

The Covert Racist Decision Architecture Sustaining Violence against Women

Normative Prohibition, Operational Permission, and the Onopticon

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Abstract

This article examines early- and late-modern feminist formations not as stages in a linear narrative of progress, but as transformations in the architectures of recognition and decision through which violence against women remains practicable even where it is formally prohibited. The analysis uses matrilineal, matrilocal and women-centred social orders as historical counter-cases: they demonstrate that obedience, dependency and diminished worth do not follow necessarily from the female body.

The central claim is that violence against women operates as the explicit or covert enforcement of a racist classificatory logic. Before a woman acts, a social nature, function, limit and value are assigned to her body; violence then enforces that assigned position, while institutions may convert the consequences of violence into further evidence about her character, reliability, maternity, sexuality or capacity. A woman may therefore be under-recognised as a victim yet over-recognised as a risk, an unfit mother, an irregular migrant, a participant in 'mutual violence', or an unreliable narrator.

The article employs the distinctions developed in *The Onopticon* between pre-recognition, onoptic layers, feedback circuits and effective contestability, while refusing to equate an isolated biased decision with a closed social regime. It places this framework in direct dialogue with Black feminist thought, intersectionality, decolonial and postcolonial feminism, administrative violence, institutional ethnography, feminist surveillance studies, social reproduction theory, reproductive justice and critiques of carceral feminism. The article's distinctive unit of analysis is neither identity nor the institution considered in isolation, but the passage of consequences between decisions: how one institution's output becomes another institution's input, how formally separate decisions produce composite foreclosure, and how the resulting deprivation is returned to the initial category as confirmatory evidence.

The article further identifies **foreclosing recognition**: an institutional mechanism in which harm is formally acknowledged and a remedy may be offered, while the future legal, political or archival consequences of that acknowledgement are delimited through finality, waiver or settlement. The Dutch childcare benefits scandal is used as a full-threshold stress test rather than declared a complete Onopticon in advance; it establishes racialised pre-categorisation, severe multi-domain foreclosure and chronically ineffective contestation, while leaving the decisive M3 feedback finding dependent upon an individual longitudinal record and a demonstrated gendered nexus.

The analysis also treats the equal incorporation of women into paid employment without an equivalent redistribution of domestic labour, the social costs of childbirth, care and rest as an institutionalised normative contradiction. Its political implications are directed not towards a single emancipatory programme but towards interrupting operational permission: purpose limitation, safe-reporting firewalls, cross-domain impact assessment, a prohibition on deriving adverse judgements from survival behaviour, public redistribution of care, audits of transferred burdens, and remedies capable of correcting linked decisions before irreversible harm occurs.

Keywords: violence against women; covert racism; racist decision architecture; racialising categorisation; Normative Prohibition; Operational Permission; the Onopticon; pre-recognition; feedback circuits; cross-routing; foreclosing recognition; remedial finality; redress waivers; intersectionality; administrative violence; racialising surveillance; carceral feminism; unpaid care work; social reproduction; effective contestability; Homovictimus

1. Introduction: The Question that Precedes the Gate

The dominant question of early-modern feminism was why women were denied entry through the political and legal gate. For racialised women, however, the question began earlier: into what bodily and social category had they been placed before they reached the gate? The first question concerns access; the second concerns how the very subject capable of demanding access is produced. The histories of racism and violence repeatedly demonstrate that the second question disrupts the limits of the first (Davis, 1981).

The problem investigated here begins at precisely this point. If a system legally prohibits violence against women, organises institutions in the name of protection and formally rejects a hierarchy between the sexes, why does violence repeatedly retain a practical field of operation? The central distinction is therefore between **normative prohibition** and **operational permission**. Legitimation does not mean that an institution praises violence. It means that the evidential, temporal, economic and procedural conditions that permit violence to continue are reproduced under the appearance of ordinary administration.

The same distinction applies to paid work and social reproduction. An order that declares equality at the gate of employment while declining to redistribute unpaid domestic labour, the social consequences of childbirth, care and rest does not merely contain an unfinished reform. It contains an **institutionalised normative contradiction**: equality is proclaimed in the sphere from which labour is extracted, while the cost of sustaining that labour is returned to women as a private responsibility.

This article is not a comprehensive history of global feminism, nor does it claim to offer a systematic bibliometric review. Feminist traditions from different regions enter the analysis not as a display of diversity but as tests of the lens itself. The cases are theoretical and mechanism-oriented rather than representative: they compare the conditions under which a decision circuit is established, interrupted or shown not to exist.

Nor is the argument a narrative of regression. Late-modern gains in legal personality, education, employment, suffrage, divorce, bodily integrity and protection from violence are real. Yet the reality of a gain does not prevent a new technique of enclosure from forming within it. Modern feminist history cannot therefore be described adequately as a movement from non-recognition to recognition. A more precise trajectory runs from exclusion to conditional recognition, from fixed legal status to dynamic profile, and from a single gatekeeper to a composite decision circuit.

2. Reading Protocol: Circuit, Not Wave

I do not use my Reality Paradigm here as an object to be defined, a doctrine to be quoted, or a ready-made schema imposed upon historical cases. I use it as a lens: a discipline of seeing designed to prevent the causal chain from disappearing. The analysis begins with the category attached to a body before the subject acts; it then follows that category into an access or protection decision, asks whether contestation changes the outcome in time, and traces whether the result produced by one decision becomes the input of another.

Within this discipline, the origin of a burden - family, custom, market, religion, state or some combination of them - is an important explanatory question, but it is not the first question. The first question is where the burden actually accumulates. Whose time is consumed? Whose body is depleted? Whose income, pension, rest and capacity to leave violence are diminished? Calling a responsibility 'socially assigned' establishes that it is not innate; it does not establish that it has ceased to organise women's lives.

'Recognition' is used here in a narrower sense than theories of intersubjective esteem, self-respect or reciprocity. It refers to **institutional recognisability**: the category through which a person can be read, the decision into which that reading is converted, and the effects that decision produces elsewhere. The lens does not claim to describe the whole person. It follows the operative reality institutions produce in that person's name.

My earlier work distinguishes process, unit, mechanism and regime (Tan, 2026). The process is **pre-recognition**: classification before the person speaks, acts or defines the situation. The unit is the **onoptic layer**: a particular institution or technical system that turns conditional recognition into compulsory categorisation. The mechanism is the integration of separate decisions and the feedback of their consequences into subsequent decisions. A regime exists only when this closure spreads across several domains of life, weakens effective contestability and renders the subject dynamically addressable.

The operational threshold is therefore not the number of institutions involved. A full Onopticon requires three connected findings: a system-produced result must return to the originating category as new evidence; the output of one decision must enter another domain and produce actual foreclosure; and the subject must be unable to correct the composite result at reasonable cost before serious or irreversible harm occurs. K1 pre-categorisation and K2 access gates reveal the inputs to the circuit, but do not by themselves establish a regime.

This separation is indispensable. A facial-recognition system that produces substantially higher error rates for dark-skinned women is evidence of serious discrimination, but not by itself evidence of a closed social regime. If that error travels into border control, employment, policing, welfare or credit; if the person cannot correct it; and if the error becomes evidence for further suspicion, an onoptic layer has developed into a feedback circuit. Conversely, an act of violence confined to one domain may be lethal even if it does not cross the threshold of a regime. The classification of a regime is not a measure of the moral seriousness of harm.

2.1. The Racist Logic of Violence against Women

I do not reserve racism exclusively for historically specific regimes organised around skin colour, ancestry or modern biological race. At the level of its constitutive operation, racism takes a category attached to the body, infers a person's capacity, morality, sexuality, obedience, trustworthiness and social value before action, and converts that inference into differentiated rights, protection and exposure to violence. When the outcome produced by that order is written back onto the body as evidence of the category's 'natural' truth, the racist circuit is complete.

Historical and analytical usage must nevertheless be separated. Violence against women predates the biological and 'scientific' racisms systematised during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. The argument is not chronological: patriarchy is not claimed to derive from modern race science. Rather, older gendered domination and modern racial regimes can share a **racialising operation** - deriving social nature from the body, presenting that nature as fixed, and organising differentiated violence around it. Where a period-specific formation is meant, I use 'modern racism'; where the common operation is meant, I use 'racialising categorisation'.

On this account, violence against women is not merely analogous to racism. It is the explicit or covert enforcement of a racist production of reality on the female body. Patriarchy names its gendered historical ordering; sexism names its discursive, cultural, legal and administrative classifications; violence enforces the place assigned to women or punishes its transgression. A woman is not simply an individual who has suffered harm. She is a categorical subject whose credibility, sexuality, reasonableness, maternity and claim to protection have already been interpreted through her body.

To prevent conceptual inflation, two levels must remain distinct. At the level of the **general operation**, racism turns bodily or attributed difference into social nature and destiny. At the level of **historical regimes**, anti-Black racism, patriarchy, caste, ableism, antisemitism and colonial classification possess different institutions, targets and techniques of violence. They are not synonyms. They can nevertheless become articulated through the same operation when disability is treated as immutable incapacity, poverty as inherited moral failure, or youth as natural incompetence.

Not every categorical distinction is therefore a racist circuit. The following links must be demonstrated:

1. A bodily or attributed group category is established before the individual act.
2. The category generates a generalisation about capacity, morality, trustworthiness or social function.
3. The generalisation is presented as natural, durable, inherited or not reasonably expected to change.
4. It is converted into a hierarchy of value, competence or worthiness of protection.
5. The hierarchy produces differentiated violence, vulnerability, rights or access.
6. Institutionally produced harm or survival behaviour returns as confirmatory evidence for the originating category.

The first five links establish racialising classification; the sixth establishes a completed feedback circuit. This makes it possible to expose a common logic without erasing the specific histories of domination.

Tablo 1. Explicit and covert operation of racist judgement

Form	Appearance of the racist judgement	Operation of violence
Explicit racism	Women are directly described as inferior, dependent, naturally obedient, sexually governable or available to the husband, family or community.	Assault, rape, killing, forced marriage, confinement or legal deprivation directly enforces the assigned position.
Covert racism	Inferiority is not declared. Apparently neutral categories such as 'family unity', 'mutual violence', 'appropriate motherhood', 'emotional instability', 'personal choice' or 'insufficient evidence' are used.	Silence, return to the abuser, flight, self-defence or distrust of institutions is converted into evidence of consent, aggression, instability or unreliability.

Covert operation does not mean the absence of violence. It means that the bodily pre-judgement has been concealed within neutral decision language. An institution need not say 'women are inferior' in order to discount a woman's account, treat her return as consent, code self-defence as mutual violence, or translate poverty into maternal unfitness. In such cases the institution does not merely misinterpret violence; it transforms the effects of violence into evidence about the category 'woman'.

The fact that the victim is a woman is not sufficient. A racist-gendered finding requires evidence that a category assigned to the female body shaped the target, form, justification, institutional interpretation or consequence of harm. The causal sequence is:

female body -> categorical pre-judgement -> differentiated violence or vulnerability -> institutional interpretation -> the outcome written back as the nature of womanhood

2.2. The Covert Structuring that Legitimises Violence

Covert legitimisation does not declare violence to be right. It distributes the responsibility for preventing it, the burden of proving it, the cost of leaving it and the time consumed by it onto the victim. The relevant question is not whether an institution's public language is misogynistic, but whom an apparently neutral standard burdens, whose field of action it narrows, and which outcome it renders administratively reasonable.

Tablo 2. The covert architecture sustaining violence

Structural layer	Apparently neutral language	Covert judgement carried by the language	Consequence for violence
Relational responsibility	'Preserve the family', 'reconciliation', 'stability for the children'	The woman is chiefly responsible for maintaining the relationship and pacifying violence.	The perpetrator's conduct becomes a shared family problem; the social cost of separation is assigned to the woman.
Evidence	'Consistency', 'objectivity', 'corroboration'	A woman unable to provide an unchanging narrative under trauma is less credible.	Delay, variation in detail or withdrawal of a complaint becomes a credibility defect rather than an effect of coercion.
Risk	'Mutual conflict', 'two-sided tension'	Self-defence can be placed on the same plane as the perpetrator's assault.	The victim-perpetrator distinction dissolves; protection thresholds rise and dual sanctions become possible.
Protection	'Co-operation', 'compliance with the safety plan', 'maintaining the complaint'	A victim worthy of protection must follow the institution's linear exit script.	Return, silence or withdrawal is interpreted as consent or lack of seriousness.
Welfare and child protection	'Stability', 'best interests of the child', 'appropriate parenting'	Poverty and displacement caused by violence demonstrate maternal incapacity.	Seeking protection can create further risks of losing housing or children.
Institutional division of labour	'Jurisdiction', 'the file was closed in accordance with procedure'	Each institution is responsible only for its own act; composite exposure belongs to no one.	Locally defensible decisions accumulate into practical freedom for the perpetrator.
Appeal	'A remedy is available'	The existence of a legal route is sufficient regardless of time and material capacity.	Correction occurs after irreversible harm; formal rights substitute for operational protection.

The actors need not share one intention. Police may focus on incidents, prosecutors on evidence, shelters on capacity, welfare agencies on eligibility, child protection on stability and migration authorities on

status. Each decision may appear intelligible within its own domain. Yet if their cumulative effect raises the woman's cost of leaving, delays constraints on the perpetrator and returns system-produced behaviour as a feature of her character, normative prohibition has been converted into operational permission.

This distinction also prevents an intentionalist leap from 'the institution failed to protect' to 'the institution desired violence'. A finding of covert legitimization requires a traceable sequence: a pre-judgement attached to the female body or gender role; its translation into a neutral standard; an asymmetric distribution of evidential or exit burdens; a decision that preserves the perpetrator's practical field; and the return of the resulting harm as a new adverse judgement about the woman.

2.3. Three Institutional Functions of Feminist Language

The protocol rejects aggregate claims such as 'early feminism was racist' or 'late feminism is emancipatory'. At least three functions must be distinguished within the same historical period. Feminist language may operate as **counter-pressure**, producing an alternative reality against the dominant record; as **selective emancipation**, speaking in the name of 'woman' while silently universalising the white, propertied, heterosexual, citizen and middle-class woman; or as a **legitimizing input**, converting women's real suffering into a warrant for colonial intervention, war, border control or anti-migrant politics. The presence of the language of women's rights does not settle which function is being performed.

3. Global Feminist Literature: Not One History, but Conflicting Realities

Adding names and regions to a bibliography does not by itself overcome Eurocentrism. A text may refer to Africa, Latin America, South Asia or Indigenous women while retaining European periods, analytical units and standards of emancipation. The comparison undertaken here therefore concerns not territories as such but divergent answers to four questions: Who counts as a woman? Where does violence begin? What does an institution do? What counts as agency?

This comparison imposes two limits on the Reality lens. First, the lens cannot independently explain the historical production of the categories whose circulation it follows. Secondly, it cannot assume in advance that women's negotiation, counter-archives, solidarity or reform from within an institution are ineffective. Institutional composition must be demonstrated as a finding; it cannot be presumed as a totality.

3.1. The Colonial and Historical Constitution of the Category 'Woman'

Oyèrónkẹ Oyěwùmí challenges the assumption that the biological body and the category 'woman' organise every society in the same fundamental way. Projecting a Western gender binary backwards onto old Yoruba society is not simply inaccurate description; it is a colonial production of knowledge. Where seniority or other principles organised status, the importation of body-centred categories helped produce the hierarchy it purported merely to observe (Oyěwùmí, 1997).

María Lugones similarly argues that race and gender were not constituted as two independent axes later brought together by colonialism. The colonial/modern gender system jointly organised humanity, sexuality, labour and governable population (Lugones, 2007). Aileen Moreton-Robinson demonstrates that

the white feminist subject cannot be detached from settler colonialism, while Sharmila Rege shows that Dalit women's testimony is not merely the report of personal experience but a counter-epistemology capable of changing what counts as theory (Moreton-Robinson, 2000; Rege, 1998).

The Reality lens does not supersede these genealogies. Without the history of category formation, following records through institutions becomes empty formalism. Without tracing their contemporary institutional effects, however, genealogy can leave the material afterlife of categories under-specified.

3.2. Women-Centred and Matrilineal Counter-Cases: The Body Is Not Destiny

The claim that 'history contains no matriarchal society' is too categorical because it depends upon what matriarchy is made to mean. Matriliney traces descent and membership through the mother's line; matrilocality places post-marital residence near the woman's kin; matriarchy, in its stronger sense, denotes women's determining role in collective and political authority. These terms are not interchangeable (Johnson, 2016/2023).

Among the Minangkabau, descent and important ancestral property pass through women. Peggy Reeves Sanday analyses this not as a reversal in which women dominate men, but as a social order in which women occupy the centre (Sanday, 2002). Mosuo households and duolocal intimate relations challenge the claim that the conjugal nuclear family is the only natural economic and reproductive unit (Shih, 2001). Within Haudenosaunee political organisation, clan mothers possessed authority to select and remove certain leaders, contradicting any presumption that women are naturally unfit for political judgement (National Museum of the American Indian, 2009).

These cases establish three points. There is no necessary connection between the female body and political dependence. Matriliney does not automatically produce equality or the absence of violence. Yet kinship, property and residence cannot be treated as inconsequential. Comparative findings from the Democratic Republic of the Congo report greater autonomy and lower acceptance and experience of domestic violence among women in some matrilineal groups; because matriliney operates with other property, residence and support practices, this cannot be generalised as a universal causal law (Lowes, 2020).

These are not complete tests of the Onopticon. They are **necessity tests**:

Tablo 3. Matrilineal and women-centred counter-cases

Social order	Documented institutional difference	Necessity claim it disrupts	What it does not establish
Minangkabau	Descent and principal ancestral property pass through women.	Women must necessarily be propertyless and dependent upon a husband's lineage.	That all political and religious authority belongs to women, or that violence is absent.
Mosuo	Matrilineal households and duolocal partnerships differ from conjugal marriage.	The nuclear marital family is the sole natural unit of reproduction and economic life.	A conflict-free, unchanging or fully egalitarian order.
Haudenosaunee	Clan mothers could select and remove particular leaders.	Women are naturally incapable of political decision.	Female supremacy in every domain or the complete absence of patriarchal relations.

Social order	Documented institutional difference	Necessity claim it disrupts	What it does not establish
Comparative groups in the Democratic Republic of the Congo	Some matrilineal groups report greater female autonomy and lower violence.	Kinship, property and support structures have no effect on women's capacity to leave violence.	That matrilineality alone reduces violence everywhere.

Their theoretical importance lies not in constructing a romantic past but in breaking the claim of categorical necessity. The same bodily difference can produce different consequences under different arrangements of property, residence, support and authority.

3.3. The Constitution of Patriarchy: Not One Origin but Multiple Institutionalised

Patriarchy should not be narrated as a single event in which a universal matriarchy gave way to a uniform male order. A more defensible account treats **patriarchies** as variable compositions of descent, property, labour, warfare, religion and state formation. Gerda Lerner's historical work shows how women's sexuality and reproductive capacity became entangled with property, inheritance and political hierarchy, but neither archaeological evidence nor early law supports a simple, universal transition formula (Lerner, 1986; Eller, 2000).

The laws associated with Hammurabi regulated marriage, adultery, inheritance and status asymmetrically, yet the phrase 'women were merely male property' obscures differences of class, marital status and legal capacity. Greek citizenship excluded most women from formal political authority while leaving important variation across city, class and period. Roman *patria potestas* and the *paterfamilias* established broad male household authority, but the familiar claim that every Roman father possessed an unlimited and routinely exercised right to kill his wife and family confuses legal ideal, historical practice and period (Cantarella, 1987; May, 2019).

These qualifications do not weaken the analysis of patriarchy. They turn it from a slogan into an account of decision architecture. The relevant question is not simply whether women were persons, but which rights were made conditional upon family status, loyalty, sexuality, evidence and class. Sylvia Walby's analysis of patriarchy across paid work, household production, the state, male violence, sexuality and culture likewise demonstrates that patriarchal ordering cannot be reduced to a single institution (Walby, 1990).

3.4. Africa: Negotiation and Decolonisation

African feminist thought does not permit the continent to be treated as one tradition. Obioma Nnaemeka's *nego-feminism* offers an important methodological warning: feminist agency need not take the form of open rupture, individual autonomy or the total defeat of an opponent. Negotiation, complementarity and strategically working within constraints can express political intelligence rather than passivity (Nnaemeka, 2004).

Sylvia Tamale places gender regimes in relation to colonial law, religion, family, sexuality, the academy and capitalist development. Decolonisation is not achieved by substituting local words for European concepts;

it requires a reorganisation of what counts as knowledge, who counts as a theorist and which forms of life are recognised as legitimate (Tamale, 2020).

The 1929 Women's War in south-eastern Nigeria supplies a historical mechanism rather than a decorative regional example. Colonial indirect rule displaced or degraded women's political institutions, installed warrant chiefs and rendered women's organised action legible to the colonial archive as a 'riot'. Women responded through assemblies and the practice conventionally translated as 'sitting on a man', directing collective action against taxation, native courts and the administrative authorities that had narrowed their political standing (Van Allen, 1972). The case exposes two connected operations: colonial administration first altered the institutional field in which women could act, then its archive redescribed women's organised counter-power as disorder. What the record called an eruption was also a struggle over who possessed authority to name political action.

This literature supplies a counter-test for the Reality lens. A woman who negotiates within a restrictive order cannot automatically be classified as Homovictimus. If negotiation changes the decision rule, opens an access route or gives women authority over the production of categories, closure must be rejected. If it merely adapts the subject to an unaltered outcome and then records adaptation as free consent, the feedback mechanism is strengthened. The distinction is made by consequences, not presumed intentions.

3.5. Latin America: Body, Territory, Debt and the Heterosexual Nation

Latin American feminist thought does not confine violence to interpersonal assault or lack of legal recognition. Rita Segato treats the violated female body as a surface upon which territorial and sovereign authority is written (Segato, 2010). Ochy Curiel examines the heterosexual nation as a legal and political regime rather than a merely private sexual norm (Curiel, 2013). Community feminist approaches refuse to separate body from territory, or territory from colonialism and extractive economies (Paredes, 2010).

Verónica Gago brings debt, precarity, violence and social reproduction into the same feminist cartography. Françoise Vergès likewise argues that a civilising and white feminism can become complicit with racial capitalism and colonial rule, while an emancipatory language that ignores care and cleaning can rest upon the exhaustion of other women (Gago, 2020; Vergès, 2021).

This literature corrects a possible narrowing of the Onopticon. Material life is not external to the decision circuit. Debt, land loss, housing and care determine whether formal protection can become an actual exit. A record travels through a field already structured by these material conditions.

3.6. South Asia: Nationalism and Caste

Kumari Jayawardena's history of women's movements in Asia and the Middle East demonstrates that feminism was not a Western idea transmitted unidirectionally to a passive periphery. Anti-colonial and national movements opened public and organisational space for women while also risking their re-enclosure as bearers of national authenticity and communal honour (Jayawardena, 1986).

Savitribai and Jyotirao Phule's struggle over education, Tarabai Shinde's critique of gender double standards, and Dalit feminist standpoint theory show that caste cannot be added to gender as a secondary

variable. A national emancipation that retains caste hierarchy can widen the public gate for some women while intensifying the pre-classification of others (Shinde, 1882/1994; Rege, 1998).

Bhanwari Devi's case shows why this warning must be followed into institutions. She was employed through a state development programme and attacked after intervening against child marriage; the criminal process that followed became inseparable from caste, gender and the state's contradictory position as both employer and failed guarantor of protection (Abraham, 2012). The collective litigation associated with the case produced the Supreme Court's *Vishaka* guidelines on workplace sexual harassment (*Vishaka*, 1997). The result is analytically double. The violence and failed redress reveal operational permission beneath formal duties, while the subsequent change in the governing rule demonstrates that contestation can interrupt a circuit. Legal correction must not be rewritten as retroactive proof that the original institutions worked.

3.7. Religion, Local Law and Agency from Within the State

Saba Mahmood demonstrates the limits of defining agency exclusively as resistance to norms or liberal autonomy. Such a definition can misread how religious women form themselves and act within normative traditions (Mahmood, 2005). Musawah's work on equality in Muslim family law brings Islamic teachings, universal human rights, constitutional guarantees and women's lived realities into the same field of interpretation. Liberation need not be equated automatically with an exit from religion; interpretation and law can be contested from within (Musawah, 2009).

Islah Jad's account of the 'NGO-isation' of Arab women's movements identifies a different danger. Adaptation to professional project language, funders' priorities and measurable outputs can weaken political relations with a movement's social base. Women's problems become visible, but the format of visibility is determined by the donor institution's decision needs (Jad, 2004). Recognition here is not absence; it is transformed representation.

3.8. East and Southeast Asia: State, Nationalism and Organisation

Women's movements in East and Southeast Asia cannot be read as delayed repetitions of Western waves. The same label 'feminist movement' can refer to autonomous organisation against the state, work through state bureaux, or alliances with labour, peasant and nationalist movements (Roces and Edwards, 2010).

Wang Zheng's study of socialist feminists in China shows why 'the state' cannot be treated as a single will. Women acting within party-state institutions created real reforms and organisational capacities, even as those capacities remained exposed to hierarchy and co-option (Z. Wang, 2016). The negative case matters: institutional density does not always produce enclosure. It can also create internal correction, resources and counter-records.

The 2022 case of the woman found chained in Feng County, Xuzhou, reveals the opposite possibility: digital visibility without immediate institutional recognisability. Public video made extreme confinement visible, yet early local accounts treated marriage, mental illness and family management as categories

capable of displacing the question of trafficking and coercion. A later provincial investigation recognised trafficking and official failure, while subsequent legal analysis situated the case within wider weaknesses in the governance of the abduction, sale and purchase of women (D. Wang, 2023). The case should not be declared a complete Onopticon without an individual cross-domain M3 timeline. Its value is narrower and more exact: it shows that visibility does not itself determine the category under which institutions will read a woman, and that correction can begin only after the initial administrative reality has been publicly broken.

3.9. From Recognition to Administrative Violence, and from Administrative Violence to Data Composition

Nancy Fraser shows that justice cannot be reduced either to cultural recognition or to economic redistribution; gender and race operate in both domains (Fraser, 1995). Judith Butler asks which lives become recognisable, protectable and grievable (Butler, 2009). The Reality lens does not replace these arguments. It asks a narrower question: what does the record of a recognised person do in the next decision?

This question approaches Dean Spade's account of administrative violence: reforms of rights and inclusion do not automatically change how administrative systems distribute life chances (Spade, 2015). Sara Ahmed shows how an institution can receive a complaint while remaking the complainant as a source of disruption (Ahmed, 2012; 2021). Dorothy Smith's institutional ethnography follows the ways in which texts, forms and files coordinate action across organisational locations (Smith, 2005). Cross-routing is therefore not proposed in an empty theoretical field.

Feminist surveillance studies show that surveillance normalises gender, race, whiteness, heterosexuality, disability and class together (Dubrofsky and Magnet, 2015). Simone Browne's concept of **racialising surveillance** demonstrates that contemporary biometrics and profiling are not detached from the histories of slavery and racial control; surveillance does not simply observe pre-existing difference but materially reproduces borders, bodies and categories of suspicion (Browne, 2015). The Onopticon does not claim to supersede Browne. It changes the unit of inquiry from surveillance alone to the circulation of its consequences: does the profile enter decisions about work, housing, migration, health or children, and does the harm produced by those decisions become new evidence for the initial suspicion?

Ruha Benjamin shows how technology can recode inequality in forms made to appear neutral and innovative, while Virginia Eubanks demonstrates how automated welfare and risk systems profile and punish poor people (Benjamin, 2019; Eubanks, 2018). *Data Feminism* rejects the idea that data speak for themselves (D'Ignazio and Klein, 2020). In relation to this literature, the Reality lens cannot plausibly claim originality for saying that institutions classify, complaints can rebound, surveillance is unequal, or data are political. Its contribution must rest upon a narrower mechanism: an output changes purpose as it enters another institution; separately defensible decisions close options in combination; and the deprivation produced by the system returns as validation of the original category.

3.10. Comparative Implications of Global Feminist Literature

Table 4. Global feminist literatures and the comparative position of the Reality lens

Feminist approach	Principal unit of analysis	Mechanism established by the literature	Additional question posed by the Reality lens	Debt and limit of the lens
Black and intersectional feminism	A subject positioned within race, class and gender	Single-axis law and politics lose Black women.	How are different institutional decisions about the same subject translated into one another?	It cannot replace intersectionality; it follows its institutional and temporal trace.
Colonial and decolonial feminism	Historical production of humanity, woman and gender	Race and gender are co-constituted through colonialism.	How does the historical category operate in contemporary records and decisions?	It follows operation, not origin.
Matrilineal and women-centred social research	Descent, property, residence and political authority	The female body need not be translated into male guardianship.	Which arrangements provide independent resources, a return network and decision-making power?	It cannot equate matriliney with equality, patriarchy or non-violence.
African and negotiatory feminisms	Agency in context, community and negotiation	Transformation need not appear as open rupture.	Does negotiation change the outcome or merely adapt the subject to it?	It cannot read accommodation automatically as passivity.
Dalit, Indigenous and anti-settler-colonial feminisms	Caste, land, sovereignty and testimony	Mainstream feminism can reproduce its own invisible norm.	Can counter-testimony correct the institutional decision?	Race, caste and Indigeneity cannot be treated as historically identical.
Latin American and community feminisms	Body-territory, debt, femicide and reproduction	Interpersonal violence combines with economic and colonial ordering.	Into which administrative judgement and feedback does material deprivation pass?	Material exploitation cannot be reduced to data circulation.
Islamic and local reform feminisms	Interpretation, law and lived reality within norms	Agency includes forms other than liberal rupture.	Does reinterpretation alter the decision rule and outcome?	Religious agency cannot be dismissed as false consciousness.
East and Southeast Asian movements	State, nationalism, labour and transnational organisation	State intervention, autonomous movements and co-option combine variably.	Does institutional density produce enclosure or correction?	Neither state nor movement can be presumed unitary.
Recognition and redistribution	Status, representation and material justice	Recognition alone does not repair injustice.	What subsequent outcome follows from the record of recognition?	The lens did not invent the critique of recognition.
Administrative violence and institutional ethnography	Administrative systems, complaint, text and everyday coordination	Rights do not automatically become life chances; texts coordinate institutions.	Through which carrier does one decision enter another domain?	These are the lens's closest theoretical neighbours.
Feminist surveillance and data studies	Data, biometrics, profiles and classification	Technology recodes historical inequality.	Does the composition of systems produce feedback-driven foreclosure?	The claim that 'data are not neutral' is not new.
Reproductive justice and social reproduction	Care, fertility, labour, debt and sustaining life	Abstract choice is constrained by material conditions.	What life becomes possible through the totality of health, housing, income and child-related decisions?	The lens did not discover material life; it locates it within a decision circuit.

The distinctive unit of the Reality lens is not 'woman', identity or institution, but **the passage of consequences between decisions**. Historically produced categories can travel from one institution's record into another institution's judgement of risk, eligibility, competence or credibility. Those decisions

can form a composite foreclosure in one life, and a survival tactic developed within that foreclosure can return as evidence that the original classification was correct.

4. Early-Modern Feminist Formation: Access to Rights and Compulsory Categorisation

4.1. The Narrow Body of the Universal Female Subject

Olympe de Gouges's *Declaration of the Rights of Woman and of the Female Citizen* exposed the gendered limit of the French Revolution's universalism (de Gouges, 1791). Sarah and Angelina Grimké linked women's equality to abolition, while Anna Julia Cooper treated the position of Black women as a political threshold constituted by race and gender together (Grimké, 1838; Cooper, 1892).

Later, bell hooks placed this counter-tradition at the centre of feminist theory, asking not merely on whose behalf a rights claim speaks but whose experience it treats as the measure of womanhood (hooks, 1981; 1984). Nevertheless, the dominant architecture of early rights discourse was organised around a gate of access. Its recurring subject was the woman already recognisable as a civil person who was unjustly denied entry.

The divisions around the Fifteenth Amendment in the United States reveal the racial boundary of that architecture. The white woman could be represented as a civil subject barred from a right, while Black men and women were pre-classified as racially suspect political subjects. The Nineteenth Amendment prohibited sex-based denial of the vote in 1920, yet Jim Crow law, poll taxes, literacy tests, white terror and lynching continued to close practical access for Black women. Formal entry and compulsory categorisation were operating simultaneously.

4.2. Sojourner Truth: The Re-racialisation of Speech

Sojourner Truth's 1851 intervention at the women's rights convention in Akron remains foundational because it shows race and gender transforming one another within the same subject. Yet the version remembered as 'Ain't I a Woman?' was reconstructed years later in a racialised Southern dialect that Truth, raised in Dutch-speaking New York, did not speak. The more contemporary account differs materially (Library of Congress, 2021).

The archive is not an innocent carrier. The Black woman's speech may be admitted into feminist memory only after being rewritten to fit a recognisable racial type. Pre-recognition operates not only through courts, police and censuses, but through the grammar of remembrance.

Trouillot demonstrates that silence is not created only when a completed history is censored; it can enter during fact creation, archival assembly, retrieval and the production of retrospective significance (Trouillot, 1995). Hartman adds a specifically gendered and racial warning: the archive of Atlantic slavery may preserve the violated Black woman primarily through the language and interests of the violence that captured her, leaving presence itself structured by loss (Hartman, 2008). For the Reality lens, archival absence and categorical over-presence are therefore not opposites. A woman may disappear from the

record or appear only through a pre-assigned type. Yet archival silence cannot be filled by theoretical desire. The test remains what record was produced, who could correct it, which subsequent decision received it and what material consequence followed.

4.3. Ida B. Wells: The Rape Myth, Lynching and the Counter-Archive

Ida B. Wells's anti-lynching investigations demolished the claim that lynching protected white women from the sexual threat of Black men. The same order that invented and circulated this threat largely left sexual violence by white men against Black women unpunished (Wells, 1892; 1895).

This double judgement reveals the racial limit of the universal female subject. White womanhood was constructed as purity requiring violent protection; Black womanhood as sexual availability unworthy of protection. Wells challenged not only prejudice but the evidential architecture of newspaper reports, official records and public numbers. Her counter-archive turned the production of truth into a material political struggle.

For the Reality lens, this is decisive. The record did not merely fail to discover reality. Journalism, administration and physical terror helped produce the reality through which subsequent violence became intelligible.

4.4. Marriage, Consent and Legal Impossibility

One of the clearest forms of patriarchal pre-recognition was the marital rape exemption. Marriage generated a presumption of irrevocable sexual consent that could make it legally impossible for a wife to occupy the category of rape victim. She remained a legal person, but the category 'wife' blocked access to bodily integrity within marriage.

Late-modern feminist struggle substantially dismantled these exemptions. *People v. Liberta* rejected New York's marital exemption in 1984, illustrating the capacity of legal challenge to interrupt compulsory classification. Yet the recognition of legal possibility did not automatically remove unequal expectations concerning resistance, corroboration, delay and credibility.

5. Colonial Feminism and the Metropolis's Selective Universalism

Colonial power did not need to deny women's real oppression. It could recognise that oppression and convert it into evidence that the colonised population lacked the capacity for self-government. Women were made visible as victims while being denied political authorship over the meaning and consequences of their suffering.

Leila Ahmed shows how the language of women's emancipation could coexist with imperial domination, while Lila Abu-Lughod warns against the familiar figure of 'saving Muslim women' as a substitute for engaging their histories, political projects and material conditions (Ahmed, 1992; Abu-Lughod, 2002). Chandra Talpade Mohanty similarly demonstrates how 'Third World woman' was produced as a homogeneous, passive and tradition-bound object for Western feminist knowledge (Mohanty, 1984; 2003).

The problem is not that the violence described was fictitious. It is that recognition was cross-routed into a judgement about the civilisation, sovereignty and governability of others. The woman appeared to be protected, but protection established the coloniser's authority and narrowed the political capacity of those in whose name it spoke.

Mahmood's work on women's piety movements in Cairo further exposes the limits of recognising agency only as refusal, while anti-caste struggles over women's education in India show that neither colonial rule nor nationalist emancipation exhausted the field of domination. The relevant question is therefore not whether feminist discourse is Western or local in the abstract, but into which institutional circuit a claim enters and whose field of action its consequences expand.

6. Transitional Threshold: Violence Enters the Public Record

The aftermath of the Second World War, the United Nations human-rights order, struggles for decolonisation and new claims to citizenship created a threshold between early- and late-modern feminist logics. Violence entered public and legal records more fully, but visibility did not determine the category under which it would be judged.

6.1. Recy Taylor and the Citizenship Politics of the Counter-Record

In 1944, Recy Taylor was abducted and raped by six white men in Alabama. The failure to prosecute them demonstrated that Black women's bodily security could not be separated from citizenship. Rosa Parks and the NAACP organised around the case, turning a local refusal of justice into a national counter-record (McGuire, 2010).

The institutional decision cannot be reduced to a neutral 'absence of evidence'. Taylor identified her attackers; the case was investigated and organised publicly. The problem lay in the racial and gendered distribution of credibility, prosecutorial seriousness and protection. The counter-record made silence legible as an imposed condition rather than proof that violence had not occurred.

6.2. The Second World War: Did Race Consume Gender?

The proposition that race consumed gender after the Second World War identifies a real displacement, but it must be stated carefully. To group every case under the single label 'wartime rape' can reproduce the very concealment the label is meant to overcome. Nazi persecution, military sexual slavery in the Japanese empire, sexual violence committed during the Soviet advance, and violence against Jewish, Roma, Slavic, Korean, Chinese, Filipino and German women were organised through different institutions and political meanings.

Nuremberg did not prosecute sexual violence through a distinct charge, despite evidence that could have supported such analysis. The Tokyo proceedings did not place the military system of sexual slavery known through the history of 'comfort women' at their centre. This is not equivalent to saying that sexual violence was wholly unknown or absent from post-war law. The decisive issue is the category under which known conduct becomes actionable. When rape appears merely as general atrocity, an offence against

honour, an incident of military indiscipline or evidence of another crime, the woman's body enters the record without generating a distinct structure of responsibility.

Political alliances, national honour, archival inequality and the Cold War contributed to prolonged silence. Yet to say that these women were 'completely erased' would itself erase survivors' testimony and the transnational counter-archives they later built. The defensible finding is narrower: official prohibition and practical impunity coexisted, while narratives of enemy identity, revenge and national shame displaced attention from gendered organisation.

The 1948 Genocide Convention was not wholly blind to reproduction; it included measures intended to prevent births within a group (United Nations, 1948). Even so, a reproductive act could become legally visible chiefly through the destruction of the group, rather than through the woman's bodily and sexual autonomy. Recognition of the racial or national project could therefore absorb the gendered specificity of the violence through which that project operated.

6.3. The Threshold of the 1990s: From Collateral Effect to Constitutive Crime

The international criminal tribunals for the former Yugoslavia and Rwanda did not resolve selective visibility, but they established a major legal threshold. The ICTY prosecuted wartime sexual violence explicitly and developed jurisprudence recognising rape as torture and sexual enslavement as a crime against humanity. In *Akayesu*, the ICTR held that rape and sexual violence could constitute acts of genocide when committed with the specific intent to destroy a protected group (ICTR, 1998; ICTY, n.d.).

Conduct formerly treated as an inevitable residue of war or a secondary element of general atrocity could now be named as a constitutive technique of military and ethnic projects. The unit of decision shifted: injury to women approached recognition as an offence against bodily and sexual autonomy, not merely against the honour of a family or nation.

This legal gain also contains a possible hierarchy. The high threshold of genocidal intent cannot mean that systematic sexual violence is insignificant when no genocidal nexus is proved. If only the victim who enters the most elevated crime category becomes fully intelligible, a new form of covert exclusion emerges. The system does not always legitimate sexual violence openly. It may redirect violence into a residual category that leaves its organisation, perpetrator and gendered injury at the margins of the decision.

7. Late-Modern Feminist Formation: Protection, Records and Decision Circuits

7.1. The Transformation of 'Private' Violence into a Public Issue

From the 1960s onwards, feminist movements achieved a decisive transformation: domestic and sexual violence ceased to be treated solely as private misfortune. Refuges, rape crisis centres, consciousness-raising groups, civil-law reform and the removal of marital rape exemptions widened the domain of recognition. CEDAW and General Recommendation No. 19 placed violence against women within the

international law of discrimination; General Recommendation No. 35 further emphasised intersecting discrimination, due diligence and effective remedy (CEDAW Committee, 1992; 2017).

The Reality lens extends rather than dismisses this achievement. Violence is not only the outcome of discriminatory treatment; it is also the enforcement of a categorical judgement that attaches obedience, care, sexual availability, diminished credibility and constrained autonomy to the female body. Its covert form converts the behaviour generated by violence into evidence about the woman's choice, personality or nature.

Recognition also creates records. Police reports, medical files, refuge records, welfare assessments, immigration status, child-protection reports and platform data need not remain separate. Each institution may act for a limited reason while the woman encounters their composite effect. Normative legitimacy for violence decreases, yet operational permission can persist through delayed thresholds, asymmetric evidence, inadequate housing and income, divided responsibility and untimely appeal. What the order sustains is not the moral rightness of violence but its **practicability**.

The distinctive late-modern form is therefore not a single command centre. Consent is fragmented while exposure is integrated. Each contact can appear procedurally proper; the total result confronts the subject as a reality she did not author, cannot fully see and may be unable to correct.

7.2. *Nicholson v Scoppetta*: Victimisation Reclassified as the 'Failure to Protect'

New York's child-protection system treated some mothers experiencing domestic violence as neglectful because their children had witnessed abuse, and removed children from them on the ground that they had 'failed to protect'. In *Nicholson v Scoppetta*, the New York Court of Appeals held that witnessing domestic violence does not automatically constitute neglect, that a mother cannot be deemed inadequate merely because she is a victim, and that removal can inflict greater harm upon the child (*Nicholson v Scoppetta*, 2004).

The importance of the case lies not only in a corrective appellate judgement but in the architecture the court had to interrupt. A woman entered the record as a victim; the same record crossed into child protection and became evidence that she was an unsafe mother. The perpetrator's violence was translated into a test of her parenting. Fear, economic dependency and the danger of separation ceased to be conditions imposed upon her and became adverse information about her competence.

For the coding protocol, K1 is the pre-reading of 'mother subjected to violence' as a potential 'neglectful mother'. K2 makes child safety conditional upon the mother's capacity to leave and comply with an institutional safety script. Transfer of the violence record into child-protection or custody decisions establishes M2 and K4=2; removal of the child can establish K3=2. The reported judgement does not by itself establish a complete M3 timeline in which the instability caused by removal is subsequently used as fresh evidence of maternal incapacity.

The case is also counter-evidence to absolute closure. Judicial contestation limited the automatic conversion of victimisation into neglect. Yet where correction follows removal and family disruption, the

existence of a remedy does not eliminate the gap between formal law and operational protection (Dunlap, 2005).

7.3. *Safe to Share?*: From a Request for Protection to Immigration Enforcement

The *Safe to Share?* super-complaint brought by Liberty and Southall Black Sisters examined the transfer by police of victims' and witnesses' data for immigration-enforcement purposes. The joint report by HMICFRS, the College of Policing and the Independent Office for Police Conduct found inconsistent practices and inadequate governance, and recommended consideration of safe-reporting mechanisms and a functional separation or 'firewall' between policing and immigration control (HMICFRS, College of Policing and IOPC, 2020).

The subsequent Home Office review accepted that data sharing could deter migrant victims from reporting crime and that perpetrators could exploit immigration status as an instrument of threat and control. It nevertheless declined to establish a complete firewall, retaining data-sharing rationales linked to safeguarding and immigration enforcement (Home Office, 2021).

The circuit is direct. A woman approaches the police for safety; the police record becomes an input into immigration-status control; the gate of protection also becomes a gate of border administration. The perpetrator can make the threat 'if you report me, you will be deported' credible by invoking this institutional connection. If she does not report, silence can be read as absence of violence or refusal to co-operate. If she reports, a migration consequence becomes possible.

The official evidence strongly supports M2 and K4=2 because the cross-domain data route is documented. It supports K3=1 where fear and deterrence increase the cost of access. It does not establish that every transfer produces detention, removal or loss of status; K3=2 requires an individual file. Nor does the report alone prove an M3 circuit in which non-reporting becomes evidence that the original complaint lacked seriousness. Its scientific value lies in this boundary: cross-routing is established; full feedback requires additional case-level evidence.

7.4. *Maria da Penha Maia Fernandes v Brazil*: Impunity Produced through Time beneath Legal Prohibition

In 1983, Maria da Penha Maia Fernandes was permanently paralysed after her husband attempted to kill her. Despite substantial evidence, more than seventeen years passed without a final and effective domestic result. The Inter-American Commission on Human Rights treated the delay not merely as an isolated procedural failure but as part of a discriminatory pattern in which ineffective police and judicial action tolerated domestic violence against women (IACHR, 2001).

The case clarifies the distinction between normative prohibition and operational permission. Attempted murder was prohibited; police, prosecutors, courts and evidence existed. Yet repeated delay preserved the perpetrator's practical field and the survivor's uncertainty. The system did not declare violence to be right. It emptied prohibition by separating it from the time at which enforcement could still protect.

K3=2 is established by permanent bodily harm and the prolonged absence of effective redress. K5=2 is supported by the failure of domestic remedies to act in time, even after irreversible harm. Repeated action within police and judicial institutions indicates M1, but the case does not establish K4=2 across different domains of life, nor M3 in which the delay's consequences became evidence about the survivor's character. It is a powerful case of operational permission through impunity, not a complete Onopticon.

7.5. *R.P.B. v the Philippines: The Composition of Gender, Age and Disability Judgments*

R.P.B. was a seventeen-year-old deaf and non-speaking young woman when she reported rape by a neighbour. The CEDAW Committee's record identified failures to provide appropriate sign-language interpretation, delays in testimony, an interview by a male officer contrary to applicable arrangements, and judicial reliance upon stereotypes about how a rape victim should resist, escape and behave (CEDAW Committee, 2014).

Her testimony was not discounted only because she was a woman. She was measured against a hearing, speaking and normatively resistant 'ideal victim'. Gender stereotypes, assumptions about youth and ableist communication standards were composed in one decision. They are not interchangeable histories, but they share the operation of inferring competence and credibility from the body.

K1 is the presumption of diminished communicative or testimonial capacity. K2 makes access to justice conditional upon the behaviour of a hearing and speaking victim. Delay and the absence of an effective domestic remedy support K5=2. Because the record does not establish transfer into another domain or return of a system-produced consequence as fresh evidence, K4=2 and M3 are not shown. The case is a boundary case of composed bodily stereotypes within adjudication, not a full Onopticon.

7.6. *From Intersectionality to Cross-Routing*

The Combahee River Collective refused to treat racism, sexism, class exploitation and heterosexism as rival explanations of Black women's lives. Kimberlé Crenshaw's account of intersectionality demonstrated how single-axis law and policy lose women of colour, particularly when violence, immigration, employment and support services are analysed separately (Combahee River Collective, 1977; Crenshaw, 1991). Patricia Hill Collins's matrix of domination further located race, class and gender within structural, disciplinary, hegemonic and interpersonal domains of power (Collins, 1990).

Cross-routing does not replace this inheritance. Its question is narrower, institutional and temporal: through which carrier does a classification produced in one field enter another; into what new judgement is it translated; and how does the resulting deprivation return as apparent confirmation of the earlier record?

A migrant woman reports violence to the police, and a protection record also activates immigration-status risk. A poor mother seeks welfare support, and poverty travels into child protection as a sign of parental inadequacy. A Black woman who defends herself is more readily placed within a stereotype of aggression and recorded as a participant in mutual violence. A woman compelled by poverty or threat to return to

the perpetrator is described as 'not serious' about her complaint. The axes do not merely accumulate; behaviour required for survival on one axis becomes adverse evidence on another.

The migrant domestic worker makes the distinction concrete. When residence and permission to work are tied to a particular employer, leaving violence, harassment or unsafe work can translate an exit from an employment relation into loss of migration status. Flight from the employer becomes an input into detention or removal risk; that risk discourages approaches to health services, police and labour authorities, reproducing dependence upon the employer. The UN Committee on Migrant Workers has recognised that employer-tied status can obstruct escape and legal remedy and has stated that health workers should not be required to report a patient's regular or irregular status to immigration authorities (Committee on Migrant Workers, 2011, paras 21, 27, 43, 50 and 53).

There is cross-routing where an employment outcome reorganises migration and healthcare access. A full Onopticon finding nevertheless requires evidence, within one individual timeline, of termination, status loss, institutional transfer, material foreclosure, feedback and ineffective contestation. Intersectional position is not itself proof of a completed decision circuit.

Class is not a third label appended to race and gender. Income determines housing; housing determines exit; insecure work determines the time available to report and contest; debt and care determine the cost of institutional action. The same protection procedure may produce an exit for a woman with material resources and loss of housing or children for a poor woman. The task is not to rank axes but to identify the concrete cost into which each is converted.

7.7. The Backlash of Carceral Protection

Strengthening criminal law became an important feminist response to violence. Yet Elizabeth Bernstein, Kristin Bumiller, Leigh Goodmark, Beth Richie and INCITE! Women of Color Against Violence have shown that protection can expand policing, imprisonment, migration control and racialised state violence without securing women's material freedom (Bernstein, 2010; Bumiller, 2008; Goodmark, 2018; Richie, 2012; INCITE!, 2016). Françoise Vergès's feminist theory of violence likewise refuses to detach interpersonal violence from racial capitalism, colonialism and the state (Vergès, 2021).

The conclusion is not that criminal law is unnecessary, or that state intervention is intrinsically harmful. The name 'protection' cannot, however, acquit an intervention of its composite consequences. The Onopticon translates this literature into an institutional timeline: while a protection decision constrains the perpetrator, into which other domains is the woman transferred, what category is produced there, and does the resulting deprivation return as evidence for the initial judgement?

Research in the United States indicates that the racial composition of victim and perpetrator can affect the likelihood of arrest and dual arrest in intimate-partner violence cases (McCormack and Hirschel, 2021). This does not support the simple claim that police always arrest Black women. It does require attention to how self-defence becomes aggression, trauma becomes non-co-operation, remaining in a violent home becomes consent and poverty becomes neglect.

Mandatory intervention may be intended to reduce the burden of decision on the victim. Yet if arrest also produces household income loss, housing insecurity, immigration consequences or intensified policing of a community, a woman may avoid reporting. That avoidance can then be recorded as absence of need or refusal of help. The cost of protection rises; reporting falls; lower reporting is interpreted as lower need. That is a feedback circuit.

Success therefore cannot be measured only by arrests. Protection that narrows the perpetrator's movement while also narrowing the victim's housing, income, child, migration and community options can reproduce the conditions of violence through another institution.

7.8. Reproduction: From Abstract Choice to Population Decision

Late-modern reproductive rights have often been formulated through the right not to continue a pregnancy and access to abortion. That right is indispensable. Histories of coercive sterilisation involving Black, Indigenous, disabled, Puerto Rican, Mexican-origin and poor women nevertheless show why abstract 'choice' is insufficient. The sterilisation of the Relf sisters without their informed consent and the experiences documented in *Madrigal v Quilligan* expose how public institutions could classify the fertility of racialised women as a social problem (Roberts, 1997; Gutiérrez, 2008).

The governing order is not simply pronatalist or antinatalist. It differentiates populations. White and middle-class motherhood may be supported as the nation's future while poor or racialised maternity is coded as dependency, cost or incapacity. The same state can restrict abortion for one group while facilitating sterilisation for another. Policies that appear contradictory are connected at the level of selective population production.

The reproductive-justice framework developed by Black women activists in 1994 joined the rights to have a child, not to have a child, and to raise children in safe and sustainable conditions (Ross and Solinger, 2017). Its strength is to return choice to material reality. Housing, health, income, migration security, environmental conditions and state violence organise the field in which a formal consent box appears. A signature cannot prove freedom where available options have already been foreclosed.

7.9. The Digital Home, Dynamic Addressability and the Environmental A Priori

Digital and connected environments have become a significant domain of gendered violence. Phones, location services, cameras, locks, thermostats, vehicles and home-automation systems can be used for surveillance, control, threat and reality manipulation in intimate-partner abuse (Brown, Harkin and Tanczer, 2025). The perpetrator does not merely observe the victim; he can alter the temperature, access, light, sound and perceived safety of the home from a distance. Violence moves from the individual message into the environmental conditions of everyday life.

The survivor's responses can then be misread. Disconnecting a device appears as withdrawal from digital participation; changing accounts as suspicious conduct; repeated checking as paranoia; leaving the home as instability. The environment engineered by the perpetrator produces behaviour that can be used to

erode the survivor's credibility. Technology does not merely accelerate violence. It changes the form of evidence.

Algorithmic classification can attach itself to this environment. *Gender Shades* found marked intersectional disparities in commercial gender classification, with error rates reported as low as 0.8 per cent for light-skinned men and as high as 34.7 per cent for dark-skinned women (Buolamwini and Gebru, 2018). This is grave evidence of discriminatory performance, but not automatically an Onopticon. It becomes a circuit if the error enters policing, border, employment, credit, health or housing; if correction is ineffective; and if the earlier error becomes evidence for further suspicion.

A mechanism example makes the threshold concrete. Digital stalking, account takeover or messages sent in a survivor's name may generate workplace complaints and disciplinary action. Dismissal produces income loss; income loss produces housing insecurity; housing insecurity is then coded in child-protection or custody proceedings as evidence of an 'unstable parent'. K4=2 exists only when the decisions are demonstrably linked across domains; K3=2 when serious loss of income, housing or the relationship with a child follows; M3 when institutionally produced instability returns as evidence of risk or unreliability; and K5=2 when the survivor cannot correct the composite result before irreversible harm.

The example is an empirical hypothesis, not proof that every technological error constitutes an Onopticon. Comparable global evidence on technology-facilitated gender-based violence also remains limited (UN Women, 2024). Archival absence cannot be read as safety, but neither can a striking case establish universal prevalence.

7.10. Masculinised Equality and the Second Shift: The Care Circuit and 'Legal Hypocrisy'

'Under which form of government have women been drawn into the field of paid work on the same terms as men while their domestic and family responsibilities have been reduced to an equal degree?' This question changes the unit by which legal equality is measured. Entry into the factory, office, farm, school or profession does not itself establish equality. If cooking, cleaning, childcare, care for older and disabled relatives, emotional repair and the invisible coordination of family life continue to accumulate on the same body after paid work, access has produced a composition of burdens rather than a transfer of them. Hochschild and Machung's 'second shift' made this double working day visible at household level (Hochschild and Machung, 1989).

The problem is not only an unequal division of chores. Women enter a sphere historically organised around a worker whose care has been performed elsewhere and whose body is assumed not to be interrupted by pregnancy, birth, post-partum recovery, breastfeeding, illness or family dependency. Joan Acker's gendered-organisation analysis shows that the abstract, disembodied worker is silently modelled upon a life freed from primary care responsibility (Acker, 1990). The body occupying that role need not be male, but the norm is male-coded.

Masculinisation does not mean that paid work belongs to men or that women become men. Two realities must be distinguished. Pregnancy, birth, post-partum recovery and some forms of breastfeeding are embodied processes. Care, cleaning, cooking and emotional labour are socially assigned responsibilities.

The first being embodied does not make the second, or its economic consequences, women's natural destiny.

The Reality lens does not prohibit inquiry into who originally imposed a burden. It refuses to make its judgement dependent upon that origin. Custom may have assigned it, family may have maintained it, markets may have profited from it, and the state may never have expressly ordered it. If the actual distribution remains unchanged, women remain its subjects. The state is not external to tradition: working hours, school schedules, childcare provision, parental leave, taxation, welfare, pensions, custody standards and public-care budgets can turn inherited household arrangements into administrative infrastructure.

For this reason, escape from socially assigned responsibility cannot be treated as a third shift that every woman must complete alone through private negotiation, better time management, service purchase or 'choosing the right partner'. Where equality is a public and legal norm, redistribution of care must become an institutional obligation for men, employers, the state and the household. Otherwise the operating cost of the social order is privatised through women's time, bodies and futures.

The shortest formulation of the mechanism is: **at work, the woman is presumed to be a man; at home, she is left as a woman**. In paid work she is expected to possess no care burden or bodily interruption; at home she remains the default carer. Modern equality does not equalise two domains. It places two full responsibilities on the same body.

Comparative data support a strong but bounded answer. The ILO estimated that women performed 76.2 per cent of global unpaid care hours and spent 3.2 times as much time on unpaid care as men; no country in the dataset had achieved equal sharing (ILO, 2018). Later estimates indicate that hundreds of millions of women remain outside the labour force because of unpaid care responsibilities (ILO, 2024). These findings do not establish that no individual household has achieved equality. They do establish that no studied national order has demonstrated complete and durable equality at population level.

Forms of government are not identical. Social-democratic welfare states have reduced women's costs through public childcare, paid leave and services; state-socialist systems produced real gains through mass employment, education and childcare; liberal market democracies widened labour-market access. Yet none has fully dissolved the separation between equal participation in paid work and unequal responsibility for reproducing life (EIGE, 2020; Molyneux, 1981). The conclusion is not that every regime is equally bad. It is that labour-market participation and the reproduction of life are distinct fields of equality.

'Legal hypocrisy' would lose analytical value if it meant that every legislator consciously lies. The more precise formulation is **institutionalised normative contradiction**. Law recognises women as sex-neutral workers while institutions retain an ideal worker without care responsibilities and consign childcare shortages, short or transferable leave, unpredictable hours, pension loss and domestic division to the field of private choice. The resulting part-time work, career interruption, lower pay and exhaustion are then recorded as women's family orientation, weak commitment or preference.

The care circuit can be specified as follows:

1. **Dual pre-recognition (K1):** the same woman is read at home as the default carer and at work as a care-free, male-coded universal worker; the man is treated as a secondary or optional carer.
2. **Masculinised access gate (K2):** formal access to employment is open, but sustainable participation depends upon continuous availability and upon care being supplied by the woman, another woman in the family, or the market.
3. **Cross-domain consequence (M2/K4):** care-related absence, part-time work or interruption enters pay, promotion and pension decisions; income loss then narrows housing, health, credit and the capacity to leave violence.
4. **Feedback (M3):** exhaustion, time poverty and a discontinuous employment history become evidence of low productivity, insufficient commitment or a 'natural family preference'.
5. **Weak contestability (K5):** employment, family law, social security, taxation, care services and household power are treated as separate, leaving no forum capable of correcting their composition.

Unequal unpaid labour in a household is not automatically a complete Onopticon. A full finding requires the same timeline to connect care burdens to an employment decision, serious loss in another domain, the return of that loss as evidence for a gendered judgement, and ineffective contestation. The macro-pattern nevertheless supplies a powerful structural terrain for such circuits. Predictable, durable and gendered distributions of time poverty, health loss, reduced political participation, diminished savings and inability to leave violence constitute structural violence.

The circuit produces two asymmetrical success narratives. A woman who leaves paid work is described as having chosen dependency; one who carries both work and home becomes proof of the 'strong woman' and the viability of the order. Defeat disappears in the first case, exhaustion in the second. An expansion in women's capacity to be exploited is narrated as an expansion in freedom.

Class and race are internal to this arrangement. A higher-income woman may purchase domestic labour, but the burden is often transferred not to men or the public realm but to a poorer, migrant or racialised woman. Global care chains can finance equality in one household through low pay, family separation and insecure status in another (Parreñas, 2001). The relevant test is not simply whether the employing woman has been relieved, but onto which body, class, migration status and household the cost has moved.

The policy implication is not to remove women from paid work or sanctify care. Equality must be extended from the employment gate to the whole time-budget of life: accessible public care; equal, paid and non-transferable parental leave used by men in practice; compensation for pregnancy- and care-related losses in pay, promotion and pension; predictable working time and a right to rest; evaluation standards freed from the fiction of uninterrupted availability; and full labour and migration rights for domestic and care workers. These are not lessons teaching women how to escape the burden; they are public obligations to redistribute it.

7.11. Femonationalism: Women's Suffering Enters the Security Circuit

In late modernity, feminist language can enter security and migration politics through renewed forms of the colonial rescue narrative. Laura Bush's 2001 presentation of Afghan women's oppression as a moral justification for the 'war on terror' is an explicit example (Bush, 2001). The violence of Taliban rule was real. The question is not whether suffering existed, but into which political conclusion it was directed. When suffering becomes evidence for military intervention, Afghan women can be converted from political speakers into proof for a decision already taken (Abu-Lughod, 2002).

Afghan women were speaking and organising before this narrative. Founded in 1977, the Revolutionary Association of the Women of Afghanistan defended education, democracy and social justice against Soviet-backed rule, armed fundamentalism and the later use of women's liberation as a warrant for military intervention (Kolhatkar, 2002; RAWA, n.d.). This counter-archive refuses the imposed choice between victimhood under the Taliban and passive receipt of Western rescue.

Sara Farris's concept of femonationalism shows how women's rights can be articulated to nationalist, anti-migrant and specifically anti-Muslim projects (Farris, 2017). The category 'migrant man as threat to women' can expand border and police power while leaving migrant women's labour exploitation, insecure status and organising invisible.

The continuity between colonial feminism and late femonationalism lies not in denying women's pain but in appropriating it. Suffering is recognised, yet the practical result enlarges the state's intervention capacity rather than women's field of action. The presence of women's-rights language is therefore not evidence of a feminist outcome.

7.12. Foreclosing Recognition: When Acknowledgement Fixes the Limit of Redress

Recognition does not only open a claim. It can also determine in advance how far that claim is permitted to travel. I use **foreclosing recognition** to describe an institutional act in which injury is formally acknowledged and a material or symbolic remedy may be offered, while the future legal, political or archival consequences of the acknowledgement are restricted through finality, waiver or settlement. The institution no longer says that nothing happened. It says that what happened has now been recognised on terms that delimit what may still be demanded.

This differs from both non-recognition and conditional recognition. Non-recognition denies or displaces the injury. Conditional recognition makes entry into the victim or remedy category dependent upon proof, conduct or compliance. Foreclosing recognition admits the injury, but converts admission into a device of closure. It is not a new K6 threshold. It is a temporal and remedial mechanism capable of producing K5=2 when accepting an urgently needed remedy extinguishes effective contestation before the record, responsibility or full consequence of harm can be corrected.

The 2015 Japan-Republic of Korea agreement on the women subjected to Japan's military sexual-slavery system illustrates an attempted **diplomatic foreclosure**. The two governments announced that the issue was resolved 'finally and irreversibly', and Japan undertook a financial contribution to a foundation established by the Republic of Korea. The later Korean review found that a victim-centred approach had

not been adequately incorporated into the negotiations (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, 2015; Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Republic of Korea, 2017). Because the agreement was between governments rather than an individual waiver executed by each survivor, and because public contestation and later litigation continued, it should not be described as a completed juridical closure. Its analytical force lies precisely in the attempted conversion of inter-state acknowledgement into a limit upon claims whose authors had not controlled the terms of recognition.

The Mother and Baby Institutions Payment Scheme in Ireland presents a different form: **compensatory foreclosure**. An applicant need not waive claims merely to apply, but a person who accepts a payment must sign a legal waiver not to bring, or to discontinue, relevant proceedings against a public body concerning the circumstances covered by the application. Limited funding for independent legal advice is provided before acceptance (Department of Children, Disability and Equality, 2025). This is a clearer individual mechanism than diplomatic finality. It should not, however, be generalised to every Irish redress scheme or treated as legally identical to the Japan-Republic of Korea agreement.

Not every settlement or waiver is oppressive. A negotiated final settlement may enlarge agency where facts are accessible, independent advice is meaningful, bargaining power is not coercively unequal, compensation reasonably reflects the loss, refusal does not impose intolerable material cost, and public truth, record correction and accountability remain possible. Foreclosing recognition is supported only where six elements can be traced: formal acknowledgement; an offered remedy; a finality or waiver device; restricted authorship by those affected; closure of later litigation, record correction or institutional responsibility; and material or archival consequences that outlive the settlement. Where these elements are absent, the concept must not be declared.

The distinction sharpens the central question of the article. An institution may pass from ‘we do not recognise you’ to ‘we recognise you, but only within the consequence we have already authorised’. Recognition then ceases to be the opposite of enclosure. It becomes the form through which the maximum consequence of truth is administratively fixed.

8. A Comparative Anatomy of Early and Late Modernity

To reduce the difference between early- and late-modern feminist formations to ‘fewer rights’ versus ‘more rights’ is to miss the mechanism of transformation. The following ideal types identify changing centres of gravity; they do not erase counter-traditions within each period or claim that every geography follows the same chronology.

Tablo 5. Comparative anatomy of early- and late-modern feminist formations

Analytical dimension	Dominant early-modern form	Dominant late-modern form
Principal struggle	Access to legal and political rights	Consequences of protection and decision
Classification	Fixed status: wife, race, caste	Dynamic profile: risk, eligibility, credibility
Institutional arrangement	Singular gatekeeper	Distributed institutions

Analytical dimension	Dominant early-modern form	Dominant late-modern form
Position of violence	Private, natural or legally impossible	Recorded, but capable of cross-routing
Mode of legitimisation	Explicit natural, familial or legal hierarchy	Operational permission within formally neutral procedures and legal prohibition
Distribution of burdens	Obedience and family status assigned directly to women	Costs of prevention, proof, separation and exit transferred to the victim
Work and care	Man as the full worker/citizen; woman explicitly assigned to household and care	Woman invited into paid work while the worker norm remains care-free and male-coded
Racialised woman	Under-recognised as a rights-bearing subject	Under-recognised as a victim, over-recognised as a risk
Contestation	Prohibited or severely limited	Formally available, potentially ineffective
Technique of enclosure	Status and explicit exclusion	Data composition and feedback
Feminist danger	Selective universalism	Carceral or security-oriented integration
Counter-politics	Counter-declaration and counter-archive	Intersectional interruption of circuits and limits upon data

Early modernity was not without bureaucracy, statistics or data. Slavery, colonial censuses, passports, public health and poor relief were powerful classificatory systems. Late modernity has not abolished explicit legal exclusion. The distinction concerns the dominant technique: the earlier order more often fixed the subject through status; the later order is increasingly able to update a moving profile across institutions.

9. Theoretical Neighbourhood and the Boundary of Distinctiveness

A new name does not establish a new mechanism. The value of the Onopticon cannot rest upon redescribing established critiques of surveillance, discrimination, intersectionality, administrative violence and data power in denser language.

The following claims do not belong uniquely to the Onopticon: that 'woman' is historically and colonially constituted; legal equality does not guarantee material equality; race, caste, class and gender operate together; institutions can defend themselves against complainants; forms and texts coordinate organisations; data are not neutral; protection can expand carceral power; organisations assume a care-free male worker; care, debt and reproduction shape freedom; and agency exceeds open resistance. These are achievements of wide and plural feminist literatures.

The claim that violence against women is explicit or covert racism goes further than the intersectional proposition that racism and sexism work together. It argues that sexism is the historical operation, upon the female body, of a racist logic that assigns social nature and destiny before action. This is deliberately contestable. The category becomes defensible only where bodily pre-judgement is shown to produce

differentiated violence, vulnerability or institutional consequence. Conceptual breadth is therefore tied to a causal test.

The potential distinctiveness of the Reality lens lies in eight narrower operations:

1. **Normative prohibition versus operational permission:** official condemnation is separated from the conditions that preserve practical continuation.
2. **Post-recognition foreclosure:** analysis moves from whether recognition occurs to what the resulting record does next.
3. **Foreclosing recognition:** acknowledgement or compensation is converted into a predetermined limit upon later claim, correction or responsibility.
4. **Cross-routing:** one institution's output becomes an input into another domain's judgement of risk, eligibility, competence or credibility.
5. **Composite consequence:** individually lawful or defensible decisions can jointly remove reasonable options.
6. **Feedback validation:** system-produced poverty, instability, avoidance or dependence returns as evidence for the initial classification.
7. **Dual visibility:** the same person can be under-recognised as a victim and over-recognised as a risk.
8. **Adverse conversion of tactical agency:** a survival tactic developed under coercion is recorded as free choice and made the ground of a new adverse judgement.

Each operation intersects with existing scholarship. Distinctiveness lies not in the uniqueness of the parts, but in requiring them to be demonstrated within the same traceable circuit.

Tablo 6. Theoretical neighbourhood and the boundary of distinctiveness

Neighbouring approach	Point of intersection	Where a distinction must be demonstrated
Intersectionality	Multiple axes of domination converge in one life.	Not the presence of axes, but the carrier through which one decision enters another.
Institutional ethnography	Forms and texts coordinate work across institutions.	Whether coordination produces multi-domain foreclosure and feedback.
Administrative violence	Legal inclusion does not automatically change life chances.	Whether an administrative output becomes another domain's decision input and later confirmatory evidence.
Complaint studies	A complaint can remake the complainant as the problem.	Whether problematisation travels into housing, income, children or migration.
Recognition and redress	Acknowledgement and remedy can answer historical or institutional harm.	Whether finality or waiver converts recognition into closure before responsibility and linked records can be effectively contested.
Surveillance assemblage	Distributed data flows can form a functional whole.	Whether circulation produces material foreclosure rather than visibility alone.
Feminist data studies	Classification is constituted within power and context.	Whether an error or omission produces its own evidence through feedback.
Carceral feminism critique	Protection demands can expand police and penal power.	Whether a protective output narrows the survivor's position in other rights domains.

Neighbouring approach	Point of intersection	Where a distinction must be demonstrated
Gendered organisations and social reproduction	The 'neutral' worker assumes a male life without primary care.	Whether exhaustion and career interruption become judgements of commitment, competence or risk.
Time-use and care studies	Paid-work participation does not equalise unpaid labour or rest.	Whether the care deficit travels into employment, income, pension, housing and exit from violence.

The central originality claim can therefore be stated precisely:

The Onopticon does not claim originality for observing that institutions classify or surveil women. It identifies a completed circuit in which one institution's output enters a different domain, produces composite foreclosure, and returns the resulting deprivation as new evidence that the originating classification was correct.

If research cannot show the transfer from institution A to institution B, the foreclosure produced by B, and the return of that consequence as evidence in A or a successor system, the Onopticon remains a new label for an existing collection of insights. A narrow and falsifiable mechanism is more valuable than a sweeping claim of novelty.

10. The Feedback Circuit of Violence and Homovictimus

Violence is often represented as a one-way relation between the perpetrator's act and the victim's suffering. The feedback model adds a second movement. The act produces fear, income loss, displacement, defensive conduct and distrust of institutions. Institutions then classify these consequences as consent, instability, aggression, non-co-operation or incapacity. The options narrowed by the classification expose the person to renewed violence.

I have called the subject of this circuit *Homovictimus* (Tan, 2026). Homovictimus is not a passive victim and not a person without agency. It is a subject compelled to exercise agency as a survival tactic on terrain structured by others, and then judged as though the tactic were evidence of an unstructured and free choice.

This formulation does not reduce agency to open resistance. Silence, return, concealment, negotiation, reliance upon religious norms, refusal to report and strategic compliance can all be forms of tactical action. Their existence does not demonstrate that the field was free.

Deniz Kandiyoti's 'bargaining with patriarchy' already demonstrates that women do not confront a single abstract patriarchy in a uniform way. They develop strategies within concrete and unequal rules in order to increase security and available options (Kandiyoti, 1988). In a late-modern institutional order, however, survival bargains can become **institutional traps**: the tactic is extracted from the conditions that made it necessary and circulated as a record of the woman's character.

The racialised woman is a paradigmatic, though not exclusive, case. Reporting can activate migration control; not reporting can be treated as absence of seriousness; leaving can create homelessness;

remaining can be treated as consent; self-defence can be classified as mutual violence. Every available action is capable of generating an adverse mark elsewhere.

Homovictimus is therefore not simply the type of victim produced by covert legitimation. It is the circuit's principal evidential target. Modern power does not always see more; it combines partial acts of seeing into one exposure and makes the subject's own survival conduct bear the burden of proof.

11. Measurement Protocol, the Limits of the Lens and Falsifiability

Conceptual force without measurement would leave the Onopticon as metaphor. Each analytical level must therefore be attached to an observable decision, carrier, sequence and consequence. Covert legitimation cannot be measured by an intuition that an institution possesses bad intentions.

Tablo 7. Observable indicators of covert legitimation

Observable element	Research question	Finding supporting covert legitimation
Formal norm	How do law and policy define violence?	A prohibition or duty to protect exists; the problem is not simply absence of a norm.
Distribution of burdens	Who must prevent, document and leave violence, protect children and rebuild material life?	Institutional duties to constrain the perpetrator become behavioural conditions imposed upon the victim.
Evidential asymmetry	What consistency, corroboration and credibility standards apply to survivor and perpetrator?	Trauma and dependence produce an exceptional burden of proof for the survivor.
Coding of survival behaviour	How are silence, return, flight, self-defence and withdrawal interpreted?	The effects of violence become consent, aggression, instability or refusal to co-operate.
Composite decision effect	How do decisions jointly change the perpetrator's and survivor's options?	Constraints on the perpetrator are delayed while the survivor loses income, housing, children, status or safety.
Timely correction	Can an appeal alter the outcome before irreversible harm?	A route exists formally but is late, costly, partial or risk-producing.
Remedial finality	Does acknowledgement or compensation preserve the ability to contest records, responsibility and uncompensated harm?	A finality or waiver device converts recognition into closure before the affected person can obtain effective correction.

No single indicator automatically establishes structural legitimation. Comparison with male victims, women differently positioned by race, caste, class and disability, and cases of effective intervention strengthens causal attribution.

Care inequality also requires more than the general statement that women work more:

Tablo 8. Care, time and cross-domain consequence indicators

Care indicator	Minimum measurement	Question posed by the Reality lens
Unpaid domestic and care time	Daily minutes, participation and task intensity by gender	Does the difference persist after paid-work time is controlled?

Care indicator	Minimum measurement	Question posed by the Reality lens
Total workload and free time	Paid plus unpaid work; sleep, personal care and leisure	Does equal employment produce equal rest and self-directed time?
Male-coded ideal-worker standard	Hours, overtime, predictability, availability, response to leave and career penalties	Does a sex-neutral standard presume an uninterrupted care-free life?
Parental leave	Paid and non-transferable duration and actual use by each parent	Is the formal right shared while usage and income consequences remain gendered?
Parenthood penalty	Employment, pay, promotion, pension and contract type before and after children	Is the bodily burden of birth converted into durable economic punishment?
Access to care services	Availability, cost, opening hours and status conditions	Is access closed by class, residence, disability or migration status?
Externalisation of care	Pay, hours, social security and migration status of paid care workers	Has one woman's burden been transferred to another rather than redistributed to men or the public?
Cross-domain consequence	Passage of care-related absence or part-time status into pay, credit, housing, benefits, custody or risk	Does a time burden become a category and serious loss elsewhere?

An increase in men's care time cannot by itself prove equality if women's total burden, rest deficit or the transfer of work to low-paid women remains unmeasured.

Feedback is coded as follows:

Tablo 9. Feedback levels and minimum evidence

Level	Observable condition	Minimum evidence
M0	Isolated or independent decision	No transfer into another decision and no return of consequences.
M1	Repetition of the same category or adverse decision	A sequence is documented, but one decision is not shown to produce the next.
M2	An institution's record or decision becomes input into another process	Transfer is shown through a file, data field, referral, common identifier, decision reasons or authorised testimony.
M3	A system-produced consequence returns as new evidence for the original category	The first decision's material result, the subject's subsequent behaviour or condition, and its use in reclassification appear in one timeline.

Foreclosure, composition and contestability are measured separately:

Tablo 10. Foreclosure, composition and effective contestability thresholds

Threshold	0	1	2
K3 - actual foreclosure	No demonstrable reduction in options.	Delay, cost, heavier proof or fragile access; a reasonable alternative remains.	Actual loss in housing, income, health, children, migration status, safety or movement; compelled dependence or no reasonable alternative.

Threshold	0	1	2
K4 - composition	One decision in one domain.	Several institutions act in the same domain, or parallel effects occur without a documented passage of consequences.	One decision's output enters a decision in at least one other domain and a composite material consequence is documented.
K5 - weakness of effective contestability	Error is corrected accessibly and before serious harm.	Appeal exists but is delayed, costly, partial or dependent upon specialist assistance.	Contestation cannot change the result in time, creates another adverse record, or succeeds only after irreversible harm.

K1 or K2 may establish severe discrimination without satisfying a full Onopticon. The complete threshold can be stated without algebra: the result produced by the system must return to the originating category as new evidence; a decision output must travel into another domain and remove serious options; and the subject must be unable to correct the composite outcome before irreversible harm. In the codebook, these are M3, K4=2, K3=2 and K5=2. The symbols compress comparison; they do not substitute for evidence.

Foreclosing recognition is coded within K5 rather than added as a separate threshold. K5=2 is supported where acknowledgement or an urgently needed payment is conditioned upon a waiver or finality device that prevents timely litigation, correction of a linked record or attribution of responsibility, and where refusal would impose an unreasonable material cost. K5=1 applies where finality narrows later action but independent advice, meaningful refusal and substantial avenues of correction remain. A transparent, informed and proportionate settlement that preserves the correction of public records and does not exploit material necessity may remain at K5=0. The existence of a waiver therefore raises a research question; it does not answer it.

11.1. Counter-Case Protocol: Necessity Tests and Circuit-Breaking Cases

This article uses counter-cases in two distinct senses. **Necessity counter-cases** test whether a bodily category must produce a specified social result. Minangkabau, Mosuo, Haudenosaunee and the comparative matrilineal findings discussed above do not establish equality or the absence of violence; they refute the claim that the female body necessarily entails propertylessness, residence within a husband's lineage or political incapacity. They test categorical necessity, not the full Onopticon threshold.

Mechanism counter-cases perform a different task. They hold relevant risks and institutional density sufficiently constant while asking whether transfer is blocked, contestation works in time, a feminist intervention changes the decision rule or a record is prevented from becoming an adverse input elsewhere. An appellate judgement, a safe-reporting firewall or collective litigation is not merely an exception to be explained away. If it prevents K3 foreclosure, interrupts K4 composition, blocks M3 feedback or restores effective contestability, the circuit is not complete. A theory that treats successful correction as hidden confirmation has made itself unfalsifiable.

At least four classes of evidence should be sought: the legal or administrative basis of the category and decision; the carrier of the record between institutions; the stated or operative reason for the decision; and the timeline of material consequences. A counter-case is mandatory.

Tablo 11. Comparative coding of the institutional cases

Case	Strongly documented	Not documented or requiring further evidence	Analytical result
<i>Nicholson v Scopetta</i>	Violence record enters child protection (M2, K4=2); child removal in some underlying cases (K3=2).	A complete M3 timeline returning removal-produced instability to maternal incapacity.	Cross-domain category conversion; the appellate judgement is also counter-evidence limiting the circuit.
<i>Safe to Share?</i>	Police data enter immigration enforcement (M2, K4=2); reporting cost and deterrence (K3=1).	Status loss in every transfer (K3=2) and M3 conversion of non-reporting into evidence against the victim.	Strong cross-routing; an individual file is required for full foreclosure and feedback.
<i>Maria da Penha</i>	Permanent harm and lack of redress (K3=2); prolonged ineffective remedy (K5=2); institutional repetition (M1).	Passage across different life domains (K4=2) and return of consequences to the category (M3).	Legal prohibition emptied through delay and impunity; not a full Onopticon.
<i>R.P.B. v the Philippines</i>	Bodily pre-category, access gate and ineffective domestic remedy (K1, K2, K5=2).	Multi-domain transfer (K4=2) and feedback (M3).	Composition of gender, age and disability stereotypes within one domain; a boundary case.
<i>Bhanwari Devi / Vishaka</i>	Caste-gendered violence, failed protection and a documented path from collective litigation to a new governing rule.	A complete cross-domain M3 timeline returning institutionally produced harm to the original category.	A circuit-breaking counter-case: contestation changed the decision rule, although legal reform did not retrospectively repair the original violence or failed redress.
Dutch childcare benefits scandal	Racialised fraud pre-category; rigid access gates; debt, employment, housing, health and family consequences; M2, K3=2, K4=2 and K5=2 are strongly supported.	An individual M3 timeline showing system-produced instability used as new categorical evidence; a demonstrated gendered nexus to violence against women.	The strongest full-threshold stress test in the article, but a candidate rather than a completed Onopticon finding.

None of the violence-specific cases in the original set alone satisfies every link of a complete Onopticon. The Dutch case brings the analysis closest to the full threshold, but its inclusion does not authorise the missing feedback and gender findings to be inferred. The next empirical task is to establish M3 on an individual timeline in cross-domain cases such as *Nicholson*, *Safe to Share?* and the Dutch childcare benefits scandal. This conclusion is not an embarrassment for the theory. It is the effect of applying its threshold rather than treating it as rhetoric.

11.2. Full-Threshold Stress Test: The Dutch Childcare Benefits Scandal

The Dutch childcare benefits scandal is a particularly demanding test because it joins racialised risk selection, a punitive fraud category, debt recovery, loss across several domains and prolonged failure of legal and administrative correction. The parliamentary inquiry found that administrative mistakes were readily treated as fraud, parents were wrongly branded intentional fraudsters, the ‘all-or-nothing’ recovery approach displaced individual circumstances, and the executive, legislature and administrative judiciary contributed to a situation in which parents had little effective chance of correction (Parlementaire ondervragingscommissie Kinderopvangtoeslag, 2020).

Racialisation is not an inference imported by this article. The Dutch Government subsequently concluded that institutional racism had operated within intensive supervision by the Tax and Customs Administration and Benefits Service. Low-income people, single applicants and people with another nationality had a greater chance of being selected for manual review without an adequate basis (Government of the

Netherlands, 2022). The decision architecture therefore combined a formally universal benefit system with differential suspicion attached to class, household position and nationality.

The debt circuit supplies the multi-domain evidence missing from several other cases. Wrongful cessation and recovery demands drove affected parents into debt; official recovery materials record loss of employment and housing, damage to health, relationship breakdown and, in some families, out-of-home placement of children. In a qualitative investigation of twenty families that entered child protection after being wrongly classified as benefits fraudsters, the financial consequences of the scandal played a small to large role in seventeen. Yet the Inspectorate found no evidence that the fraud label itself had been weighed in the child-protection decision, and financial problems were never the sole stated reason for a measure (Inspectie Justitie en Veiligheid, 2023). The later *Erfenis van onrecht* inquiry found that wrongful recoveries produced debt, poverty and stress, while services frequently failed to recognise the financial origin of escalating family problems; some placements might therefore have been prevented (Commissie Toeslagen en Uithuisplaatsingen, 2025).

These findings justify a disciplined coding. K1 is the pre-categorisation of the applicant as a potential or intentional fraudster; K2 is the rigid gate through which benefit entitlement, proportional recovery and payment arrangements were restricted. They remain input conditions and are not assigned invented 0-2 scores. The documented passage from a benefits decision into debt, employment, housing, health and family conditions establishes M2 and supports K4=2. Actual loss and compelled precarity support K3=2. Years of ineffective objection and correction after serious harm support K5=2.

M3 remains the decisive limit. It is not established merely because harm accumulated. A full feedback finding requires one longitudinal file showing that poverty, instability, missed contact, deteriorating health or family stress produced by wrongful recovery was subsequently used as new evidence for parental unreliability, incapacity or risk, and that this reclassification reinforced the circuit. The Inspectorate's finding that the original fraud label was not shown to have entered the child-protection judgement prevents a shortcut from M2 to M3. The case supplies a strong feedback hypothesis and unusually rich evidence of composition, not permission to treat cumulative injury as feedback by definition.

Its position in an article on violence against women requires a second restraint. The scandal disproportionately affected single-parent, low-income and migration-background households, but neither the applicant's sex nor the prevalence of mothers proves that a gendered category caused the decision. Direct relevance to violence against women would require evidence that maternity, unequal care, dependency produced by intimate violence, or women's responsibility for maintaining the household organised selection, interpretation or consequence. Without that nexus, the scandal remains a comparative calibration case for racialised administrative closure rather than direct proof of the architecture sustaining gendered violence.

The case is therefore more valuable as a stress test than as a triumphant illustration. It demonstrates how close a documented administrative disaster can come to the complete threshold while still leaving M3 and gendered causal attribution open. A theory becomes stronger when its best candidate is not exempted from its hardest test.

A lens must also identify what it cannot see.

First is the problem of origin. The Onopticon does not explain why patriarchy or racism arose. Property, labour, conquest, colonialism, the sexual division of labour and male violence require distinct historical explanations.

Secondly, there is an archival problem. Domestic, rural, colonial and Indigenous violence often leaves fewer official records. As Trouillot and Hartman demonstrate in different registers, silence and distortion can be produced within the making of the archive rather than merely discovered after it. Archival silence does not prove the absence of a link, but it cannot be filled by arbitrary assertion. Testimony, oral history, local press, movement records and material outcomes must enter the evidential architecture.

Thirdly, the regime threshold can understate catastrophic harm within one domain. Rape, forced sterilisation, severe injury and killing do not become more serious because they spread to a second domain. The seriousness of harm and the classification of a regime must remain separate.

Fourthly, causal attribution cannot begin and end with the victim's sex. The bodily category must be shown to organise the target, form, legitimation, institutional interpretation or consequence of harm. A shared racist operation cannot erase the different histories of patriarchy, anti-Black slavery, caste and colonialism.

Fifthly, these cases are not a global sample. Theoretical sampling can establish the possibility and traceability of a mechanism, not its prevalence or geographical weight. Every new setting requires fresh evidence of category, carrier, consequence and the cost of contestation.

Sixthly, the use of racism risks anachronism. Gendered violence predates modern biological race. The claim concerns a common racialising operation, not the historical identity of different regimes. Period-specific names and analytical mechanisms must therefore remain distinct.

The argument is weakened or falsified where there is no passage of data or consequence between institutions; decisions do not become inputs into later decisions; contestation works effectively rather than formally; a person can correct classification at reasonable cost; protection does not systematically narrow options elsewhere; or the observed difference is explained by transparent, reviewable conduct rather than a bodily category. Under these conditions, the claim of an onoptic feedback circuit must be withdrawn. Falsifiability is the methodological restraint that prevents the lens from replacing reality with its own categories.

12. Institutional Implications: Interrupting Operational Permission

This article does not propose a single programme of liberation. It nevertheless refuses political in consequence. Once a mechanism is specified, neutrality about its foreseeable effects becomes an evasion. The following principles do not depend upon one state model or one universal feminist subject; each is tied to a circuit identified in the analysis.

Tablo 12. Institutional mechanisms for interrupting operational permission

Responsible actor	Principle and instrument	Circuit targeted	Measure of success
Police and migration authorities	Safe-reporting firewall; no routine use of victim data for immigration enforcement	Protection record becomes border-control input	A victim can report regardless of status; exceptional transfer is necessary, explicit and independently reviewed.
Child-protection agencies and family courts	Exposure to violence is not automatic neglect; prioritise the perpetrator's conduct and material support	Victimisation becomes 'failure to protect'	Before removal, concrete harm, necessity and less harmful alternatives are individually established.
Prosecutors and courts	Time limits, reasons for delay and irreversible-harm review in repeated violence cases	Legal prohibition emptied by chronic delay	Protection and adjudication constrain the perpetrator before further harm.
Data-protection authorities and independent auditors	Purpose limitation and cross-domain impact assessment	Correct data enter the wrong decision architecture	Record flows, common identifiers and subsequent material consequences are regularly audited.
All protection institutions	Prohibition on adverse inference from survival behaviour	Silence, return, flight or self-defence becomes consent or fault	Behaviour is not used adversely without considering violence, income, housing, migration, care and disability.
Courts, ombuds institutions and data controllers	Timely suspension, linked-record correction and effective remedy	Formal appeal produces no operational correction	A wrong decision is halted before irreversible harm and withdrawn from connected systems.
Governments, redress bodies and settlement designers	Victim-authored redress; no blanket waiver; independent advice; preservation of record correction and public accountability	Acknowledgement becomes foreclosing recognition	Accepting a remedy does not extinguish unexamined claims or prevent correction of the public and institutional record.
Feminist organisations, survivor networks and communities	Counter-records, independent monitoring and shared governance of categories	Experts monopolise risk and eligibility classifications	Affected women possess decision power over the design, review and removal of criteria.
Legislatures and budget authorities	Composite-harm and transferred-burden budgeting	Costs of protection are left as income, housing, child and care losses	Material exit capacity after intervention is measured and financed.
Legislatures, employers, social security and local government	Public care infrastructure; equal paid non-transferable parental leave; pension and care credits; predictable work and a right to rest	Equal employment is defeated by unpaid care and time poverty	Total workload, leave use, free time and post-parenthood employment outcomes converge by gender.
Labour, migration and care regulators	Full pay, social security, organising rights and status-independent protection for domestic and care workers	Care burdens are transferred downwards between women by class and race	Relief in one household is not financed through another woman's precarity, family separation or status loss.

The Reality lens does not add another list of rights. It adds a **composite outcome test** asking whether rights cancel one another within the same life. Purpose limitation is therefore more than privacy: information accurate in a health, refuge or police setting can cause harm when detached from purpose and moved elsewhere. Effective contestation is more than a form or an appeal: it must suspend implementation when necessary, recall errors from linked records and avoid producing a new risk mark because the person objected.

Results must be disaggregated by class, race, caste, disability and migration status. A procedure that offers a usable exit to a woman with resources may create foreclosure for a woman whose income, status or care access is insecure. Success cannot be measured by the volume of arrests, records, risk flags or data exchanges. It must be measured by whether the subject's material capacity to leave violence has increased.

Different feminist traditions do not yield one institutional formula. Negotiatory feminism, reform from within religious law, reproductive justice, social-reproduction strikes and Indigenous approaches to land and sovereignty identify different sites of transformation. Each intervention can nevertheless be subjected to the same Reality question: did it widen women's viable options, or only enlarge the institution's capacity to recognise and administer them?

Care policy requires a time-budget as well as a financial budget. Employment participation cannot be counted without total labour, sleep, rest, men's actual use of leave, post-childbirth income and pension penalties, and the conditions of those who provide paid care. An equality regime that counts only paid work conceals the cost of reproducing the worker.

13. Conclusion: Who Determines the Conditions of Recognition?

The question of this article was not how emphatically violence against women is condemned, but through which structure it remains practicable while being condemned. Normative prohibition can coexist with operational permission because evidence, time, material support, institutional responsibility and the cost of exit are distributed across separate procedures whose composite effect belongs to no single decision-maker.

Early- and late-modern feminisms are not two universal periods through which the whole world passes. They are institutional logics that can coexist. The early logic is organised more visibly around legal exclusion and fixed status; the late logic around conditional recognition, records, profiles and distributed decisions. The second does not abolish the first.

The historical record of matrilineal, matrilocal and women-centred societies supplies negative evidence against bodily necessity. It does not establish a lost world without domination. It establishes that the female body does not naturally entail propertylessness, political incapacity, compulsory marriage or obedience. Translating bodily difference into social destiny is the work of institutions.

The argument that violence against women is racist does not claim that patriarchy derives from modern race science. It identifies an operation shared by gendered and racial regimes: the body is made to speak before the person acts; social nature is inferred from it; differentiated violence enforces the inference; and the effects of that enforcement are returned as proof of the body's nature. Historical specificity is indispensable precisely because a common operation can be realised through different laws, labour regimes, kinship systems, empires and technologies.

The Second World War and later international criminal law show why recording violence is insufficient. A known act can be absorbed into general atrocity, national honour, military indiscipline or the exceptional

threshold of genocide. The category into which conduct enters determines whose injury becomes legible and which responsibility follows.

Late-modern protection has widened women's rights and saved lives. It can also produce records that cross into child protection, migration, welfare, employment and policing. The same woman may be under-recognised as a victim and over-recognised as a risk. Visibility is not the opposite of enclosure; it can become its material.

Recognition can also become the moment at which enclosure is finalised. Diplomatic finality and compensatory waiver do not deny that harm occurred; they determine the maximum consequence the institution will permit that truth to have. Foreclosing recognition therefore adds a temporal question to the politics of recognition: after an institution acknowledges injury, which claims, records and responsibilities remain open, and who had the power to decide that the matter was closed?

The divide between paid work and care is the ordinary global form of this contradiction. Whether custom, family, market or state first imposed the burden does not alter where it accumulates. When women are held to the same paid-work standard as men while continuing to bear unequal care, childbirth consequences and loss of rest, the solution cannot be assigned to women as another private task. Doing so makes the victim of inequality responsible for abolishing it.

The comparison with global feminist literature also limits the originality claim. The Reality lens did not discover the historical production of womanhood, the inadequacy of recognition, the institutional coordination of texts, unequal data, carceral protection or material reproduction. Its defensible distinctiveness is narrower: it separates normative prohibition from operational permission and follows a decision's consequences across institutions until separate acts produce composite foreclosure and the deprivation caused by the system becomes evidence validating the original category.

Homovictimus is not a passive residue of this circuit. Homovictimus acts tactically within a pre-structured field and is then judged as if the tactic revealed free preference. The analytical requirement is to separate the meaning of survival conduct from the institution's use of its record.

This is not a total explanation of global violence. It is a falsifiable research agenda. Investigators must ask: Which category was assigned before action? Through which carrier did one decision enter another? Which reasonable options disappeared? Did the subject correct the linked result before irreversible harm? Did institutionally produced deprivation return as evidence of character, risk or incapacity?

Where these links are absent, the Onopticon must not be declared. Where they are documented, the problem is no longer only a prejudiced official, an erroneous algorithm or an incomplete law. It is the composition of separate decisions within one life.

The central issue is therefore no longer simply whether women are recognised. It is who determines the conditions of recognition, who receives operational permission beneath normative prohibition, who pays the cost of exit, and who is authorised to produce reality.

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