
1. Gender and violence: tools to think with

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There is so much that could possibly be said about gender and violence. The prospect of producing a comprehensive *Handbook* engaging with all possible dimensions of gender and violence, thought together (*how might we understand 'gender violence'? is violence gendered? is gender violent?*) and separately (*what does it mean to associate 'gender and violence'? what do these concepts mean and how do they function in the world, in our knowledge claims?*), is daunting indeed. In fact, the idea of a comprehensive *Handbook* is an illusion: a venture such as this one can only ever be partial, and, as such, is necessarily limited and exclusionary. It seems important to acknowledge this partiality openly, to explain how and why the decision was made to include certain topics and not others, and to ensure that this volume is positioned as a single intervention into an ongoing space of debate and contestation. That is, in part, the purpose of this chapter. I begin by outlining how I came to research gender and violence, and why I was interested to curate this collection of essays and engagements with these topics. In the second section, I provide an overview of the organization of the *Handbook* into three sections: concepts, representation and contexts. The chapters in the section on concepts elaborate on the tools we use to think with in our work on gender and violence (not only the concepts of gender and violence but also related concepts like sex, sexualities, patriarchy and security). The section on representation includes chapters on the different ways in which gender and violence are constituted in and through various representational practices, including film, policy and online. Finally, the section on contexts is devoted to the examination of gender and violence in various empirical settings, including different spheres of activity, from economic to juridical. The *Handbook* concludes by drawing out some thematic connections across the collection and addressing some of the limitations that can be addressed in future research.

RESEARCHING GENDER AND VIOLENCE

I am an accidental researcher of gender and violence. I did not intend to write about these things, to spend my academic career trying to understand these concepts separately and together. When I concluded my

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undergraduate degree, I had – consciously or otherwise – not managed to cultivate a lasting interest in the disciplinary canon of Anthropology (for that was the subject I was supposed to be studying). Instead, I was mostly interested in the feminist theory I had read for a course on feminist Anthropology, which sparked what would ultimately become an abiding interest in the concept of gender and how gender organizes how we are perceived within, and how we encounter, the world. As I embarked upon a Master's degree in the study of gender and international relations, I learned how to think about world politics using the tools that feminist theory provided. International Relations, as a discipline, is fearful and violent (see Crawford 2000); its scholars are good at many things, but historically its 'mainstream' scholars have not been very good at recognizing and taking seriously the operation of gendered power in the world (see Tickner 1997, 2005, 2010; Steans 2003; Zalewski 1993, 1995, 1998). It seemed, as a disciplinary neophyte, that I would struggle for acceptance should I pursue my interest in understanding what work gender is doing in world politics – this formulation belongs to Marysia Zalewski (see Zalewski 1995, p. 341). I was undeterred, for I could not comprehend how to make sense of war, diplomacy, and political economy *without* understanding the gendered dynamics of each. As L.H.M. Ling explains:

While taking seriously its consequences such as war [. . .] feminist IR disturbs the immutability of the inter-state system. This leads to feminist unearthing of even more hallowed ground: the state and its sovereignty as institutionalised patriarchy where 'androcratic' politics flourish, the State of Nature as an invention of feverish bachelor-hood where priorities such as children and toilet-training do not exist, and military 'security' as another struggle for statist Manhood that incurs profound insecurity instead. (Ling 1996, p. 27)

It was this last part that caught my imagination, and formed the foundation of my doctoral research program.

So I came to research violence through an interest in security (which is the subject of my own contribution to this *Handbook*), specifically in the partiality of 'national security' and the assumption that a 'secure state' is something that is both possible and meaningful. Thinking about security from the perspective of those marginalized from, and actively threatened by, the machinery of many security practices fundamentally changes the conclusions we draw about security. I set out, in my research program, to understand how it became possible that gendered violence – specifically but not exclusively sexualized and gender-based violence in conflict – could be articulated as a matter of (inter)national security priority, such that this connection was embedded in the regulatory architecture of the highest collective security body in existence: the UN Security Council. I

wanted to know not so much whether it was a good thing or a bad thing, but how it had been made possible for diverse actors and coalitions of actors to forge those connections across discourses that seemed impossibly divergent – discourses of bodily integrity and the protection of individuals from harm on one hand, and discourses of territorial integrity and the protection of the state as a functional entity on the other hand. The concepts with which I was concerned – of gender, violence, security, and the international – emerged as of paramount significance in my investigation. I formed an abiding interest in the conceptual apparatus through which we encounter and analyse the world through this research, and this accounts for the focus of Part I of this *Handbook*, in which various authors offer their own exploration of the concepts that inform research on gender and violence.

Both my doctoral research and the majority of the work I have undertaken since that time has focused on representation.¹ Initially I explored the representation of gender violence as a matter of international security, and since then I have examined the representational politics of a range of issues relevant to world politics, from peacebuilding to popular culture. No action seems more potent to me than the move to define, to classify, to categorize – all of which are inherent to the process of representation, to the constitution of cognitive schema and the ways in which we make sense of our worlds. The concepts we use are the tools we think with, and representation is how they are ordered into claims to ‘know’. Thus, I see representational practice – the rendering of a concept or idea such that it is communicable – as the process through which we attach meaning to subjects. It is the process through which those concepts or ideas become meaning-full, filled with meaning, and this process is subject to endless contestation. Every concept or idea is open to being filled differently, to having different meanings attached with radically different consequences. Which attachments hold, then, and therefore which meanings become stable, is a question of power. The construction of meaning is a site of politics – to my mind, *the* site of politics – because I think nothing can be more fundamental to politics than the conceptual apparatus that structures knowledge in any given society. This gives rise to a desire to understand what David Campbell describes as ‘the manifest political consequences of adopting one mode of representation over another’ (1992, pp. 7–8). Through examining the construction of meaning, by paying close attention to representational practice, we are in fact examining

¹ This section draws on material initially prepared for an interview with the editor of *Journal of Narrative Politics*, which was published in 2016 (see Dauphinee and Shepherd 2016).

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the production of possibility: once a particular meaning is attached to ‘women’, for example – such as ‘agent of change’ or ‘helpless victim’ – certain policy initiatives become ‘thinkable’, even necessary, while others are excluded. Thus, Part II of the *Handbook* explores the multiple ways in which gender violence is represented both literally and symbolically across different forms of text.

Even the final part of the *Handbook* was influenced by my experiences of working with and through gender violence as an area of research preoccupation. One of the (entirely justified) criticisms levelled at my doctoral research, when it was eventually published as a book (Shepherd 2008), was that the analysis I presented was somewhat divorced from context. I wrote about the advocacy and mobilization of women’s organizations around the issue that would be captured in UN Security Council Resolution 1325 from a position of distance, two levels of removal from the lived politics of these negotiations: not only did I fail to visit the countries of origin of many of the women and organizations involved to hear directly from them their stories of the resolution, I also did not even interview elites in New York, where the final negotiations took place and where the resolution was adopted in the UN architecture – the first ever to be adopted under the title of ‘Women and peace and security’. In subsequent projects, I have had a similarly ambivalent relationship with ‘context’. As I wrote in my recent book on UN peacebuilding discourse:

There is no doubt another project, the ghost-twin of this project at hand, for which my own ghost-twin travels to Burundi, or Liberia, or Guinea-Bissau and does engage directly with the women about whom the UN writes so copiously. [. . .] But that is a different project. When making the decisions that I did about the project I undertook, I considered a project that investigated implementation, but honestly, I could not find a way to make peace with the idea of traveling to these post-conflict spaces to interview women whose lives had been ruptured by sometimes decades of war and extract their words like gemstones, to later polish and arrange for publication and professional advancement, not least because I had nothing to offer in return. (Shepherd 2017, p. 4)

In the years since I completed my doctoral research, I have learned to engage with the question of ‘context’ in a different way: the context I am most frequently interested in is the context in which regulation and legislation is designed. It is these representational practices with which I am most often concerned, where I feel that I have something to contribute to the understanding of the many ways in which the concepts gender, violence, and security are represented in policy and normative statements, and thus through those representations construct horizons of possibility around what can and cannot be seen, acted upon, ‘real’. But understanding of other contexts is critical to the wider project of researching gender and

violence. Thus, in the final part of this *Handbook*, authors offer encounters and engagements that provide an introduction to the study of gender and violence in a wide range of analytical, practical, and geographical contexts.

INTRODUCING THE *HANDBOOK*

In Part I, authors elaborate on the tools we use to think with in our work on gender and violence. The collection opens with an exploration of the concept of gender by Marysia Zalewski, who provides a nuanced overview of some complex debates in feminist research about gender/sex. Zalewski uses an image of a collage made of bullets, depicting a female combatant, as an entry point into a discussion of race, gender, and violence, encouraging us to ‘to keep asking gender as a question’ rather than assuming or attempting to offer definitive answers to the question of gender. In Chapter 3, Celeste Montoya offers deeper and more specific engagement with race as a concept in the context of research on gender and violence. Montoya shows how our understanding of gender and violence is rendered inadequate and partial if we fail to pay attention to the work that race and racialization does in justifying and perpetuating particular forms of violence and domination. Relatedly, Lise Rolandsen Agustín and Emanuela Lombardo expand on some aspects of Montoya’s analysis in their own treatment of the concept of intersectionality in Chapter 4. Their thoughtful elaboration shows ‘the intersection of gender with inequalities of race, ethnicity, class, sexuality, age, and other systems of domination’ in the study of violence.

Jamie J. Hagen also uses an intersectional analytic, as she explores in Chapter 5 how sexualities are gendered, and how the policing of sexual boundaries is frequently violent. Hagen provides a rich account of contemporary debates in sexuality studies as they relate to both gender and violence, commenting on four specific issue areas: transnational LGBTQ rights; trans inclusion in sexuality studies; decolonial critiques of the field; and how queer theory challenges key tenets of global politics. Following on from Hagen’s discussion of sexualities, in Chapter 6 David Duriesmith proposes that researchers working on gender and violence need to take seriously the contextual configuration of masculinity. Duriesmith argues ‘that masculinity serves as a cause and multiplier of violence across different scales, sites and forms’ and encourages scholars to investigate ‘the multiple and often contradictory ways in which masculinity both causes violence, and is itself an object of violence’.

Chapters 7, 8, and 9 address the body, sex, and patriarchy respectively. In Chapter 7, Jessica Auchter maps out a conceptual encounter with

the body as a site of governance and violence in world politics. Auchter concludes with an exhortation for scholars to acknowledge their own embodiment and to attempt to reconcile the social scientific insistence on objectivity in knowledge production with a commitment to documenting our own bodies in pain. Karen Boyle turns to the embodied experience of sex in Chapter 8, surveying feminist debates about the sex of sexual violence in an overview of research in this field that begins with Susan Brownmiller's influential work *Against Our Will: Men, Women and Rape* (first published in 1975). Boyle builds on Liz Kelly's important formulation to develop what she identifies as 'continuum thinking: the feminist push to see the ways in which different aspects of women's experiences are linked, without insisting on false equivalences between them'. In Chapter 9, Kaye Quek also draws Brownmiller's work into conversation with other research to provide a thoughtful account of the concept of patriarchy and how it informs and can be informed by research on gender and violence. Citing, among others, Gwen Hunnicutt and bell hooks, Quek argues that 'a revised theory of patriarchy that looks at *gendered* violence not only as male coercion but also in its myriad of forms can be a powerful tool for feminist scholarship on violence and its relationship to gender'.

The last two chapters in this opening section are concerned with femicide and the concept of security. In Chapter 10, Consuelo Corradi and Daniela Bandelli engage with the concept of femicide, developed as a specific way of capturing the unlawful killing of women. Their analysis offers four country case studies – Mexico, Argentina, Italy, and India – where the notion of femicide has spread in association with local cultural and political issues. The authors draw attention to important variation in the way that the concept is used in different contexts, and in the ambiguity of the concept that necessitates careful consideration as we draw the concept into our research frameworks. In Chapter 11, I explore the concept of security, suggesting that whether we think security can be *achieved* depends a lot on what we think security *is*. I provide an overview of the different dimensions of security that are particularly pertinent to the consideration of gender and violence, and elaborate on the idea of security providers, linking ideas about gender, violence, and security to the concept of protection. Thus, I explore not only whose security matters but also how it is claimed that security can be achieved.

Part II of the book brings together a number of engagements with the question of representation. In Chapter 12, Ben Swanton opens this section with a powerful and provocative analysis of the emergence of gender violence as a policy problem. In this chapter, Swanton argues that much research on gender and violence assumes a particular representation of 'gender violence' as a specific form of problem, which then in turn has

profound implications for how such violence might be addressed. Staying with questions about the politics of representation, in Chapter 13 Roxani Krystalli offers a sophisticated account of feminist narrative approaches to the study of violence, asking what happens to our knowledge about gender and violence when we take narratives seriously. Elaborating on the intricate politics and practices of narrative-based research, Krystalli demonstrates that ‘narratives can be sites of not only power, but also care. That dual attentiveness to care and power, to the possibility of agency alongside the possibility of harm, is itself a key feminist tenet that scholars of violence can carry forward.’

In Chapter 14, Andrea McDonnell provides an analysis of gender, violence, and popular culture. She considers ‘the ways in which popular cultural realms – advertising, television, and celebrity culture – contribute to our “common sense” understanding of the relationship between gender and violence’. McDonnell treats these three sites as case studies from which she skilfully draws out the implications for research on gender and violence. Turning to a related but different site, Lee Broughton analyses gender and violence in film in Chapter 15. Presenting a wide-ranging analysis across different genres of film, and weaving in insights from psychoanalysis, Broughton elaborates on the ways in which gender and violence are represented in film, and proposes a potential analytical framework for researchers interested in such texts. In Chapter 16, Sandra Yao offers a different site of analysis again, engaging with gender and violence online. Yao examines the ways in which gendered behaviours and identities are policed and (re)produced online, in often violent ways, and explores the representation of gendered violence in online media such as video games. To conclude this section, in Chapter 17 Roland Bleiker and Emma Hutchison examine representations of gender and violence in news media, including news photography. Through their detailed and rich analysis, Bleiker and Hutchison show that ‘photographic representations – and aesthetic practices more broadly – are paradoxically both an essential part of gender discrimination and an equally essential part of overcoming them’.

The final section of the *Handbook* is empirically diverse, bringing feminist lenses to bear on different contexts of gender and violence. In Chapter 18, Kaitlin Kelly-Thompson, Amber Lusvardi and Laurel Weldon provide an overview of research on gender and violence in transnational perspective. They discuss transnational activism on gender violence, and emphasize the possibilities of transnational and, more recently, specifically digital forms of organizing to mobilize against gender violence. The authors adopt an intersectional analytical lens, and caution against the idea that a singular, ‘one size fits all’ solution to such a complex problem is possible, noting ‘the ways that neo-imperialism, heterosexism, racism

and sexism are intertwined in shaping violence'. Following on from Kelly-Thompson, Lusvardi and Weldon, in Chapter 19 Jo Spangaro offers a detailed examination of one of the specific forms of violence that feminists have mobilized around: intimate partner violence. Spangaro examines both prevalence and impact, and explores the shifts from conceptualizing such violence as 'domestic' to its current formulation as 'intimate partner violence'.

In Chapter 20, Sara Meger discusses gender and violence in the context of the 'Women, Peace and Security' agenda, the international policy architecture that addresses women's rights and protection issues in conflict and conflict-affected settings. Meger elaborates on the ways in which that agenda has produced a narrow focus on women as victims of violence, and argues that 'the original feminist intentions of the resolution have become increasingly diluted through its institutionalization'. Picking up on the theme of gendered institutions, Joane Nagel provides an engaging analysis of gender, violence and the military in Chapter 21, in which she argues that 'gender and sexuality play a prominent role in shaping military violence, both in the course of routine military operations and in instances of "extralegal" or illegal military violence'. Nagel's careful account shows how institutional culture, values, and ideologies are both gendered and violent, and function to (re)produce gender and gendered violence in pervasive and unsettling ways. In the third of three chapters that touch on the themes of militaries and conflict, Torunn Wimpelmann discusses gender, violence, and post-conflict in Chapter 22. Wimpelmann examines 'the post-conflict setting as a particular historical moment shaped by new political openings, emergent and powerful women's movements, and the influence and resources of international aid agencies'. Highlighting the complexity of engaging with gender and violence in post-conflict settings, Wimpelmann's account is both compelling and revealing.

Shifting the focus to urban planning and domestic policy, in Chapter 23 Paula Meth explores 'safe cities'. Moving deftly across scales, Meth brings to the surface debates in critical and feminist urban geography as they intersect with discussions of gender and violence, focussing primarily – though not exclusively – on the ways in which women in cities experience and organize against violence. Wide-ranging in scope, Meth's analysis shows how 'city spaces as sites of power are implicated in gender and violence; and processes and outcomes of gendered violence are closely tied to legal, cultural, economic and social relations'. Penny Griffin elaborates on gender and violence in the context of those economic relations that Meth highlights, in her discussion of gender and economic violence in Chapter 24. Griffin provides a detailed overview of current approaches to economy and violence in the practices of the global political economy, and outlines

feminist debates on gender and violence in the global political economy. To explore the conceptual and representational issues raised, Griffin develops an analysis of three themes: violence against women; the violence of ‘development’; and the relationship between economic restructuring and violence.

Chapters 25, 26, and 27 are concerned with rights and justice, broadly conceived. Dianne Otto provides a nuanced and detailed examination of gender, violence, and human rights in Chapter 25. Otto presents a comprehensive engagement with a wide range of laws, treaties, and conventions, applying an intersectional lens to the question of human rights and showing how the rallying cry that ‘women’s rights are human rights’ has provided a foundation for activism across a range of rights-based issues, including the right to live free from homophobic and transphobic violence. In Chapter 26 Bianca Fileborn offers an analysis of gender, violence and the criminal justice system. Fileborn draws attention to ‘gendered patterns in terms of who is able to report to and access the system, in which circumstances, and for certain types of violence – though these patterns are also inflected with other socio-structural factors such as class, race and sexuality’. Highlighting the theme of prosecution, in Chapter 27 Dienneke de Vos discusses prosecuting sexual and gender-based violence at the International Criminal Court (ICC), the body with a mandate under the Rome Statute to prosecute war crimes, crimes against humanity and genocide. As de Vos explains, ‘the Statute criminalises not only rape, but includes separate crime categories of sexual slavery, enforced prostitution, forced pregnancy, enforced sterilization, gender-based persecution and “other forms of sexual violence” as war crimes, crimes against humanity and/or, in some circumstances, genocide’. De Vos’s account of prosecuting sexual and gender-based violence crimes at the ICC brings to light some of the complex and challenging issues surrounding the contemporary emphasis on combating impunity for such crimes, and the ongoing quest for justice for survivors.

The final chapter in the *Handbook* is a bit unusual, in many regards. The other chapters all follow a similar structure: an introduction to the issue; an overview of contemporary debates both in scholarly literature and regarding the manifestation of the issue in practice; and some suggestions for future research for those interested in taking these issues further. Chapter 28 offers us something quite different. As I mentioned in the previous section, my work on gender and violence really began when I was a doctoral student. Some of the most useful ‘tools to think with’ that I found were derived from Sharon Marcus’s 1992 essay ‘Fighting Bodies, Fighting Words: A Theory and Politics of Rape Prevention’, which was published as part of a collection edited by Judith Butler and Joan W. Scott titled

Feminists Theorize the Political. Marcus's original essay articulated a way of thinking about gender and violence that resonated powerfully with my own understanding. In her intricate analysis of violence, Marcus provided a vocabulary to describe, and a viewpoint on, the inevitable imbrication of the physicality of violence with its expression in discourse. When I began the project of putting together this collection, I was determined to feature Marcus's writing in some way. I was delighted when she agreed to provide a chapter revisiting 'Fighting Bodies, Fighting Words', and offer some concluding reflections on gender and violence in the twenty-first century. In some ways an 'afterword', in some ways a coda to the chapters that precede it, the concluding chapter reminds me of the work to which my own scholarship in this field is indebted, and – I very much hope – will inspire more research in years to come.

As I mentioned at the outset of this chapter, I envision this collection as an intervention in an ongoing set of debates about what it means to research gender and violence, how we might research gender and violence, and what effects our research on gender and violence might have in the world we inhabit. These debates are complex, elliptical, and challenging; insights from many disciplines are brought to bear on our shared 'object(s) of study' – not that it makes sense to me to think of gender and violence in such terms. Each chapter is designed as an individual contribution, so you can dip in and out of the volume as you wish: themes emerge and recede as you progress through the volume; but despite the loose ordering outlined above, each chapter very much stands alone. I hope that you find each chapter as interesting and intellectually invigorating as I do, and that you learn new things from your engagement with each contribution, as I have. These essays are intended to open up our thinking, and offer us better tools to think with.

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