

Gender, Structural Violence and Peace

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Introduction

Popoki hates the cold. In winter, he stays indoors eating and sitting on his heated carpet, toasty and warm. Popoki's friends in the park are hungry and cold. They sit shivering, waiting for spring. Is your peace related to the peace of others? Can you have peace if others do not? (Alexander 2007:43).

In March 2016, a young Japanese woman named Rina Shimabukuro was reported missing in Okinawa, the island housing 75% of US military installations in Japan. Two months later, her mutilated body was found in the woods. A former U.S. Marine and current employee at a US military base was arrested and accused of rape and murder. The outraged local community gave a collective shout of “Our anger has reached its limit!” and, several weeks after the body was found, people gathered at a mass demonstration to express their anger at the U.S. bases in general and sexual violence by

U.S. soldiers in particular (CBS News 2016). Some of those voices called the rape an example of not only direct violence but also structural violence such as militarization and racism (Takara 2016).¹

Violence is a frequently used term with a multiplicity of definitions generally related to violence as force and/or violence as violation.² The idea of structural violence was first suggested by peace scholar Johan Galtung (1969) who, in seeking a more precise understanding of peace, proposed that violence can come from invisible sources and affect people in indirect ways. This approach enriched understanding of peace and non-peace, and has become a core concept in peace research. However, as Galtung did

¹ US military bases abroad are governed by Status of Forces Agreements (SOFAs). In Japan, the SOFAs limit the access and jurisdiction of local authorities to members of the U.S. military suspected of committing crimes. As a result, many soldiers have escaped prosecution for sexual violence. “At US military bases in Japan, most service members found culpable in sex crimes in recent years did not go to prison.... Instead, in a review of hundreds of cases filed in America’s largest overseas military installation, offenders were fined, demoted, restricted to their bases or removed from the military” (Associated Press 2014).

² According to Bufacchi (2005), the word “violence” comes from the Latin *violentia* (vehemence, impetuosity) and “because acts of excessive force frequently result in the violation of norms, rights or rules, the meaning of violence is often conflated with that of “Violations”, from the Latin *violare*, meaning “infringement” (194). ‘Force’ is often used synonymously with violence, but while violence refers to destructive actions, force is not necessarily destructive or measurable as particular actions. Some scholars argue that the degree to which a particular act of violence is intentional and/or harmful is not necessarily clear (Dewey 1980:246, Pogge 1991), and so understanding violence means understanding its relation to power (Arendt 1969). Like Galtung, these scholars note that as it is often not possible to identify the perpetrators, violence is not necessarily goal oriented and involves more than the intentional use of force to inflict damage, injury or death to particular ‘others.’

not recognize the role of gender in the construction of violence or the ways that social structures are engendered, analyses using structural violence often lack a gender perspective.

Taking a feminist approach, this chapter analyzes the concept of structural violence and suggests that it can be useful only if it incorporates an understanding of how social relations are gendered. In order to do this, I will first contextualize the concept of structural violence by looking at some of the debates underlying the emerging discipline of peace research at the time it was proposed in the late 1960s by Johan Galtung, and then examine the concept itself, introducing Galtung's violence triangle. The rape and murder of Ms. Shimabukuro is used here to illustrate the importance of understanding gender and show both limitations of the concept of structural violence as well as ways in which it can be put to use.

Setting the Stage: Agendas for Peace Research

Throughout history, scholars, theologians and activists alike have sought ways for people to live in peace. Most Western approaches focus on war and take its absence to

mean peace. In this view, states have primary responsibility for war, and by association for peace, but, as many feminist scholars have pointed out, these analyses do not consider the ways citizenship, social institutions and states themselves are masculinized nor do they address the ways that war and peace affect men and women differently (see for example Enloe 1989; Hooper 2001; Parpart and Zalewski 2008; Reardon 1985; Shepherd 2008; Sjoberg 2013; Sylvester 2013).

This lack of a critical and gendered perspective also applies to the origins of what we know as peace research today. In the wake of the devastation wrought by two world wars, American peace research in the 1950s and 60s focused on measurable and objective causes of war, taking a scientific and positivist approach. Given urgency by the Cold and Vietnam Wars, the primary objective was the prevention of war or achieving negative peace. In contrast, for European peace researchers, the Vietnam War brought American imperialism and neo-colonialism into focus. Countries of the global South that had been under foreign domination were gaining independence and grappling with the legacies of their colonial past as well as with the neo-colonial policies and proxy wars foisted on them by the Cold War adversaries. 'Development' was seen as a panacea for the growing gaps in income, access to basic human needs such as food,

water and fuel, education, health care, and life expectancy between the countries of the north and those in the global south. But development strategies soon proved to be far less effective and much more problematic than initially promised.

It was against these deep divisions over methodology, focus, and the role of violence in the creation of peace that Norwegian sociologist Johan Galtung first proposed his idea of structural violence (1969). Galtung had studied and taught in the United States and was greatly influenced by American positivism. In the sixties, he had also spent time in Africa experiencing firsthand the reality of maldevelopment and at the Institute of Gandhian Studies in Varanasi, India. While he retained his belief, honed in the United States, in the efficacy of using a scientific approach, he joined his European colleagues in acknowledging the importance of stressing issues of social justice (Lawler 1995:70). This is reflected in his understanding of the focus for peace research which he suggested has two branches: “negative peace which is the absence of violence, absence of war - and positive peace which is the integration of human society” (Galtung 1964:2).³

Many scholars have subsequently used this negative/positive peace approach. Taking a

³ Quincy Wright distinguished between negative peace (the absence of war) and positive peace, (international justice). He believed that the “positive aspect of peace – justice- cannot be separated from the negative aspect – elimination of violence” (Wright 1942).

scientific approach, some scholars try to measure the degree of peacefulness/peacelessness.⁴ Others apply it to peace education such as feminist scholars Birgit Brock-Utne (1997) and Betty Reardon (Reardon and Snauwert 2015:115), the latter of whom prefers the term ‘organic’ to positive peace. Reardon was one of the first scholars to identify the importance of women’s rights in creating peace, seeing global violence and warfare as both the “cause and consequence of the structural violence that denies the human rights of women” (1993:71) and to identify the relationship between sexism and militarism (1985). Around the same time, Cynthia Enloe (1989) identified ways in which understandings of gender underlie international politics. These and subsequent feminist understandings of peace, violence and the military make it clear that, while Rina Shimabukuro and her murderer may have had a personal dispute, the institutionalized militarism, misogyny and racism of the U.S. military in Japan set the stage for her rape and murder.

Galtung’s Concept of Structural Violence

⁴ The Positive Peace Index, for example, is composed of 23 qualitative and quantitative indicators. It ranks countries and territories on three broad themes: the level of safety and security in society; the extent of domestic or international conflict; and the degree of militarization (Institute for Economics and Peace 2016: 9).

Galtung proposed structural violence in the context of seeking a global focus for peace that would be different from that of international relations and help to transform the international system (Lawler 1995:50). He hoped to find non-violent solutions to not only direct acts of violence, but also to what he saw as highly unacceptable social orders. This required addressing the ways people *unintentionally* cause extreme harm. In looking for a structural approach, Galtung borrows from Marx, but credits Gandhi for giving him an appreciation of holistic approaches acknowledging the interconnectedness and sacredness of all life and for the inspiration to move away from the actor-oriented perspective of much Western science (Galtung 1985:146, 1990:302).

Working toward a clear definition of violence, Galtung begins with the idea that, “violence is present when human beings are being influenced so that their actual somatic and mental realizations are below their potential realizations” (1969:185). He uses a definition which is not limited to intentionally destructive acts, calling for an “extended concept” of violence, defined as the “cause of the difference between the potential and actual.” He offers the example of a person dying from tuberculosis in the 18th century and one dying of the same cause today. In the former example, medical knowledge was such that death would have been unavoidable and thus not considered to

be violence. Today, however, when medical resources are available, then violence would be present. If the actual is avoidable and the potential is higher than the actual, then there is violence. If the actual is unavoidable, then violence is not present (1969:168-9).

Galtung stresses the importance of clarifying this extended concept of violence, and thinks in terms of influence involving a subject, an object and an action. He outlines six dimensions. The first two characterize the mode of influence: physical (violence that works on the body)/psychological (violence that works on the soul) and negative (coercion)/positive (reward) approaches. The third dimension focuses on the presence or absence of an object that is hurt, including such aspects as the threat of violence and destruction of things rather than persons. The fourth dimension concerns whether or not there is a subject who acts. The fifth dimension concerns whether the violence is intended or unintended and the sixth distinguishes between manifest and latent violence (Galtung 1969:169-172).

The above dimensions reflect aspects of both violence as force and violence as violation. Structural violence refers in particular to the fourth dimension and describes the less visible aspects of violence, contrasting it with personal violence which occurs when

there is person who can be held accountable for the injurious act. Structural violence is “unintended harm to human beings,” a slow process of misery that eventually leads to death (Galtung 1985:145-146). While lives may be lost as a result of structural violence, “the violence is built into the structure and shows up as unequal power and consequently as unequal life chances” (Galtung 1969: 171).⁵ Thus when the identities of both the subject and object of violence are clear, it is personal violence; when they are not clear, it is structural violence.⁶ Galtung does not distinguish between male and female bodies as subjects of structural violence and is not concerned with recognition, but rather with the possibility for avoidance. Hunger is structural violence if it is objectively avoidable regardless of the cause, and a slave is subject to structural violence regardless of whether s/he is aware of his/her condition.

For Galtung, subjects and objects are important for identifying the presence of violence,

⁵ In a footnote (n13; p.188), Galtung (1969) refers to an essay by Stokeley Carmichael in 'Black Power' (The Dialectics of Liberation, David Cooper ed., London Penguin, p. 151, 1968) in which he distinguishes between two types of racism: individual and institutional. Galtung confirms that the individual/institutional division is the same as his personal/structural violence but emphasizes that a person might act on behalf of a group, while “individual” is understood as the opposite of a group. Group violence, he asserts, is important, but is not institutional.

⁶ Webel and Galtung (2007) discuss the meaning of structure in the following way. “If conflict = incompatible/contradictory goals, where do the goals come from? We can identify three broad categories of answer: from Nature, Culture and Structure. Nature is in us, and around us; Culture is in us as internalized values and norms; and Structure is around us as institutionalized, positive and negative, sanctions” (15-16).

but he does not concern himself with the process of subjectification in particular socio-political contexts (see for example Price 2012; Shepherd 2009; McSorley 2013; Sylvester 2013). However, an understanding of violence as being both produced by and productive of particular subjectivities would allow for a more nuanced understanding of the construction of both violence and resistance.

When the concept of structural violence was first introduced, it opened up a whole range of possibilities for the study of violence and peace. Galtung himself was interested in the relationship between peace and health, and structural violence provided a way to address the harmful effects of poverty without invoking, in his terms, subjects and objects. Many scholars working on health issues have found structural violence useful for explaining the complexity of HIV/Aids and other cases of extreme suffering. Medical anthropologist Paul Farmer, for example, looks at illness in Haiti and Latin America (Farmer 2005, 2009) as a problem not only of individual behaviors and opportunities, but also as a manifestation of structural violence. Others have used, and criticized, structural violence in analyses of issues in poverty, human rights, and human security (Ho 2007; Pogge 2003; Shepherd 2008).

Structural violence is a concept which in many ways is a reflection of its time. It was offered to peace researchers in the late 1960s as a way to nuance their understanding of the meaning of peace; a way to talk about life and death issues of nuclear war and development in the same conversation. In general, it was greeted with approval by those interested in issues of development and post- and/or neo-colonialism, but those focusing on war and nuclear war found the concept to be overly normative and too broad. They felt that allowing the inclusion of everything would lead to the illumination of nothing. It could not help to prevent nuclear holocaust nor could it contribute to the creation of a more peaceful world (Boulding 1977).⁷

Critics have also focused on Galtung's reliance on negation, binaries and opposites to explain the relationship of violence to peace. Feminists have criticized Galtung's structural violence, as well as his later work, for its dependence on binaries and opposites, noting the lack of recognition of the ways the pairs are unequal and are gendered. Although Galtung does occasionally mention men and women, his understanding is based on male and female bodies rather than norms of

⁷ Galtung addresses this criticism in his later work, saying that positive peace can only come through addressing the underlying causes of negative peace, the virtuous triangle and through his work with Transcend (Galtung 1987, 1990; Webel and Galtung 2007).

masculinity/femininity and gender hierarchies.⁸ Structural violence as a concept could be greatly enhanced by reflecting the wealth of feminist scholarship from a range of theoretical perspectives that addresses the construction of gender and the ways gendered hierarchies impact international relations, that is relations international as performed by gendered bodies (for example, see Enloe 2007; Butler 2004; Parpart and Zalewski 2008; Sjoberg 2013; Sjoberg and Gentry 2007; Shepherd 2008; Åhäll and Shepherd 2012; Connell 1987; Tickner 1992; Sylvester 1994; Whitworth 2004).

Confortini (2006), in an extensive discussion of the ways Galtung fails even to mention gender except in one publication (Galtung 1996), offers four possible ways that feminism might contribute to his work.⁹ She suggests that understanding gender as power relations would lead to the realization of ways that gendered norms and customs contribute to the reproduction of violence. In particular, attention should be paid to masculinity and the relation of masculinity to the production of violence, as well as to the importance of language in the production/reproduction of violence and peace.

⁸ Joan Scott, for example, defines gender as, “a constitutive element of social relationships based on perceived differences....a way of signifying relationships of power” (J. Scott 1988:7).

⁹ These are: (1) understanding gender as power relations; (2) recognizing that dichotomous categories are gendered and reproduce violence; (3) recognizing the ways language is gendered and ways violence and peace are constituted through language and (4) recognizing that violence is both productive of, and produced by gender identities (Confortini 2006: 333).

Confortini suggests that the introduction of a feminist perspective into analyses of structural violence will allow for a deeper understanding. Conversely, without one, the ultimate goal of social justice will be impossible to achieve.

Cultural Violence and the Violence Triangle

As suggested earlier, Galtung's ultimate objective in studying and defining violence is the creation of peace. Finding himself dissatisfied with the direct/structural violence binary, in 1990 he added a third dimension: cultural violence. As outlined below, he used triangles to illustrate this concept as well as its positive opposite.

The violence (vicious) triangle came from the need for understanding not only the use of violence but also the legitimation of that use in order to transcend it (Galtung 1990:291). Direct and structural violence comprise two corners of the violence triangle. To the third corner is assigned cultural violence, defined as "those aspects of culture, the symbolic sphere of our existence – exemplified by region and ideology, language and art, empirical science and formal science (logic, mathematics) – that can be used to justify or legitimize direct or structural violence" (1990:291). In other words, cultural

violence makes direct, and at times structural, violence acceptable. It is through this process of normalization that violence becomes invisible and/or unrecognizable as violence. Causality flows in all six directions of the violence triangle, and can begin from any point and go in any direction. So for example, an act of explosive violence (direct violence) can be understood as terrorism and cause intolerance toward particular groups (structural violence) justified by the injury (cultural violence). Similarly, perceived intolerance (structural violence) can lead to explosive violence (just war) legitimated by claims of protection of human rights, culture and/or religion (cultural violence) can lead to explosive violence (direct violence) followed and intolerance and sanctions (structural violence), and so on.

As the terminology suggests, Galtung's structural violence is predicated on oppressive and exploitative social structures. For example, torture is a visible and direct manifestation of violence, but it is built upon "strategies of capitalist and social imperialism" (Galtung 1994:133). These social structures both make the perpetrators of violence invisible and at the same time serve to legitimize the violence so as to make it imperceptible and/or acceptable to the majority of people. Accordingly, the eradication of this violence or, in Galtung's framework, the transcendence of structural violence to

structural peace (transformation of negative peace to positive peace) requires not only eliminating the immediate visible signs of violence, but also the underlying structural/cultural causes.

As with his other concepts, Galtung contrasts the violence (vicious) triangle to a self-reinforcing virtuous triangle. The conversion of vicious to virtuous requires work on all three corners at the same time; changing one is not sufficient to change the others. Anticipating criticism that cultural violence further broadens the agenda for peace studies, he suggests that like the study of health, the study of peace is complex and that peace research could contribute to a new scientific enterprise, “*the science of human culture*” (1990: 303, emphasis in original).

In Galtung’s 1969 article he suggested that, “[o]ne husband beating his wife is personal violence, but one million husbands keeping one million wives in ignorance constitutes structural violence” (1969:171). The addition of cultural violence might enable a more dynamic analysis of gender violence. Even so, without a gender perspective, the utility of the violence triangle is extremely limited.

Using the above example, Galtung might, in 1990, have also described one man beating his wife as an example of cultural violence, because in some cultures, men ‘discipline’ their wives. This assessment of wife-beating as direct violence and/or cultural violence is helpful, but does not address the act of ‘wife-beating’ as a performance of masculinity (see, for example, Butler 1999; Connell 1987). In fact, as the second part of Galtung’s sentence refers to keeping women in ignorance, it implies not only the lack of subjectivity on the part of the women but also an implicit understanding that if women were less ignorant they might prevent or at least avoid being beaten by their husbands. Again, there is no attention given to the role of gender hierarchies in the ‘private’ lives of men and women, nor to the cultural/social circumstances in which this wife-beating and knowledge deprivation occurs.¹⁰ In other words, Galtung does not interrogate how masculinity and/or femininity contribute to social understandings of violence, particularly of the ways certain understandings of masculinity normalize male violence.

Like structural violence, the violence triangle is to a great extent based on binaries – negative/positive, male/female, top dogs/under dogs – and on pre-existing structures and hierarchies of power. For Galtung, these structures are not relations of power as

¹⁰ Needless to say, in this example, ‘ignorance’ no doubt refers to ‘education’ which of course is important. However, it makes one curious as to the depth of Galtung’s interest in the dimensions and realities of women’s knowledge.

produced and productive in a Foucauldian sense (Foucault 1976), nor are they constructed through discourses. Rather, they are simply *there*. Structural violence tells us that there are underlying oppressive structures that allow the ‘top dogs’ to be rich while the ‘under dogs’ suffer, and that those same structures obscure the oppression experienced by the under dogs from the top dogs, and perhaps even to the under dogs themselves (Galtung 1969). What it does not tell us however, is how those structures came to be in place. What discursive practices and/or norms create and maintain the unequal power relations within our social institutions? Galtung identifies “religion and ideology, language and art, empirical and formal science” (1990: 296) as six cultural domains used to legitimize structural and/or direct violence but fails to explore the role of power in those contexts. The ‘top dogs’ are powerful, but how is their power defined and from where does it originate? And, who exactly are those ‘top dogs’ and ‘under dogs’? Galtung builds his arguments on opposing binaries, but ignores both how the two sides of the binary are respectively privileged and marginalized, and the range of difference within and among those groups (see for example Chaudry 2004, Collins 2000, Crenshaw 1991). In describing them as such, he is reproducing the invisibility of those who do not match his categories. Both the violent and virtuous triangles thus both identify, and reproduce, violence (Price 2012).

Gender, Militarization and Structural Violence

In this section, we return to the example of Rina Shimabukuro to consider how use of a gendered understanding of structural violence could make visible the intersections of militarism, gender and racism. Using the violence triangle as a point of departure, we can identify the ways different kinds of violence are constituted by, and serve to constitute, each other.

Sexual assault and murder are obviously instances of direct violence. However, use of the violence triangle allows us to see that these acts of violence are not only the result of a single violent act by a single violent man. It is important that the perpetrator was a man, and also that he was employed by the military and a former Marine stationed in Okinawa. Why? Because militarized masculinities both promote and normalize the use of violence including, and especially, sexual violence (Enloe 2007; Whitworth 2004; Lutz 2009; Vine 2015; de Matos and Ward 2012; Higate 2003).¹¹

¹¹ It is important to note that the discourse of sexual violence in the military often excludes male to male sexual violence (Kwon 2012).

Militaries are institutions that promote the use and control of violence. On the one hand, they need to take new recruits and make them into soldiers who will not balk at engaging in killing other humans. On the other hand, those same soldiers have to be controlled so that they do not turn their aggression and violence on one another. Connell and Messerschmidt (2005) discuss the idea of 'hegemonic masculinity', suggesting that, although there are many different masculinities, certain features such as reluctance to express emotion and toughness are prioritized. Militaries are one place where hegemonic masculinity is cultivated and spread. Feminist scholars have shown how militaries invoke gendered hierarchies to promote masculinity through misogyny and the denigration of femininity. These hierarchies play into colonial hierarchies of domination and subjugation through which colonizers assert their superiority by degrading feminized and 'barbarian' others. Militarization multiplies this process of othering and feminizing by glorifying and normalizing the military masculinity. The normalization occurs to such an extent that 'militarization of the everyday' becomes invisible. Military hardware incorporated into everyday food labels is but one example of the many ways that military motifs (camouflage designs, clothing styles, etc.), ideas and language have become part of mass culture and everyday life (Enloe 1989; Alexander 2015).

The rape and murder of Rina Shimabukuro occurred against a background of militarism, militarization and militarized masculinities. Okinawa was the site of a bloody battle in June of 1945 and in addition to heavy military casualties on both sides, one in four Okinawan civilians were said to have been killed, many by Japanese soldiers. Okinawa was not included when independence was re-established in Japan after the signing of the peace treaty. The island remained occupied, and a large (and contested) U.S. military presence stayed even after Okinawa was returned to Japan in 1972. Today, as mentioned, the island hosts 75% of the U.S. military forces in Japan, including large and controversial bases.¹² The murder of Rina Shimabukuro is one of the most recent of close to 500 incidences of sexual violence by U.S. soldiers in Japan, most of which go unprosecuted in Japan and are often swept under the carpet by U.S. military authorities (Associated Press 2014).¹³

As we can identify many layers of “avoidable harm,” some intentional and some not, in the rape and murder of Rina Shimabukuro, structural violence can be said to be present.

¹² Okinawa Prefecture and the Japanese government are currently deadlocked over plans for relocating US Marines from the Futenma base to Guam, building a new base at Henoko and a helipad in the pristine forest of Takae.

¹³ According to the National Police Agency and Okinawa prefectural police, in the early 1990s there were close to 300 crimes committed by those with ties to the U.S. military in Japan. The number dropped to 90 in 1996, but by 2003 had risen to 194. The number has hovered at around 100 annually thereafter, with about half of the crimes committed in Okinawa (Sonoyama, F., M. Maeda and T. Kimura 2016).

We can also find cultural violence, as Galtung (1990:296) suggests that the ideology of militarism is the way militarization as a process becomes invisible and normal. His essentialist understanding of gender as sex might allow recognition that the perpetrator was a man and the victim a woman, but would ignore the militarized masculine violence of the 'victorious' U.S. military presence in 'defeated' Japan, especially in the already marginalized Okinawa. Promiscuous sexual behavior, excessive consumption of alcohol, substance abuse and aggressive behavior are all part of military masculinity and when combined with hierarchies of domination result in situations where the health and well-being of the local population is put at risk. In this case, making violence "avoidable" would be to question the military presence itself.

Conclusion

Structural violence is a concept that grew out of divisions in the peace research community in the late sixties. It was proposed by Johan Galtung with the objective of creating a more nuanced definition of peace by making visible the harm caused by violence having no subject or object. The concept has been useful, particularly for addressing issues of positive peace and social justice, but was at the time criticized for

expanding the definition of peace and violence to such an extent that it was no longer useful for preventing war or for peace action. Johan Galtung has been criticized for his positivist perspective, as well as his use and treatment of binaries as equal opposites without interrogating the power relations between the members of each pair. Moreover, his work lacks a gender perspective, an understanding of gender as power relations and of the ways social institutions are gendered. The case of the rape and murder of Rina Shimabukuro illustrates these shortcomings, particularly with reference to militarism and militarization.

Structural violence was initially intended as a way to incorporate issues such as hunger or maldevelopment into the conversation about peace and violence; war was understood in the context of direct violence. The lack of an understanding of the ways social structures are gendered prevented the linking of structural/cultural violence with militarism, militarization and war. In order to do this, it is preferable to move away from unidimensional structures and understand structural violence as institutionalized relations of power which are supported by, and support, gendered social hierarchies in the form of social relations, customs and norms. The analysis of intersecting relations of differing violence(s) including structural or institutional violence can be useful for

making hidden aspects of violence visible, showing the ways violence is produced and reproduced and understanding the ways the peace and/or violence experienced by one person is related to that experienced by others. Such an understanding reflects that true peace is only possible for one if it is also possible for all.

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