

Book Review

“Violence against Women in and Beyond Conflict: The Coloniality of Violence” by Julia Carolin Sachseder

Ömer Gökhan Ulum
Mersin University, Turkey

Introduction

Julia Carolin Sachseder’s “Violence against Women in and Beyond Conflict: The Coloniality of Violence,” published by Routledge in 2022, examines the complex and intertwined nature of gender, race, and violence against women, particularly in conflict zones. Sachseder introduces the concept of “the coloniality of violence” to explain how systematic violence is deeply rooted in colonial processes, transnational capital, and socio-political structures. This review employs the Five Cs approach to evaluate the book’s context, content, critical analysis, comparisons, and contributions.

1. Context

Sachseder’s book delves into the intersectionality of gender, race, and violence against women in conflict areas, using Colombia as a case study. Sachseder argues that violent actions against women are not isolated events but rather reflections of broader societal patterns and historical injustices. Highlighting colonial legacies, she discusses how Afro-Colombian and Indigenous women are subjected to sexual exploitation, internal displacement, and violence exacerbated by global economic actors. By emphasizing women’s narratives, Sachseder challenges reductionist perspectives on gender and violence.

2. Content

Sachseder’s book provides a comprehensive analysis of the coloniality of violence concept.

Intersection of Gender, Race, and Coloniality

The book introduces the concept of “the coloniality of violence” to explain how historical colonial processes and the global political economy shape systematic violence against women.

Methodology

Utilizing ethnographic research, Sachseder accentuates women’s narratives and testimonies to reveal patterns of sexual violence and internal displacement, reflecting broader socio-political structures.

Political Economy of Violence

Sachseder argues that violence is intertwined with transnational capital and serves as a tool for control and dispossession in postcolonial contexts. The analysis examines how global corporate actors exacerbate local power dynamics.

Conceptualizing Violence

The book emphasizes the understanding of violence as part of the political economy of conflict, not merely as a byproduct of war, and highlights its connection to existing hierarchies.

Women’s Agency

Sachseder positions women not just as victims but also as agents of resistance against colonial and patriarchal oppression, revealing new perspectives on gendered violence and displacement struggles.

The book includes an introduction to thematic focuses, a literature review, a methodology section, empirical chapters with case studies, and a conclusion, proposing new frameworks for understanding violence against women in (post)colonial contexts.

3. Critical Analysis

3.1. Strengths

Innovative Theoretical Framework

The concept of “the coloniality of violence” offers a detailed perspective on how women’s experiences of violence are shaped by historical and structural factors.

Empirical Grounding

Sachseder's extensive ethnographic research provides rich sociocultural contexts and qualitative insights, enhancing the reliability and relevance of the findings.

Intersectional Analysis

The integration of race, gender, and class dynamics presents a multidimensional view of violence that moves beyond simple victim-perpetrator binaries.

Re-conceptualization of Women's Roles

The book challenges traditional portrayals by positioning women as agents of resistance, contributing significantly to feminist literature.

Critical Contribution to Literature

Sachseder engages in important debates in feminist and peace studies, linking violence against women to global capital and colonialism.

3.2. Weaknesses**Too Abstract for Some Readers**

Theoretical discussions may be challenging for readers without sufficient background in postcolonial theory or feminist literature, thus limiting accessibility.

Case Study Limitations

Focusing on Colombia provides depth, but may narrow the applicability of the findings to other global contexts.

Potential Bias

Emphasizing ethnographic narratives can lead to selective representation issues, influenced by the author's theoretical inclinations.

Methodological Constraints

The time-consuming nature of ethnographic research raises concerns about the representativeness of the sample and scope limitations.

Lack of Concrete Policy Recommendations

The book could be more practical for activists and policymakers by offering more concrete steps or policy suggestions for addressing the issues discussed.

4. Comparisons

Sachseder's work can be compared to several seminal texts in the field. "The Political Economy of Violence Against Women," by Jacqui True (2012), explores the institutional responses and policy implications of gendered violence, whereas Sachseder delves into its structural impacts. Ruth Seifert's "War and Rape: A Preliminary Analysis" (2017) views rape in war as a strategic and symbolic act, in contrast to Sachseder's focus on structural and economic entanglements. "The Gendered New World Order," by Jennifer Turpin and Lois Ann Lorentzen (2013), examines the intersectionality of gender with global issues, such as militarism and underdevelopment, while Sachseder focuses on the colonial roots of gender-based violence. Elizabeth D. Heineman's "Sexual Violence in Conflict Zones" (2012) provides a historical perspective on wartime sexual violence, in contrast to Sachseder's emphasis on structural and colonial dimensions. Keith Krause's "Beyond Definition: Violence in a Global Perspective" (2013) addresses the challenges of defining and measuring global violence, whereas Sachseder emphasizes the historical and structural roots of gender-based violence. Finally, "Gender-based Violence and Public Health," by Coast et al. (2012), develops public health approaches to gender-based violence, whereas Sachseder's approach is rooted in post-colonial theory and structural analysis.

Conclusions

Julia Carolin Sachseder's "Violence Against Women in and Beyond Conflict: The Coloniality of Violence" provides a compelling and nuanced exploration of the intersections between gender, race, and violence in conflict zones. By introducing the concept of "the coloniality of violence," Sachseder offers a valuable theoretical lens for understanding the structural and historical roots of gendered violence. Despite some limitations, the book makes significant contributions to feminist and postcolonial scholarship and offers critical insights for addressing gender-based violence in a global context.

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Biographical Note. **Ömer Gökhan Ulum** is an academic at the Department of English Language Teaching, Faculty of Education, Mersin University, Turkey. His research spans across several critical areas, including gender studies, women's issues, ideology, and hegemony, with a keen focus on how these intersect within the realms of culture and education. Dr. Ulum is particularly interested in exploring the dynamics of gender in educational settings, analyzing gender representation in media and literature, and investigating the impact of societal norms on women's roles in both private and public spheres. Email: omergokhanulum@gmail.com

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