends and families in the midst of genocide. However, it is not difficult to imagine that as targeted groups become more nationalist and natalist in the face of genocide, they too begin to exclude, isolate, and persecute queer people. As a result, queer people may have higher rates of fatalities during genocides because they are cut off from the support, safety, and solidarity community members provide each other. We do know that in Nazi Germany, while other prisoners detained in similar conditions received aid and care packages from family and friends outside the concentration camps, homosexual prisoners did not.¹¹⁰ What happens to queer people persecuted by their community for being queer and by another community for their ethnicity, nationality, religion, or race? With both researchers and targeted groups dedicated to ideas bound up with reproductive futurism, we do not have a complete answer to that question.

Finally, when genocide experts and international humanitarians whose understandings of genocide are built around reproductive futurism arrive to help rebuild societies after genocide, they may focus primarily on rebuilding families and efforts to reconcile children of different backgrounds. In doing so, they inadvertently minimize the trauma of adults and those who fall outside of normative understandings of family, like widows, rape survivors, and queer people. They also tend to entrench the heteronormative structures that, as discussed in the preceding section, create an environment where nationalism and genocide flourish. Since these experts understand genocide as an event that “disrupts and destroys” family, they place a “special emphasis” on “rebuilding families and fostering cohesion.”¹¹¹ “Children and youth, in whom visions of national development are invested, are central to post-conflict state-building efforts.”¹¹² In Rwanda, for example, the post-genocide government declared its goal was to become a middle-income country by 2020, resting most of their hopes on the education of the 65% of the population under the age of 25.¹¹³ Of course, children, like anybody else, are worthy of care and concern following genocide. However, when everyone places all of their bets on the next generation, it can devalue the current generation and human life in the process. Addressing the individual stress and trauma and cultural stress and trauma caused by genocide requires extreme attention and nuance.¹¹⁴ By overemphasizing the nuclear family and children, however well-intentioned, those aiding reconstructing efforts may be robbing others of the care they need and deserve.

In this section, I made a normative critique of Genocide Studies as a discipline. Many genocide scholars define genocide as interference with biological and cultural reproduction. I applied Lee Edelman’s concept of reproductive futurism to these definitions and critiqued them for erasing queer people and others who are or are perceived to be non-reproductive, namely

¹⁰⁹ von Joeden-Forgey, *The Devil in the Details*, 6.

¹¹⁰ Plant, *The Pink Triangle*, 169.

¹¹¹ von Joeden-Forgey, *Gender and Genocide*, 79.

¹¹² Kirrily Pells, Kirsten Pontalti and Timothy P. Williams, “Promising Developments? Children, Youth and Post-Genocide Reconstruction under the Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF),” *Journal of Eastern African Studies* 8, no. 2 (2014), 294, accessed August 17, 2019, <https://doi.org/10.1080/17531055.2014.892672>.

¹¹³ Ibid.

¹¹⁴ Meierhenrich, *Genocide*, 298.

the impoverished. As a result, Genocide Studies normalizes, though unintentionally, an understanding of the concept that reifies genocidares' logic, deemphasizes queer lives during genocide, and contributes to heteronormative reconstructions of post-genocidal societies. Martin Shaw's 2007 definition of genocide provides an example of a definitional direction to move in:

...genocidal action can be defined as action in which armed power organizations treat civil social groups as enemies and aim to destroy their real or putative social power, by means of killing, violence and coercion against individuals whom they regard as members of the groups. Thus, genocide is a type of unequal social conflict between two sets of actors, which is defined primarily by the type of action carried out by the more powerful side.¹¹⁵

While Shaw's definition is not immune to critique, it emphasizes the destruction of current, living people based on their membership in a social group. While not explicitly a queer definition of genocide, and I do think there is a space and need for a queer definition of genocide, a definition like Shaw's does not devalue non-reproductive life. Rather, it criminalizes the taking of or harm to all life. In addition to discussions about including sexual orientation and gender identity in definitions of protected groups, we must also have a much-needed discussion about re-defining genocide in a more inclusive and queer way.

Conclusion

This paper argues for the empirical and analytical utility and normative necessity of building bridges between queer theory and the study of genocide. I used the queer theory concepts of queer intellectual curiosity, heteronormativity, and reproductive futurism to demonstrate why bridging is necessary and what it might look like. While the empirics are currently limited, I drew examples from Nazi Germany, the former Yugoslavia, Chechnya, and Rwanda, to help demonstrate the need for a queerer Genocide Studies. I did not intend to convince the reader of any one truth about queering Genocide Studies in this paper. Rather, I hoped to convince the reader that queering Genocide Studies has value. The constructive arguments I did make, such as the argument that heteronormativity makes possible genocide, serve as examples of the way queer theories of genocide might work. When I began scrutinizing the puzzle of genocide and queerness, I planned to empirically examine heteronormativity as a precondition of genocide. Early in the research process it became clear the existing literature base and archives are insufficient to support empirical investigation. We need a robust research program on queer(er) Genocide Studies that produces a wide array of primary sources and literature investigating the myriad possible connections between queerness and genocide.

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¹¹⁵ Martin Shaw, *What Is Genocide* (Cambridge: Polity, 2007), 154.

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