GEXcel Work in Progress Report
Volume XII

Getting Rid of Violence
TRANSdisciplinary, TRANSnational and
TRANSformative Feminist Dialogues on Embodiment,
Emotions and Ethics

Proceedings from GEXcel Theme 7:
Getting Rid of Violence
Autumn 2010

Edited by
Barbro Wijma, Alp Biricik and Ulrica Engdahl

Centre of Gender Excellence – GEXcel

Towards a European Centre of Excellence in
Transnational and Transdisciplinary Studies of
• Changing Gender Relations
• Intersectionalities
• Embodiment

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Department of Gender Studies, Tema Institute,
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Gender and Medicine,
Faculty of Health Sciences, Linköping University
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Centre of Gender Excellence
Gendering Excellence – GEXcel

Towards a European Centre of Excellence in Transnational and Transdisciplinary Studies of:

- Changing Gender Relations
- Intersectionalities
- Embodiment

Nina Lykke,
Linköping University, Director of GEXcel

In 2006, the Swedish Research Council granted 20 million SEK to set up a Centre of Gender Excellence at the inter-university Institute of Thematic Gender Studies, Linköping University and Örebro University, for the period 2007–2011. Linköping University has added five million SEK as matching funds, while Örebro University has added three million SEK as matching funds.

The following is a short presentation of the excellence centre. For more information contact: Scientific Director of GEXcel, Professor Nina Lykke (ninly@tema.liu.se); GEXcel Research Coordinator, Dr. Ulrica Engdahl (coordinator@genderexcel.org); GEXcel Research Coordinator, Dr. Gunnel Karlsson (gunnel.karlsson@oru.se); or Manager, Gender Studies, Linköping, Berit Starkman (berst@tema.liu.se).
Institutional basis of GEXcel

Institute of Thematic Gender Studies, Linköping University and Örebro University

The institute is a collaboration between:
Department of Gender Studies, Linköping University;
Gender and Medicine, Linköping University
&
Centre for Feminist Social Studies, Örebro University;
Gender Studies, Örebro University

GEXcel board and lead-team
– a transdisciplinary team of Gender Studies professors:
• Professor Nina Lykke, Linköping University (Director) – Gender and Culture; background: Literary Studies
• Professor Anita Göransson, Linköping University – Gender, Organisation and Economic Change; background: Economic History
• Professor Jeff Hearn, Linköping University – Critical Studies of Men and Masculinities; background: Sociology and Organisation Studies
• Professor Liisa Husu, Örebro University – Gender Studies with a Social Science profile; background: Sociology
• Professor Emerita Anna G. Jónasdóttir, Örebro University – Gender Studies with a Social Science profile; background: Political Science, Social and Political Theory
• Professor Barbro Wijma, Linköping University – Gender and Medicine; background: Medicine and Associate Professor Katarina Swahnberg – Gender and Medicine; background: Medicine

International advisory board
• Professor Karen Barad, University of California, St. Cruz, USA
• Professor Rosi Braidotti, University of Utrecht, The Netherlands
• Professor Raewyn Connell, University of Sydney, Australia
• Professor Emerita Kathleen B. Jones, San Diego State University, USA
• Professor Elzbieta Oleksy, University of Lodz, Poland
• Professor Berit Schei, Norwegian University of Technology, Trondheim, Norway
• Professor Birte Siim, University of Aalborg, Denmark
Aims of GEXcel

1) To set up a temporary (five year) Centre of Gender Excellence (Gendering EXcellence: GEXcel) in order to develop innovative research on changing gender relations, intersectionalities and embodiment from transnational and transdisciplinary perspectives.

2) To become a pilot or developmental scheme for a more permanent Sweden-based European Collegium for Advanced Transnational and Transdisciplinary Gender Studies (CATSgender).

A core activity of GEXcel 2007–2011

A core activity is a visiting fellows programme, organised to attract excellent senior researchers and promising younger scholars from Sweden and abroad and from many disciplinary backgrounds. The visiting fellows are taken in after application and a peer-reviewed evaluation process of the applications; a number of top scholars within the field are also invited to be part of GEXcel’s research teams. GEXcel’s visiting fellows receive grants from one week to 12 months to stay at GEXcel to do research together with the permanent staff of six Gender Studies professors and other relevant local staff.

The Fellowship Programme is concentrated on annually shifting thematic foci. We select and construct shifting research groups, consisting of excellent researchers of different academic generations (professors, post doctoral scholars, doctoral students) to carry out new research on specified research themes within the overall frame of changing gender relations, intersectionalities and embodiment.

Brief definition of overall research theme of GEXcel

The overall theme of GEXcel research is defined as transnational and transdisciplinary studies of changing gender relations, intersectionalities and embodiment. We have chosen a broad and inclusive frame in order to attract a diversity of excellent scholars from different disciplines, countries and academic generations, but specificity and focus are also given high priority and ensured via annually shifting thematic foci.

The overall keywords of the (long!) title are chosen in order to indicate currently pressing theoretical and methodological challenges of gender research to be addressed by GEXcel research:

– By the keyword ‘transnational’ we underline that GEXcel research should contribute to a systematic transnationalizing of research on gender relations, intersectionalities and embodiment, and, in so doing, develop a reflexive stance vis-à-vis transnational travelling of ideas, theories
and concepts, and consciously try to overcome reductive one-country focused research as well as pseudo-universalising research that unreflectedly takes, for example ‘Western’ or ‘Scandinavian’ models as norm.

– By the keyword ‘changing’ we aim at underlining that it, in a world of rapidly changing social, cultural, economic and technical relations, is crucial to be able to theorise change, and that this is of particular importance for critical gender research due to its liberatory aims and inherent focus on macro, meso and micro level transformations.

– By the keyword ‘gender relations’, we aim at underlining that we define gender not as an essence, but as a relational, plural and shifting process, and that it is the aim of GEXcel research to contribute to a further understanding of this process.

– By the keyword ‘intersectionalities’, we stress that a continuous reflection on meanings of intersectionalities in gender research should be integrated in all GEXcel research. In particular, we will emphasise four different aspects: a) intersectionality as intersections of disciplines and main areas (humanities, social sciences and medical and natural sciences); b) intersectionality as intersections between macro, meso and micro level social analyses; c) intersectionality as intersections between social categories and power differentials organised around categories such as gender, ethnicity, race, class, sexuality, age, nationality, profession, dis/ablebodiedness; d) intersectionality as intersections between major different branches of feminist theorising (for example, queer feminist theorising, Marxist feminist theorising, postcolonial feminist theorising etc.).

– Finally, by the keyword ‘embodiment’, we aim at emphasising yet another kind of intersectionality, which has proved crucial in current gender research – to explore intersections between discourse and materiality and between sex and gender.

Specific research themes of GEXcel

The research at GEXcel focuses on a variety of themes. The research themes are the following:

Theme 1: Gender, Sexuality and Global Change
On interactions of gender and sexuality in a global perspective.
Headed by Anna G. Jónasdóttir.

Theme 2: Deconstructing the Hegemony of Men and Masculinities
On ways to critically analyse constructions of the social category ‘men’.
Headed by Jeff Hearn.
Theme 3: Distinctions and Authorisation
On meanings of gender, class, and ethnicity in constructions of elites.
Headed by Anita Göransson.

Themes 4 and 5: Sexual Health, Embodiment and Empowerment
On new synergies between different kinds of feminist researchers’ (e.g. philosophers’ and medical doctors’) approaches to the sexed body.
Headed by Nina Lykke (Theme 5) and Barbro Wijma (Theme 4).

Theme 6: Power Shifts and New Divisions in Society, Work and University
On the specificities of new central power bases, such as immaterial production and the rule of knowledge.
Headed by Anita Göransson.

Themes 7 and 8: Teaching Normcritical Sex – Getting Rid of Violence. TRANSdisciplinary, TRANSnational and TRANSformative Feminist Dialogues on Embodiment, Emotions and Ethics
On the struggles and synergies of socio-cultural and medical perspectives taking place in the three arenas sex education, critical sexology and violence.
Headed by Nina Lykke (Theme 8) and Barbro Wijma (Theme 7).

Theme 9: Gendered Sexualed Transnationalisations, Deconstructing the Dominant: Transforming men, ‘centres’ and knowledge/policy/practice.
On various gendered, sexualed, intersectional, embodied, transnational processes, in relation to contemporary and potential changes in power relations.
Headed by Jeff Hearn.

Theme 10: Love in Our Time – a Question for Feminism
On the recent and growing interest in love as a subject for serious social and political theory among both non-feminist and feminist scholars.
Headed by Anna G. Jónasdóttir.

Themes 11 and 12) Gender Paradoxes in Changing Academic and Scientific Organisation(s).
Theme on gender paradoxes in how academic and scientific organisations are changing and being changed.
Headed by Liisa Husu.

In addition, three cross-cutting research themes will also be organised:
a) Exploring Socio-technical Models for Combining Virtual and Physical Co-Presence while doing joint Gender Research;
b) Organising a European Excellence Centre – Exploring Models;
c) Theories and Methodologies in Transnational and Transdisciplinary Studies of Gender Relations, Intersectionalities and Embodiment.

The thematically organised research groups are chaired by GEXcel’s core staff of six Gender Studies professors, who together make up a transdisciplinary team, covering the humanities, the social sciences and medicine.

Ambitions and visions

The fellowship programme of GEXcel is created with the central purpose to create transnational and transdisciplinary research teams that will have the opportunity to work together for a certain time – long enough to do joint research, do joint publications, produce joint international research applications and do other joint activities such as organising international conferences.

We will build on our extensive international networks to promote the idea of a permanent European institute for advanced and excellent gender research – and in collaboration with other actors seek to make this idea reality, for example, organisations such as AOIFE, the SOCRATES-funded network Athena and WISE, who jointly are preparing for a professional Gender Studies organisation in Europe.

We also hope that collaboration within Sweden will sustain the long-term goals of making a difference both in Sweden and abroad.

We consider GEXcel to be a pilot or developmental scheme for a more long-term European centre of gender excellence, i.e. for an institute- or collegium-like structure dedicated to advanced, transnational and transdisciplinary gender research, research training and education in advanced Gender Studies (GEXcel Collegium).

Leading international institutes for advanced study such as the Centre for the Study of Democracy at the University of California Irvine, and in Sweden The Swedish Collegium for Advanced Studies (SCAS at Uppsala University) have proved to be attractive environments and creative meeting places where top scholars in various fields from all over the world, and from different generations, have found time for reflective work and for meeting and generating new, innovative research. We would like to explore how this kind of academic structures that have proved very productive in terms of advancing excellence and high level, internationally important and recognised research within other areas of
study, can unleash new potentials of gender research and initiate a new level of excellence within the area. The idea is, however not just to take an existing academic form for unfolding of excellence potentials and fill it with excellent gender research. Understood as a developmental/pilot scheme for the GEXcel Collegium, GEXcel should build on inspirations from the mentioned units for advanced studies, but also further explore and assess what feminist excellence means in terms of both contents and form/structure.

We want to rework the advanced research collegium model on a feminist basis, including thorough critical reflections on meanings of gender excellence. What does it mean to gender excellence? How can we do it in even more excellent and feminist innovative ways?
Editors’ foreword

The papers of this volume represent the intense and intellectually hectic activities which took place during the seventh research theme of the GEXcel during the autumn 2010 in Linköping, Getting Rid of Violence; TRANSdisciplinary, TRANSnational and TRANSformative Feminist Dialogues on Embodiment, Emotions and Ethics. In short, the theme was called The Violence Theme 7. All the authors were GEXcel scholars for various periods of time between October and December 2010, working with their research projects at Tema Genus, Linköping University.

All scholars also participated in the Conference arranged within the theme in Linköping on 12th–14th October 2010: Violences and Silences: Shaming, Blaming – and Intervening (see Appendix B for program). This conference gathered 35 participants from all over the world who during three intensive days exchanged knowledge. So many papers were submitted after the conference for the proceedings that those have appeared in a special Work in Progress report, volume XII.

Many of the chapters in the volume were presented at the seminars which were held regularly during the theme period (see Appendix A for program).

This volume is literally a “Work in Progress” report, meaning that some of the texts are not preliminary as to intellectual content but will in future be elaborated more before they are finally published. Some minor editorial comments and changes have been exchanged between the authors and the editors, and the content of the chapters are thus the authors’ own responsibility. Only the texts from non-native English speaking authors have gone through a formal language check by a native English-speaking editor.

We would like to thank Berit Starkman, Björn Pernrud and Ulrica Engdahl for all their efforts in the practical arrangements for the theme and the scholars, Liz Sourbut for English language revision of the manuscripts, Tomas Hägg for excellent work with the printing, Mette Bryld for invaluable advice on applicants for GEXcel, and Nina Lykke for her support as GEXcel Director.

Linköping, May 2012
Barbro Wijma, Alp Biricik and Ulrica Engdahl
Chapter 1
Getting Rid of Violence
TRANSdisciplinary, TRANSnational
and TRANSformative Feminist
Dialogues on Embodiment, Emotions
and Ethics
An Introduction to Research Theme 7

Barbro Wijma
Gender and Medicine, Linköping University, Sweden

This introductory chapter gives a short outline of Research Theme 7: Getting Rid of Violence: TRANSdisciplinary, TRANSnational and TRANSformative Feminist Dialogues on Embodiment, Emotions and Ethics. Theme 7 was one part of the activities of the Centre of Gender Excellence (GEXcel) at Linköping University during the years 2007–2011. During all the activities, the theme was known by the short title of Violence Theme 7, which is why it will often be referred to in that way throughout this volume.

The Violence Theme 7 period, autumn 2010

The first part of Violence Theme 7 was arranged together with Professor Nina Lykke at the Department of Gender Studies, Linköping University, during 2009 under the title: Theme 4 & 5: Sexual Health, Embodiment and Empowerment: Bridging Epistemological Gaps. For this theme we invited researchers from all over the world who focused on either of the two main topics: sexual health or violence. Throughout the theme period we worked on bringing together different and often opposing perspectives on the research topics discussed. This became a very rewarding experience and was thus also applied to the following theme on violence, Theme 7.

For various uncontrollable reasons, Theme 7 was carried through without scholars dealing explicitly with research on sex, and without the close cooperation of Professor Nina Lykke, who had worked on Theme 4 & 5. However, the scholars involved in Theme 7, quite naturally, did
also explore many issues connected to sex in their research, e.g. sexual violence, pornography, or sexual mutilation.

When selecting scholars, we aimed to recruit participants who of course were highly qualified, but who could also represent various fields of research and different cultural contexts. And in both aspects we were extremely successful, as the reader will see when exploring the content of this book. All in all, 12 researchers worked together during a period of usually one to three months. Their names and present affiliations can be found in the Appendix C. Their enthusiasm was overwhelming and they made the most of the opportunities to meet and work together with so many researchers from very different contexts. Many new networking and joint research projects were set up as a result of the close collaboration created in this milieu.

During the theme we conducted seminars (see Appendix A) and a conference (see Appendix B for an overview of the programme). The conference: Violences and Silences: Shaming, Blaming – and Intervening, Linköping October 2010, is presented in more detail in a separate volume of the Work in Progress series, Volume XIII.

A theoretical background to the violence themes is presented in the introductory chapter (Chapter 1) of the Work in Progress Report number XI: “Gender and violence: mechanisms, anti-mechanisms, interventions, evaluations.”

Presentation of the chapters

In this volume we have collected contributions from 11 of the 12 scholars. Dubravka Zarkov’s contribution is missing here but will be presented in a forthcoming volume of the Routledge book series: Routledge Advances in Feminist Studies and Intersectionality, in a volume with the working title “Violences and Silences”, coedited by Barbro Wijma and Nina Lykke.

The chapters in this report have been arranged according to context, i.e. chapters dealing with connected content are placed together in five sections. Each of the chapters will be summarised in the following text to present the reader with an overview of what happened during the period of Violence Theme 7 at the Department of Gender Studies, Linköping University, in 2010.

PART I: INTIMATE PARTNER VIOLENCE

Chapter 2: Exploring Women’s Reports of Sexual Violence and Control
Halimah A. F. DeShong, University of the West Indies.
In this chapter, the author explores three separate, but related, themes on violence against women in intimate heterosexual relationships: women’s actual or presumed sexual infidelity as a rationalisation for men’s violence, the masculinist construction of women’s sexuality and narratives of sexual violence against women. The analysis is based on interviews with 34 women and men from the Eastern Caribbean country of St. Vincent and the Grenadines. It is argued that the practice of physical violence against women in heterosexual relationships is embedded within broader asymmetrical gendered power relations.

The threats of violence, coupled with women’s memories of previous violent episodes, serve to limit women’s activities within intimate relationships. The acts of physical and sexual violence need to be studied in the context of a range of other coercive practices. Also, it is difficult to separate understandings of gender ideologies and power from research that examines the practice of intimate partner violence, particularly when we consider the asymmetrical distribution of this phenomenon between men and women.

Men used a range of violent, controlling and coercive acts to regulate women’s ability to navigate between culturally demarcated public and private spaces. Often, in these narratives of violence and control, women were objectified and positioned as the possessions/property of men. Conversely, men were depicted as regulators of these two separated domains. The spatial limits set for women also reinscribe masculinised constructions of gender and sexuality.

Men often construct binary and value-laden sexualised scripts for women, moving between the Madonna image as an ideal and notions of women’s innate carnal desires. The latter is associated with the threat of emasculation, which is in turn used as a rationale for policing the boundaries of physical space, gender and sexuality. Also explored in this chapter is the often-repeated theme of women’s sexual infidelity as a justification for men’s violence. Women find themselves in a constant struggle to prove their virtue and monogamy in violent heterosexual relationships. Men’s narratives support the double standard of sexual morality that justifies promiscuity among men, but insists on women’s fidelity. The dominance of the discourse on men’s sexual prowess in the construction of masculinities means that suspected infidelity by women acts as a form of emasculation. Implicitly, violence is justified as a means of restoring masculine identity.

The emerging dynamics of power in these relationships are discursively constructed as the effect of traditional gendered and (hetero) sexualised practices that are often cast as normal and natural. Physical violence against women is thus rationalised and justified as a way of
responding to threats to these traditional arrangements of gender and sexuality. Men tend to situate their controlling behaviours and the perpetration of violence within the context of protecting some notion of feminine virtue. For example, one female respondent explains that her partner acted as he did because he felt that he had some exclusive right to her, being the first to have had a sexual relationship with her. There is a sense in which her “loss of virginity” is linked to his attempts to govern her body and sexuality. These accounts of sexual violence reinforce the duality of gender identities. Masculinities performed in these accounts centre on men’s power and dominance relative to women’s bodies and sexuality. Conversely, women’s identities are linked to notions of submission and obedience.

Chapter 3: Palimpsests of Sexuality and Intimate Violence: Turning points as Transformative Scripts for Intervention.
Christa Binswanger, University of Basel, Switzerland; Lotta Samelius, National Police Academy and Linköping University, Sweden; Suruchi Thapar-Björkert, Uppsala University, Sweden.


Abstract from the published article:
In this article, we explore transdisciplinary understandings of scripts as transformative interventions. Script refers, on the one hand, to cognitive, routinized behavioural patterns; on the other hand, it is a multilayered process of enacting, interpreting, and rewriting interaction within a specific context. The metaphor of the palimpsest, embodying and provoking interdisciplinary encounters, links the various layers of practiced and narrated scripts. The interrelation of the scripts of the palimpsest is marked by inextricability as they use the same space and create an illusionary intimacy. We develop our ideas about script as intervention, reflecting on scripts of violence and sexual experience. We make use of the psychoanalytic term “cryptic incorporation”. Cryptic incorporation entails the idea of an experience psychically “swallowed whole” by the subject and therefore not accessible to conscious reflection, once incorporated.

Our methodological readings are both empirical and fictional. The empirical example is based on an interview with one respondent, who has experienced intimate violence during the course of her life. The autobiographical text of Shedding, written in 1975 by the Swiss author Verena Stefan, is an example of fiction. Both texts engage in the inextricability of vulnerability and intimacy. Analysing these narratives, we pay
special attention to “turning-points”. As turning-points represent decisive changes within evolving life-stories, they are read as palimpsestuous scripts of a transformative process. Thus, we focus on the human ability to change scripts, to rewrite biographical events. We look for a productive entanglement of our scientific writing, understanding the writing process itself as a palimpsestuous layer of script as intervention.

PART II: VIOLATIONS OF FEMALE SEXUALITY

Chapter 4: Inner Labia Elongation as Violence Against Women.
Mathabo Khau, Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University, South Africa

This chapter describes and analyses the impact of inner labia elongation on female sexual health, being a traditional way of preparing girls in Lesotho for marriage and sexual intercourse. Older women were responsible for the transmission of sexual knowledge and acceptable sexual practices, including inner labia elongation, to young girls. Through this rite of passage into womanhood, attitudes and values were also insidiously constructed. Internationally, this practice is highly controversial, with the WHO classifying inner labia elongation as a Type IV female genital mutilation, and the UN classifying it under “harmful traditional practices”. Arguments have been raised that the practice is neither harmful to women’s health, nor forced on women. However, in Lesotho, young girls engage in this practice before menarche where their autonomy in making their own decisions is seriously hampered.

The chapter highlights how the practice of labial elongation perpetuates the violation of women and girls’ rights to sexual pleasure. In the literature many beliefs about the elongation of inner labia have been documented, e.g. elongated inner labia kept a woman hot as they blocked the vaginal entrance and kept the heat inside, and not elongating meant risking the loss of favour with one’s husband due to being sexually unpleasant. If it is a rite of passage into womanhood, then it means that those women who do not conform are supposedly not complete women and have to face the life-long shame of being incomplete. While in other countries labial elongation supposedly increases sexual pleasure for both male and female partners, in Lesotho it was believed to make girls less sexually excitable because it forced the clitoris to retract into the labial folds. This practice was done to keep girls and women “good”. Thus the main reason behind inner labia elongation has been the need to control girls’ and women’s sexuality. However, young girls were not given this information. The blame placed on women who have not elongated their inner labia, and the shame they are forced to endure within societies, perpetuates women’s silence regarding the violations they endure within
marriages and other social structures. The public humiliation of deviant women, mostly by other women, serves to reinforce this violation of women’s right to sexual autonomy and pleasure.

If preparing Basotho girls for womanhood centres around labial elongation, whose specific aim is enhancing male sexual pleasure and reducing female sexual pleasure, this means that female sexuality is constructed as not needing pleasure. Young girls are forced to construct their sexual identities around sexual restraint and passivity because pursuing sexual pleasure transforms good Basotho girls into bad girls. Growing up with these perceptions makes it difficult for girls to fully embrace their sexuality and its pleasures because good girls should not pursue sex or be sexually knowledgeable.

But despite the intended suppression of female sexual desire and pleasure, the practice of labial elongation also created a space for the exploration of pleasurable female sexuality and hence in some situations became an arena for challenging traditional sexual norms. The fact that girls enjoyed mutual sexual pleasuring in their “partnerships”, while pulling each other’s labia, shows that the practice of assisted inner labia elongation challenged the hegemony enjoyed by male sexual pleasure and heterosexuality. There are also reports documenting that girls who engaged in such “same-sex practices” did not see this behaviour as sexual at all. To them, sexuality had to do with penetration.

Bourdieu argues that agents in any field conform to norms or prescribed rituals depending on their interests. Women in Lesotho thus seem to have a vested interest in labial elongation despite its drawbacks relating to female sexual pleasure, and they are also strategically complicit in the symbolic violence or “othering” directed at those without the elongated labia because they stand to gain from this practice. Those women with elongated labia, as existing holders of power, use labial elongation as an entry fee into the field of womanhood for young girls as new players, or a way of blocking or excluding “unfit” players from the game of being a woman.

Chapter 5: Trafficking of Women and Girls from Nepal to India for Prostitution; What is Known About its History, Nurturing Factors, Health Effects and Prevention?
Sunil Kumar Joshi, Kathmandu Medical College, Nepal; Katarina Swahnberg, Linköping University, Sweden.

This chapter presents what is currently known about the trafficking of women and girls (W/G) from Nepal to India, its history, nurturing factors and health effects, and finally the ongoing activities against it. Trafficking is illegal under Nepalese law.
The trafficking of Nepalese W/G to Indian brothels has been documented since 1960 and comprises an estimated number of between 5,000 and 12,000 W/G annually. Besides the increased risk of exposure to STDs, HIV, violence and sexual trauma, trafficked W/G run a high risk of developing mental ill-health and also of having more difficulties in obtaining access to healthcare than non-trafficked W/G.

The trafficking of W/G is possible throughout the 1,740 mile-long open border between India and Nepal, and therefore stopping this “export” at the border is a huge task. Preventive actions are blocked by both the trafficking community’s vested interests and the lack of actual information and networking among stakeholders.

W/G trafficking is a highly profitable business, both for the traffickers and the brothel owners. A trafficked W/G may be sold to brothel owners in India for US$ 2,000–2,400, and the trafficked W/G has to work in the brothel in order to pay back the “debt” along with interest. The US Central Intelligence Agency has reported that the “value” of a trafficked W/G who works as a prostitute is approximately US$ 250,000 on the sex trade market.

There is a high demand for Nepalese W/G in Indian brothels, both because of their fairer complexions and because, as strangers, they are less likely to be able to find a way to protest within Indian society. Young girls are most in demand and the mean age is thought to have decreased to, at present, 10–14 years.

There are many other factors besides those mentioned above that nurture W/G trafficking in Nepal: unemployment, extreme poverty, conflict situations, a lack of infrastructure and basic needs, social norms such as the low status of W/G in the family and society, tradition and culture, illiteracy or ignorance about being trafficked and sold, lack of political commitment, administrative deficiencies, urbanisation and globalisation.

Preventive work to decrease the problem of W/G trafficking means combating the factors that make W/G vulnerable to trafficking, i.e. poverty, unemployment, illiteracy, violence against women, social exclusion and discrimination. To make society take action and ensure that its efforts are effective there is also a need for institutionalised reporting systems in W/G trafficking from Nepal, i.e. documental research.

Chapter 6: I Have Been to Hell: Rescued Nepalese Girls’ and Women’s Experiences of Trafficking to Brothels in India.

Sunil Kumar Joshi, Jagannath Kharel and Bhim Suwal, all from Kathmandu Medical College, Nepal; Barbro Wijma and Katarina Swahnberg, Linköping University, Sweden
The interview study described in this chapter was performed in cooperation with two Nepalese non-governmental organisations called Community Action Nepal (CAC Nepal) and Shakti Samuha. Informants were six trafficking survivors who were living independently in various parts of Kathmandu Valley and six who were currently staying at a rehabilitation centre.

Most of the informants had been tricked into being trafficked. The most commonly used bait was the promise of a nice job in Kathmandu or abroad with a good salary, which would allow the informant to buy “nice clothes” and eat “good food”. To this, it needs to be added that the migration decision of the informants (which turns out to be trafficking) takes place at an interface between economic hardship, the informant’s own desire for better work and a better life, and pressure on her to assist in sustaining her family.

The trafficker was most often a known person, male or female, who had spent time and effort in building a good relationship with the informant before taking her off for the “good job”.

Life at the brothel was described as a prison, where the informants instantly and at any time of the day or night had to obey the brothel owner (who was often a woman, and sometimes Nepalese), and her “guards” (male or female). If the informants refused or did not act appropriately they were severely punished, often by physical means, and their lives were reduced to one purpose: “how to satisfy brothel’s customers”. The owners of the brothels were usually sitting at the main entrance and other guards were always around. The doors were always locked when the informants had some time off. Most informants had not been allowed to leave the house, and a few of them did not understand where they were until they could ask someone later on.

The relief of finally returning home to Nepal was often clouded by difficulties. Only one of the informants had been able to go directly back home to her family. She was well accepted by her husband and in-laws, but she had to face a lot of resistance from other community members. Later on she decided to leave her husband, as she realised that he was also to blame for her being trafficked.

The informants revealed that their experiences while being trafficked were usually kept a secret both during and after trafficking. According to several studies, the trauma of having been trafficked is often complicated by societal rejection upon their return from the brothels. Survivors know who the traffickers are, but their reputation for cruelty and the failure of the police and legal system to enforce the law contribute to creating an attitude that there is no point in making official reports.
Finally, one puzzling fact is presented: during the last two decades Nepal has made great improvements in designing anti-trafficking programmes and implementing new anti-trafficking laws. Yet, trafficking seems to have become an increasing problem in the country during the same period. This poses an urgent challenge to both researchers and society.

**PART III: THE MEDIA AND GENDERED VIOLENCE**

**Chapter 7: “Porn Chic” – An Underlying Cause of Gendered Violence in Intimate Relationships? An Update.**

Nicola Steffen, Wolfgang von Goethe Universität Frankfurt, Germany

Nicola Steffen describes how Western culture has been sexualised and pornified to such an extent that sexualisation and pornification are now part of mainstream culture. It is mainly young women who are targeted – at an increasingly younger age. Steffen discusses how this pornification might contribute to violence in intimate relationships. Researchers generally agree that exposure to non-violent pornography has no negative effects on consumers. However, the nature of the effects of viewing the aggression and degradation inherent in current popular pornography continues to be much disputed. What is seen as potentially problematic is the mostly favourable responses of the female victims to aggressive sexual acts which give the impression that the sustained aggression is pleasure enhancing. Through social learning, consumers of pornography may become more aggressive towards their real-life partners as a result. The objectification of the women depicted in pornography may also contribute to this. Moreover, pornography is likely to influence sexual scripts, and as degradation and extreme pornography are becoming the norm, the sexual practices that consumers are wanting to re-enact with their real-life partners are also becoming increasingly non-normative in nature, i.e. more degrading and violent. For male consumers, there lurks yet another danger: that of becoming less able to maintain a healthy relationship with a woman, due to what is displayed in pornography, where relationships are depicted as shallow and transient and women as ever-available. According to Marriott: “Unlike real life, the pornographic world is a place in which men find their authority unchallenged and in which women are their willing, even grateful servants and: “Running like a watermark through all pornography use... is the desire for control” (Morgan).
Chapter 8: Framing Gendered Violence on Romanian Television: Politics of Representation and the Construction of Social Deviance.

Elena Panican, Central European University Budapest, Hungary.

This chapter does not discuss strategies for the elimination of violence, focusing instead on a critical analysis of a Romanian reality television programme in order to expose the mechanisms that make the representation of gendered violence instrumental in the discursive construction of marginalised, underprivileged social groups as “other”: 1) By not acknowledging that the violence taking place onscreen is gendered, it is dismissed from becoming connected to wider structures of discrimination organised around gender, ethnicity, class and their intersection, 2) De-gendering gendered violence by involving expert diagnostics and comments only on a couple-by-couple basis and thereby individualising the roots of violence, 3) Representing gendered violence as limited to the domain of the “other”, thus removing it from the list of urgent issues affecting society in its entirety, 4) Pathologising marginalised underprivileged groups and constructing them as socially deviant by representing them as inherently violent, 5) Profiting from scenes of spectacular instances of violence against women by members of “othered” groups in order to posit the existence of “civilised”, “European” subjects projected against the “uncivilised”, “backward” elements of society represented onscreen.

These mechanisms form the basis for articulating a politics of representation of gendered violence as a feminist intervention against the routine fetishisation of violence against women in the Romanian media landscape.

PART IV: STATE, LAW AND VIOLENCE

Chapter 9: Working Rape: Feminisms and the Rise of Rape and Sexual Violence in International Law.

Rana Jaleel, New York University, United States.

During her GEXcel scholarship, the author was in the beginning phase of her research project which she describes as: “an intellectual history of how 1960s and 1970s feminist organising around rape and sexual violence became institutionalised within international law and jurisprudence. To this end, I examine how divergent conceptions of and selected responses to rape and sexual violence became enshrined in international law by undertaking a combination of archival work, legal textual analysis, people-based research and engagement with theoretical writings on gender and race, state violence and the relationship between law, justice and property.” The institutionalisation of feminist ideals, what le-
gal scholar Janet Halley terms “Governance Feminism,” appeared in the mid-1990s, as human trafficking and sexual violence during conflicts became focuses of debate, and when the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia (ICTY), began to incorporate feminist concepts into its official language.

By the 1990s, several United Nations documents and conferences expressly named living without fear of violence as a fundamental human right for women, and western mainstream feminists, who had been criticised for not taking class and race into account, argued that “violence against women” should become an organising principle for international feminist action. Over time, what constitutes “violence against women” has shifted away from a presupposed collective interest in combating the direct male oppression and domination of women. What is now seen is a transnational feminist approach that pays attention to gender diversity as well as to inequalities and commonalities produced by late capitalism, within specific historical contexts.

The need for international criminal justice is by no means satisfied by the creation of the permanent International Criminal Court (ICC). Insufficient attention has been paid to accounts of war-time and post-war-time rape and sexual violence, their changing definitions and the increasingly racialised laws around them. The stories never told have of course no platform at all (see Chapter 11 in this volume).

What has this change in rhetoric meant, when a discussion of “violence against women” shifts into one of “international human rights” and thence to “war crimes” in “a world distinguished by racist histories of imperial and colonial occupation, marked by economic disparities, unequal access to resources and global militarism”? These are the themes discussed in Chapter 9.

Chapter 10: Sovereignty and Security in Post-9/11: Queering Migration Politics

Shirin Saeidi, University of Cambridge, United Kingdom.

One of the reasons why the interrelationships between sovereignty and migration have not been sufficiently examined is because questions pertaining to sovereignty are continually explored through the confined understandings of state-making processes. With this approach, moments when people and/or states demonstrate sovereignties become framed solely through discussions of elite decision-making and structures of legal rights. This trend is most evident in studies of migration that take for granted conventional understandings of belonging and citizenship. This study questions the extent to which Diasporas are trying to (re)create their states away from “home,” or indeed still ascribing to the ideals of
the nation-state. Using the memoirs of Iranians in the Diaspora and ethnographic work, this chapter re-examines how attempts at establishing sovereignty for immigrants should figure in investigations of community formation and citizenship.

Additionally, the relationship between the formation of polities and political action in Diasporas has not been sufficiently framed within discussions of sovereignty. Queer theory, however, has provided more specific tools by, for example, refusing to utilise a formal definition and understanding its intellectual perspective to be a “becoming,” a process that is useful precisely because it does not take for granted apparent forms and material manifestations. This perspective invites researchers to pay attention to the intricate workings of processes, as opposed to applying empirical data to an already established and accepted form.

In an attempt to move beyond the structures of legal rights and elite decision-making, this project postulates individual and collective movement within institutions as an alternative approach to deciphering the state formation process (Saeidi, forthcoming). As such, state formation is re-conceptualised as the consequence of individual and collective governance of local and international sites, and not merely a collective integration into the formal governing apparatuses of the state (Saeidi, forthcoming). While institutional form still remains central to this theorisation of state-making, it is also argued that structures develop through the ways in which people work within institutions. This approach requires a closer look at the negotiations, navigations and contentions of everyday life.


PART V: VIOLENCE AND WAR

Chapter 11: “I Want to Heal Myself by Unburdening my Heart”: Deconstructing Violence against Women in the Aftermath of War in Bosnia and Rwanda.

Sara Valentina Di Palma, University of Siena, Italy.

This chapter focuses on the problem of silence/silencing and the importance of breaking the silence and having an audience, or at least one listener, as a means of changing the effects of violence. After having experienced war-time violence, women often feel guilty and ashamed and retreat into silence. Raped women are often blamed and rejected by their relatives, while a first important step towards regaining self-esteem is to
share their memories with somebody they trust and who can understand them.

Talking and being listened to is nevertheless a long and complicated process. Drakulić reports: “I remember the first [rape] victim I talked to [...] she was willing to talk – but it was impossible for her to talk about what happened to her... She could not stop shaking. It then occurred to me for the first time, _her story was precisely in what she could not say._ And I must find a way to say it for her.” And, with reference to Holocaust survivors, Semprún and Wiesel state: “To be silent is forbidden, to talk is impossible,” and even if it were possible to _talk_ it would not be possible to _communicate._

The issue of breaking the silence was also the reason why, after the war in the Former Yugoslavia, women’s organisations started to collect women’s memories. The aim was to build a collective memory which proved victims’ suffering and at the same time denounced the exploitation of the raped women by trying to focus on the women’s experiences more than on their bodies.

The overlap of wartime violence and post-war domestic violence or violence by the former perpetrators is also discussed. Both in the Former Yugoslavia and in Rwanda, raped women have often been stigmatised by their own families. The process of development, from being just victims in need of recovery to the organisation of women’s own associations and NGOs to improve women’s rights, started a feminist reflection on women’s role in the aftermath of the war. Rwandan women’s strategy was to enter political life and gain power in order to be able to challenge gender inequality, and some of them today hold important positions. This is what some feminists define as a new “philosophy of feminism”: a feminist answer to past and present violence and to women’s victimisation, whereby women are encouraged to become conscious citizens fighting for their rights.


Neloufer de Mel, University of Colombo, Sri Lanka

This chapter discusses a series of important shifts that have taken place in Sri Lanka as the country emerges from a thirty year armed conflict. In doing so, it primarily asks questions about the relationship of citizenship to violence in a post-war context. What constitutes post-war citizenship in a Sri Lanka which has become heavily militarised due to the prolonged war? To answer this question, the chapter highlights two communities that are at the centre of debates within Sri Lanka on its post-war future. These communities are a) the large numbers of Tamils who were internally displaced from the Vanni during the final phase of the war, and b)
the female garment factory workers of the Katunayake Free Trade Zones (KFTZ), who are largely of Sinhala ethnicity. The chapter introduces us to the most recent histories of these two groups, locates them in terms of current theories on post-war Order, and reflects on the transnational consensus that violence in conflict zones today can be managed through development programmes. The chapter draws upon contemporary theories of post-conflict societies. Often, there is an assumption that the end of war means normalcy and peace, in which violence has no role. But the chapter shows how many scholars, such as Zizek, Gyan Pandey, Stathis Kalyvas and Veena Das, argue that violence is a central part of normalcy, that normalcy itself is reliant on force. We understand well the violence that is obvious – like the violence people experience in war, communal riots, or in IDP camps etc. This type of violence is called “subjective” violence (Zizek), or “extraordinary” violence (Pandey), or “eventful” violence (Das). On the other hand, violence that is “objective”, “routine”, or “ordinary” is the violence that is there in the everyday, but is hidden and invisible. It resides within discourse. This type of violence is not easily recognised, but it constitutes what normalcy is, particularly in a country emerging from war.

The chapter goes on to provide an example of this type of invisible violence by looking at the discourses of development that are currently dominant in post-war Sri Lanka. It looks at the “development for peace” programmes sponsored by international donors and multilateral agencies. A major ideological drive behind these programmes, particularly in contexts where ethnicity has been the cause of conflict, is that people forget about their ethnic identities in favour of a focus on development. It is hoped that this shift in allegiances will unite a war-torn country. In this re-imagining of citizenship, it is hoped that citizens will see themselves primarily as consumer citizens under global capital, rather than as belonging to different ethnic categories such as Tamils, Sinhalese, etc. But is this agenda (what Zizek calls the “post-political”, “post-ethnic utopia” which he sees as a central ideology in the West today) realisable? By referring to theories and debates on the “post-nation”, the chapter shows that the “post-political utopia” which developmental organisations call for is an impossibility. Ambiguous and contradictory, this address to move “beyond” the political holds its own implicit and invisible violence in the way that developmental programmes, for instance, are often implemented on the ground. The chapter therefore asks that we view violence and our assumptions about post-war normalcy in a different way; and that developmental programmes, while they are important and necessary, carry their own discourses of violence in order to secure the peace.
Concluding remarks

It is the hope of the editors that by now the reader has gained an impression of the breadth of subjects covered during Theme 7 and feels tempted to read the remaining chapters of this volume. Our own conclusion is that the scholars of Theme 7 constitute an extremely promising and creative group of researchers who are very likely to be heard of again in the near future. Most of them seem to be engaged in fields of huge importance to society, formulating challenging research questions with great courage and exploring their research areas with impressive knowledge, sound questioning and much energy. As a theme leader, I am merely very thankful that all these people decided to come to Linköping University during the autumn of 2010 in order to enrich each other and the research milieu in such an extraordinary way.
PART I: INTIMATE PARTNER VIOLENCE
Chapter 2
Exploring Women’s Reports of Sexual Violence and Control

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In this paper I am interested in exploring three separate, but related themes on violence against women in intimate heterosexual relationships: women’s actual or presumed sexual infidelity as a rationalisation for men’s violence, the masculinist construction of women’s sexuality and narratives of sexual violence against women. The analysis is based on interviews with 34 women and men from the Eastern Caribbean country of St. Vincent and the Grenadines. I argue that the practice of physical violence against women in heterosexual relationships is indeed embedded within broader asymmetrical gendered power relations. Men often construct binary and value-laden sexualised scripts for women, moving between the Madonna image as an ideal and notions of women’s innate carnal desires. The latter is associated with the threat of emasculation which is in turn used as a rational for policing the boundaries of physical space, gender and sexuality. The emerging dynamics of power in these relationships are discursively constructed as effects of traditional gendered and (hetero)sexualised practices that are often cast as normal and natural. Physical violence against women is thus rationalised and justified as a way of responding to threats to these traditional arrangements of gender and sexuality.

1 I wish to express my sincere gratitude to the GEXcel coordinators, colleagues and friends and for everyone who commented on my work during a very productive stint at Centre for Gender Excellence (GEXcel), the University of Linköping, Sweden. I want to also extend a heartfelt thank you to Prof Eudine Barriteau for making me aware of this vibrant community of scholars and for her continued mentorship. I am also very grateful for the unwavering support of my PhD supervisors, Prof Rebecca Dobash and Prof Russell Dobash, from the very beginning to the very end of the process.

2 This paper forms part of a larger study which explored the relationship between gender and violence through the application of feminist discursive frameworks. Between 2007 and 2008, I interviewed 19 women and 15 men from four state agencies in the Eastern Caribbean country of St. Vincent and the Grenadines. Within this group there were eight couples who participated in the project. Special thanks to the women and men who gave of their time very generously.
Sexual Violence, Control and Coercive Acts

Intimate Partner Violence (IPV) against women usually takes place within the context of a range of controlling and coercive acts (Wolf-Smith and LaRossa, 1992; Dobash and Dobash, 2004) in situations where unequal relations of power are exploited. In fact, Dutton and Goodman (2005) explain that within this framework of IPV, violence (physical and sexual) is viewed as a tool within patterns of coercive control with other tools including financial deprivation, threats, intimidation, abuse of children and other relatives, and isolation. To this contextual view of violence Yodanis (2004: 658) adds that a “culture of fear” of men’s violence against women secures men’s status in intimate heterosexual unions. This fear is reinforced by the various stories, images and symbols of men successfully using violence; thus creating boundaries for women’s actions. The differential construction of manhood and womanhood means that similar boundaries do not exist for most men in these relationships. Yodanis notes that although most violent crimes are committed against men, women tend to be considerably more fearful of violent crime than men. This, she explains, is a result of women’s greater vulnerability to sexual violence and intimate partner violence. The fear of being violently victimised creates subordinate subject positions for some women, particularly women who have experienced violence in their current or previous relationships.

Violence against women in intimate unions also involves sexual coercion and sexual violence against women. Research also indicates that often, after women are beaten, they are forced and/or intimidated into having sex by their partners (Bergen and Bukovec, 2006; Gelles, 1977). The problem of criminalising forced sex in intimate relationships as rape or sexual assault is related to the historical location of women as the property of their husbands (Gelles, 1977; Yllo, 1999). This is a reflection of the traditional asymmetrical relations of power between women and men. The underlying assumption about men’s bodily entitlement in relation to women, tied to the idea of women as passive sexual subjects, may explain why several women and most men avoid naming these acts of forced sex, rape or sexual assault (Bergen and Bukovec, 2006; Gelles, 1977). Difficulties associated with identifying and analysing sexual violence are well documented in the literature (Bergen and Bukovec, 2006; Campbell and Soeken, 1999; Gavey, 1992; Gelles, 1977).

Similarly, Gavey (1992 and 2008) analyses women’s talk on unwanted and coerced sex in heterosexual relationships. She observed that women’s decision to comply with their partners’ demands for sex, in spite of their own sexual desires, can be understood in the context of the dominance of heterosexual discourses. Gavey (1999: 325) uses the no-
tion of “technologies of sexual coercion” to explain why women often engage in unwanted sex (Gavey, 1992: 325). It is Gavey’s (1992: 325) contention that the ways in which discourses on sexuality are produced “have the power to affect the material practice of heterosexuality in ways that subordinate women”. Technologies of heterosexual coercion reproduce unequal power arrangements in which men’s sexual desires take precedence. Gavey (1992 and 2008) deploys Foucault’s metaphor of the Panopticon to explain how men’s surveillance of their partners and women’s consequent self-surveillance secures women’s compliance to men’s sexual requests/demands. The Panopticon is a watch tower located in the centre of the prison which allows the guard/s to monitor the compound without being visible to the inmates. Even in the absence of someone inside of the watch tower surveillance continues. The Panoptican, Foucault explains, ensures the automatic functioning of power (Foucault, 1995).

The metaphor provides a compelling illustration of the functioning of disciplinary power (Foucault, 1995), particularly when we consider women’s sense of being constantly surveilled. When applied to women’s experiences of violence we can imagine how women learn to self-regulate as a means of staving off their partners’ further use of violence. Men’s coercive acts exist on a continuum, ranging from subtle acts to the use of direct force.

In relation to her research on women’s experiences of coerced sex Gavey (1992) observed that the dominance of narratives of heterosexual unions explains why some women felt it necessary to agree to have sex with a partner after some time had elapsed in the dating relationship. These narratives positioned women as passive and compliant, but not desiring participants in sex. She noted that women were often unaware of the view of consent as a matter of choice. Gavey (1992: 348) considers this is an effect of “normative prescriptions for heterosexual practice… given that women’s sexual desires are often invisible [and] unspoken”.

The threats of violence coupled with women’s memories of violent episodes serve to curtail women’s activities within intimate relationships. The acts of physical and sexual violence ought to be studied in the context of a range of other coercive practices. Also, it is difficult to separate understandings of gender ideologies and power from research that examines the practice of intimate partner violence, particularly when we consider the asymmetrical distribution of this phenomenon between men and women.
Surveilling Women’s Sexuality

The single most common motivation cited in men’s and women’s accounts for men’s violence against women is the presumption of women’s sexual infidelity. Women document various measures used by men to monitor and ultimately restrict their movements between the home and socially designated/public spaces. There is an overall sense in which the construction of the public represents a means through which women might be seduced away from the esteemed Madonna image. From attempts to regulate women’s attire to outlining specific boundaries of space, a number of signifiers appear in both men’s and women’s accounts that point to a perceived need to monitor women’s sexual practices and, by extension, women’s sexuality.

The first example is taken from two separate interviews with Linda and Lance who lived together for a period of five years before Linda ended the relationship. Both participants use attire as a signifier for ‘good’ and ‘bad’ femininity with implicit reference to dress as a marker of women’s sense of sexual morality. In both instances they lament the loss of modesty among women as a turn to a vile femininity. In particular, Lance describes what, in his view, is a loss of modesty by his partner.

*Int.*: In your opinion what do you think your partner thinks it means to be a woman?

*Lance*: Well of late I start looking at her and the way she start carrying herself like, like than before.

*Int.*: What do you mean, what was different before?

*Lance*: Before the kind o’ [of] clothes she used to wear, like of late now she start wearing some pieces o’ pants going down the road now. She was even leaving home without underwear. She never used to do that before so I have to say something wrong.

He argues that his partner’s view of womanhood shifted from one in which she valued modesty in dress to wearing clothes that, in his view, were revealing and sexually suggestive. Lance describes the act of leaving home without underwear as signifying a change in her moral purview. He alludes to a loss of respectability and her subsequent (suspected) sexual infidelity. There are points of convergence and variance in the accounts of Lance and his partner. Linda posits that:

A woman should be a decent woman, and I think nowadays women not doing that anymore. They tend to be doing all sorts o’ dirty things, you know. I think decency is what they should show . . . And respect, but good behaviour is what they should
have ... lack of self esteem is a problem. Come on the way some o’ them does dress and so on it’s just sick. (Linda)

Linda laments a loss of decency among women, and supports the idea that women’s identity should embody the idea of respectability. In particular, both Linda and Lance, advocate a dress sense for women based on the principle of modesty. In both accounts, dress is used to symbolise an inappropriate and over-sexualised woman who has departed from the iconic image of the Madonna, with its allusion to a pure/virginal femininity.

Rationalisations of violence were often linked to the discourse on a villainous femininity and the possibility of sexual looseness among women if left unregulated. Men described being provoked into violence because of women’s (presumed) sexual infidelity. In fact, women outlined various forms of violence and controlling practices meted out against them because their partners believed they were having sexual intercourse outside of their relationships. Men’s talk point to a desire to suppress women’s perceived proclivity for sexual intercourse, with women’s sense of dress used as a measure for such desires. The regulation of women’s dress thus becomes one of the many practices used to police femininity in an effort to maintain respectability, avoid emasculation and affirm dominant masculine performances.

This motive is tied to historical discourses on what it means to be a man and what it means to be a woman. The link between gender and violence emerged as a salient feature of these interviews as the excuses, rationalisations and justifications offered for men’s violence against their partners resonated with traditional notions of men’s entitlement to power and women’s obligation to obey.

Women’s ability to navigate the public/private divide was significantly curtailed in situations where men’s violence was frequent in these relationships. Janet documents the extent to which her partner set clear boundaries for her. She explains that she was denied the option of seeking work, and she became isolated from her family and friends. In the following excerpt she talks about her experience:

He was always like I cannot go certain places, even with his cousin. If I go to town with her it was like what we doing in town so long [why are spending so much time in the city]? Where we were and that kind o’ stuff. Even when I was doing the course sometimes he would pass and check to make sure I’m there. He would be like ‘right after class make sure you go home’ and stuff. (Janet)
Men’s surveillance of their partners, as described in the example provided by Janet, was a prominent theme discussed in the interviews with women. There was a sense in which such surveillance ensures that women remained wedded to notions of sexual respectability. In other words, policing the physical boundaries of space was intended to secure men’s control of women’s sexual and gendered identities. Besides the obvious attempts to monitor, Janet’s statement conveys images of confinement and control. Similarly, in Linda’s view of her own relationship she says that it was “like you’re living in jail, doing a five year sentence where you only having a visitor once in a while”. The prison trope is deployed to signal the extent to which she felt disempowered within this relationship. This tendency by men to use a range of physical and symbolic acts of violence to preserve an unequal relationship of power was a major feature of these accounts.

It should be noted here that women reported experiencing violence in situations where they questioned their partners’ sense of entitlement to freedom. This was the case as Sharon talks about her violent victimisation. Her narrative highlights the double standards of spatial boundaries in these intimate relationships by demonstrating how violence is rationalised as a response to the questioning of men’s freedom.

Well there was a time that he went partying and I can’t remember what I told him, you know. Something I said and he started to argue. I asked him if he’s not fed up with the partying and he has the children to help with and he beat me that time … My skin was swollen and I felt really sick. (Sharon)

Her effort to question a traditional social act associated with men’s sense of freedom is met with the most extreme penalty in the context of intimate relationships. The view expressed in her account is performative of the socio-historical idea of men’s role as providers. Having to deal with the harsh realities that many working class families face she reminds him of his familial responsibilities. Her admonishment of his actions is an indication that she rejects the unchecked freedom some men enjoy. Men appear not to be constrained by the same spatial limitations that are used to restrict women in their day-to-day lives. Whereas women’s domestic responsibilities and positioning as ‘docile’ sexual subjects (Gavey, 1992) function to curtail their movement between public and private spaces, men’s failure to satisfy their socially constituted role as provider does not have a similar effect. Challenges to men’s freedom of movement are punished sometimes by violence, and this serves to reinforce ideas about men’s entitlement to autonomy in relation to families.
Men used a range of violent, controlling and coercive acts to regulate women’s ability to navigate between culturally demarcated public and private spaces. Often, in these narratives of violence and control, women were objectified and positioned as the possession/property of men. On the other hand, men were depicted as regulators of these two separated domains. The spatial limits carved out for women by no means extend to men. Personal autonomy is normalised as a feature of men’s entitlement. This dichotomisation of gender and power (re)produces notions of men’s right to authority, and women’s obligation to defer to their partners. Spatial limits set for women also reinscribe masculinised constructions of gender and sexuality.

**Sexual Infidelity? Justifying Violence against Women**

In this section I explore the often repeated theme of women’s sexual infidelity as a justification for men’s violence (Dobash and Dobash, 1997; Hearn, 1998). I am less concerned about the veracity of men’s claims of women’s sexual infidelity or women’s insistence on their own sexual fidelity. Instead, the ways in which accounts of women’s promiscuity become associated with the practice of violence is of greater analytical value in unpacking the nexus between gender, power, sexuality and violence. Women find themselves in a constant struggle to prove their virtue and monogamy in violent heterosexual relationships. Masculinities, enacted in these men’s narratives engage cultural ideas about male sexual prowess. This is achieved when they are able to keep their partners satisfied, thus preventing them from seeking sexual satisfaction elsewhere (Wilson 1969). Men’s narratives support the double-standard of sexual morality that justify promiscuity among men, but insist on women’s fidelity. The dominance of the discourse on men’s sexual prowess in the construction of masculinities means that suspected infidelity by women acts as a form of emasculation. Implicitly, violence is justified as a means of restoring masculine identity.

In this first example Randy, who is in a long-term relationship with Janet, describes his reasons for using violence in his relationship with Janet:

> She was the first person who actually gave me a birthday party and she invited another man at my birthday party ... It wasn’t right, but I was kind o’ angry seeing that I was trying to get out and she, it just flashed back to me that this guy was checking her out and the way that she was dressed, she look so sweet and I was wondering if she dressed that way for me or if she was dressed for guy. That is why I hit her. (Randy)
In the previous section, Janet refers to the extent to which her actions were regulated by Randy. She cites his jealousy as resulting in her loss of friends. In my interview with him he talks about his views on women’s roles and responsibilities in the context of intimate relationships. Pregnancy and menstruation were cited as debilitating and he used these bodily conditions as a rationale for women’s confinement to the home. Men tend to situate their controlling behaviours and perpetration of violence within the context of protecting some notion of feminine virtue. There is dual and oppositional depiction of femininity in operation in these accounts. A virtuous femininity preserves male reputation; the image of the whore or the loose woman when attached to female bodies is described by men as having an emasculating effect. Men allude to the idea of an embodiment of this binary, so much so that violence and threats of violence are seemingly enacted as a means of suppressing/eradicating a ‘sexually loose’ enactment of femininity in order to shore up feminine virtue. In the above extract, the presence of another man makes Randy question Janet’s motivation for organising the party. It unsettles his masculine identity. In his reckoning of the events, her dress sense is symbolic of this constant threat of female infidelity and its associated threats to his masculine identity. His reference to her manner of dress also resonates with the archetype of woman as temptress which, in a binary scheme of things, is located as part of a vile femininity. This symbolic act, coupled with his misgivings (I want to convey here his doubt or apprehension about why she hosted the party hence the word ‘misgivings’) about her reasons for hosting the party, contributes to his emasculation, as he questions his exclusive ‘right’ to her. However, he claims that his motivation for violence was because she prevents him from leaving. Notwithstanding this justification, the fact that he focuses on his suspicions would imply that this has some significant bearing on the meanings he attaches to his violence.

The following two examples compare the narratives produced by Lance and Linda in which they both account for his use of violence against her in their relationship:

Int.: Could you tell me what happened?

Lance: Her cousin used to leave and go to Canada to spend some time.

This last time he left her in the house again {mm hmm}. What she was doing before was going around there and then coming back a little later, but this time around she wasn’t doing that. She was going around there and not coming back. I didn’t have a problem with that, but every time I would go somewhere, like
when I go to the gas station somebody would always tell me
well they see my girlfriend with another man, and a guy came
and told me that he saw my girlfriend in Rockley in a car. Then
one day I coming down the road and I saw her in the car and I
stopped the car and I ask her to get out, but she never got out
{mm hmm}. The guy told her not to get out, so I left and I just
went about my business. So when I came home now she told me
that our relationship was over. I said ‘just like that’? I ask her ‘if
we’re over where do you want me to go now’? She didn’t care.

Int.: You asked her where did she want you to go?

Lance: Yeah, she doesn’t care. So I left and I went away. No, I
didn’t go away. I slept in the house the same night and in the
morning left and I went away. So I came back in that night and
I was talking to the girl. I said ‘girl’, I ask her how long has this
thing been going on {mm hmm}. She turned to me and told me
that’s her effing [instead of cursing, he uses this term] business,
and at the time I slapped her.

In his account of the events, Lance describes changes in his partner’s
behaviour as prompting their split and his subsequent use of violence. His
use of violence centres on what he deems as her sexual infidelity,
and refusal to provide justifications for her actions. His loss of power in
influencing her decisions is captured in the following “I stopped the car
and I asked her to get out, but she never got out ... the guy told her not
to get out”. The presence of another man and what he perceives as an
act of disobedience represent a challenge to his authority in the context
of the relationship. This is accentuated by her decision to terminate their
relationship. In the second part of the extract he questions her about
his belief that she was unfaithful. He presents his violence as a reaction
to her dismissal of his request for an explanation about her perceived
infidelity. The details of the incident provided by Linda, Lance’s partner,
var from that which he presents. However, their accounts converge on
the issue of his perception that she was unfaithful. She says:

Actually I had ended the relationship because of the way he was
treating me and the kids, you know, so I decided that this thing
must end and in order for it to end I have to do it myself and
I have to be serious about it ... It was a week since I put him
out ... When I was inside I heard my door lock, like it clicked,
so I jump up out of me sleep and I said ‘what’? I had to alert
the child. I said ‘get up. Lance is in the house’. He started pul-
ing me outside now. He got me out there. He began asking me
‘how many times have you been having sex with that guy’? I said ‘what kind of guy you telling about’? ‘I hear people me you have this guy’, you know, so I said ‘actually I don’t know what you’re talking about’, so he slapped me. [She goes on to describe extreme violence perpetrated by Lance against her, the details of which I cannot disclose for purposes of anonymity].

(Linda)

Although there are differences in the cataloguing of events between Linda and Lance, the purpose here is not to determine the accuracy of their claims, but to analyse the meanings produced about gender, sexuality and violence in these accounts. In Linda’s talk on the violent event there is an overall sense of powerlessness in her attempts to effect an end to the relationship. Their accounts reflect his need for an explanation of rumours that she is intimately involved with another man, a demand that implicates ideas about the terms and conditions of intimate relationships, that is, the need for closure. The inclusion of what she presents as a direct question from him, “how many times have you been having sex with that guy?” positions her as whore because it implies that she has compromised her respectability and virtue, while simultaneously damaging his masculine reputation.

Comparing the historical justifications for IPV between England (Dobash and Dobash, 1981) and the Caribbean (de Moya, 2004) there are important parallels to be drawn. Referring to activities which date as far back as the 15th century Dobash and Dobash (1981) describe practices of publicly ridiculing men who were thought to have ‘allowed’ their wives to get out of control. De Moya (2004) makes reference to the Fiesta de Cuernos (cuckolding festival) held yearly in the Dominican republic in which the man whose wife was thought to bring him the greatest public shame because of her continued infidelity is usually dubbed the Cuckold of the year and made to wear the ‘Crown of Horns’. In both instances public beatings of women were justified as a means of restoring men’s reputation. Although such antiquated practices no longer attract the same level of public support, there are resonances. Justifications for violence that centre on rumours of women’s sexual infidelity and the resulting public emasculation appear as vestiges of the practice of cuckolding. It positions women as the objects of men, reinforcing beliefs about men’s power in relationships. The meanings people attached to practices, such as being seen in a vehicle with another man if a woman is in a relationship, speaks to certain codes of behaviour to which women are expected to adhere.
Women’s Experiences of Sexual Violence

Asymmetries of power are overtly expressed in women’s report of experiencing sexual violence in their relationship. Several women explained being coerced into sexual intercourse by their partners. In extreme cases women reported being raped by their partners. It is important to note that there were no admissions by men of committing acts of sexual violence against their partners which might reflect a social loathing of this form of violence against women. This is what I refer to as conspicuous, deliberate and strategic silences in men’s accounts or non-accounting on their use of violence to force women into having sex. This section explores the connection between violence, sex and sexuality in intimate relationships.

Women reported that men engaged in both physical and verbal coercive tactics to force them into unwanted sexual intercourse. In some instances women named their experiences rape. In fact, some of their descriptions of sexual violence matched legal definitions for rape. Women sometimes explained that they engaged in unwanted sexual activities in order to avoid conflict in their relationships. These depictions often positioned women as the objects of men’s sexual desires, rendering them powerless to make their own sexual choices. Eve explains that “if I don’t want to do it. He would argue and when he’s done arguing he would come and do it”. Eve’s statement exemplifies how men used physical force to exert power over women’s bodies and their sexual autonomy. In the following extract, Janet (Randy’s partner) illustrates her experience of sexual violence in the relationship:

I was having a problem. Sexual intercourse started hurting. I explained this to him. If I didn’t give him he would hold me down and take it. He would drink. He would come home and start beating me and telling me I have to give it to him and I can’t say no and that sort o’ stuff. (Janet)

In this account, Janet describes extreme forms of sexual violence. In fact, the experience she presents satisfies legal definitions of rape. Her talk evokes the image of a robbery, and her attempts to thwart his intentions are futile. He is presented as lacking compassion as, in spite of her explanation that she was experiencing pain during sexual intercourse, he appears unconcerned. In part, she rationalises his violence as a result of his use of alcohol, “he would drink”. This is not presented in an overt way, in that, she does not say that it is the cause per se. However, the fact that she mentions that he was drinking suggests that this has some bearing on the meanings she attaches to his use of violence. His perpetration of
physical violence explains how he establishes control over her sexuality and her daily life, positioning her as his possession. Similarly, Isis recalls her partner’s use of violence to force her into unwanted sexual intercourse:

_Int._: Have you ever been sexually abused as an adult?

_Isis_: Well you know that they usually say, what, what, what – You know how they would say, well with my boyfriend, lately, I never used to want to have sex with him and he used to rape me. I would say rape because I never used to want to have sex with him. And he used to hit me. He used to fight me just to get sex and that wouldn’t be physical abuse. It would be sexual abuse.

_Int._: Yes. How often would this happen?

_Isis_: Real often. Remember, like I said, we used have arguments like say five times a week and after we finish arguing he used to want to have sex with me. How would I feel about it? How would I – I wouldn’t feel comfortable to, you know, give him, so I used to like put up a resistance and he would still fight me.

Isis names her experience of sexual violence as rape. She describes experiences similar to those of Janet. Explaining these events, she talks about him using physical violence to force her to have sexual intercourse with him. In fact, she distinguishes between ‘physical abuse’ and ‘sexual abuse’. There is a tendency to use the umbrella term abuse to capture various forms of violence and coercive act. In everyday talk on violence individuals use the terms abuse and violence interchangeably. For her, the use of physical force as a coercive tactic by her partner to force her into unwanted sexual activity is part of her overall experience of sexual, and not physical, abuse. In spite of her efforts to resist his sexual solicitations, she describes being overpowered. This is another example of how men’s exercise of force is used to demonstrate and sustain their positions of power in relationships. It serves as a means through which women are objectified and violated in these unions.

Deidre explains what happened once when she agreed to go out socially with her partner once she had ended their relationship:

He started asking me why I went to Trinidad. I said ‘that doesn’t have anything to do with you. We’re not together’, and then he starts to carry on and quarrel . . . asking why did I go to Trinidad, accusing me of going to Trinidad to give another man sex and telling me that I’m not giving him any. The relationship
was over, but he always had this thing that although we were broken up he is still supposed to be able to get sex from me because he took my virginity ... I told him that nothing happened. Eventually, I just started to tell him things that he wanted to hear to get to go home. Then he raped me. (Deidre)

She presents her partner as acting in a way that would suggest he had some exclusive right to her because he was the first to have had a sexual relationship with her. This accounts for her objectification and positioning as his possession. Historically, a woman’s first sexual experience is treated as something sacred, something to be held on to until marriage, which is in contrast to men’s first sexual experience which is treated as a right of passage from boyhood to manhood. There is a sense in which her ‘loss of virginity’ is linked to his attempts to govern her body and sexuality. These accounts of sexual violence reinforce the duality of gender identities. Masculinities performed in these accounts centre on men’s power and dominance relative to women’s body and sexuality. Conversely, women’s identities are linked to notions of submission and obedience.

The coercive practices that women reported that men used to force them into having sexual intercourse did not always involve explicit physical violence. This is exemplified in the extract from Yvette:

There are times at nights that if I don’t want to have sex with him he would harass me all night and the children be in the other room and they would be listening because I know that they would know that it’s something we’re fighting over [mm hmm] so I say I have to stop this thing, this arguing and so on. Sometimes I don’t even want to but I would just give up, just to keep the peace.

She speaks of surrendering to his demands for sexual intercourse to avoid conflict and to keep the peace between both of them. Although there is no specific mention of his use of physical force, her account is suggestive of other forms of coercion. There is a portrayal of her being harassed, terrorised even, within earshot of their children. Her submission is an effect of her effort to avoid further conflict in the relationship. Engaging in sexual intercourse with her partner is a reflection of the imbalance of power which is a feature of their relationship.
Conclusion & Further Work

There are various means through which men attempt to govern women’s sexuality in violent heterosexual relationships. The analysis highlights the myriad practices used to reinforce boundaries of gender and space in which women’s autonomy is significantly compromised. These range from the use of dress as a marker of appropriate and inappropriate sexual scripts for women to the more direct practice of sexual violence against women. In women’s narratives of sexual violence they often position themselves as powerless, with limited or no influence on the actions of their male partners. Conversely, men use violence to discipline women’s sexuality and to ensure women’s monogamy, and conformity. It should be stated that women’s accounts were not suggestive of the quest for multiple sexual partners. Women seem to favour mutually monogamous relationships. Their accounts represent a defence of their ‘honour’ and fidelity to their partners, and to their relationships.

Though not discussed (explicitly) in this paper, the questioning of men’s sexual freedom indicate that women reject men’s autonomy to pursue other sexual and/or intimate relationships, even though they appear powerless to effect change in men’s sexual practices. They reject an arrangement of power which offers men sexual autonomy, while at the same time restricting women’s sexual freedom. This theme is explored in a separate paper coming out of refinements made during my time at GEXcel. Elsewhere, I also explore the subversive discursive acts present in participants’ (particularly women’s) accounts of gender and violence. My work on this theme has also stimulated my interests in further exploring the meanings of silences in accounts of violence. I am particularly interested in what I refer to as conspicuous and strategic silences in men’s accounts and the related minimisations that are features of men’s talk on various forms of violence against women in heterosexual relationships.

References


Chapter 3
Palimpsests of Sexuality and Intimate Violence: Turning Points as Transformative Scripts for Intervention

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**Introduction**

In this article\(^1\) we attempt to bridge epistemological gaps between theorising, writing and researching on sexuality and sexual violence through the use of “scripts” as a tool for transformative interventions. With our disciplinary starting points rooted in Sociology, Psychology and Literature, we explore the possibilities of transdisciplinary understanding and theorizing of “script as intervention”. Script, as a term, refers, on the one hand, to cognitive routinised behavioural patterns or ”cognitive schema characterising a particular sequence of events, such as going out on a first date or going to a movie” (Seal et al. 2007: 141; Schank & Abelson, 1977). On the other hand, script is understood as a multi layered process of enacting, interpreting and re-writing, interacting within a specific context (Frith & Kitzinger, 2001).

Our aim is to approach scripts in a dynamic and empowering sense, drawing on the complexity of sexual meanings and practices embedded within them. We see the boundaries of scripts and narratives as diffused, expressed through the metaphor of the palimpsest. There are two interrelated ideas that we would like to emphasize: first, the palimpsest is a *process of layering*, where the complex nature of textual relationality is embodied (Dillon 2007). Second, the palimpsest represents the provocation of an *interdisciplinary encounter*. As Dillon argues, “the palimpsest cannot be the province of any one discipline, since it admits all those terrains that write upon it to its body. [...] the palimpsest becomes a figure for interdisciplinarity – for the productive violence of the involvement, entanglement, interruption and inhabitation of disciplines in and on each other” (Dillon 2007:2).

In this article, we highlight three inter-related aspects. First, we incorporate the (creative) process of writing into the notion of the script, understanding the textuality of scripts as a site of discursive struggle. Second, we approach script as intervention, focusing on a rather neglected site of the scripted body, on the human ability to change scripts and to re-write biographical events. In this connection, our focus is on “turning points” – moments of crisis or change. Third, the metaphor of the palimpsest embodies the interrelation of the layers of scripts, marked by both inextricability and alienation; persistence and change. As Dillon argues, “the ´present´ of the palimpsest is only constituted in and by ´presence´ of texts from
the ´past´, as well as remaining open to further inscription by texts of the ´future´” (Dillon 2007: 37). Turning points are where the past, the present and the future meet.

**Palimpsests: Inextricable Intimacies**

In the literal sense, a palimpsest is a manuscript page from a scroll or a book that has been used again. The original written script gets overwitten by a new script. The underlying script or the script that overwrites it can be equally significant as they simultaneously co-exist. If the underlying script acquires greater importance in a specific historical configuration, it has to be deciphered through the overwritten script. Deciphering and interpreting a palimpsest requires the reading of the clear script on top and the ability to read overwritten scripts at the same time. The layers of a palimpsest create an illusory intimacy because they use the same space but very often their relationship is marked by inextricability, which provokes deviation (see Binswanger et al. 2009). There is always the attempt to suppress the meaning of the “other”, of the pre-script. Neither the underlying meanings nor the new script itself are static or teleological. “Although the process that creates palimpsests is one of layering, the result of that process, combined with the subsequent reappearance of the underlying script, is a surface structure which can be described by a term coined by de Quincey – ‘involted’” (Dillon 2007: 3-4). Through an interdisciplinary understanding of a transformative script, we look for such an involutedness in our disciplinary understandings.

The term "palimpsestuous", going back to Gérard Genette's analysis of Proust's work, is equally useful, as it integrates the meaning of "incestuous" to the "several meanings [which] are merged and entangled together, all present together at all times, and which can be only deciphered together, in their inextricable totality” (Genette 1982: 226, cited by Dillon 2007: 5). As a metaphor of genealogy, in the Foucauldian sense, the palimpsest represents the arbitrariness of history: what genealogy finds “at the beginning of things is not the inviolable identity of their origins; it is the disension of other things. It is disparity” (Foucault 1996:142, cited by Dillon 2007:7). Therefore, the boundaries between the cultural script (cultural and historical guidelines), and the script which is developed within the narrative (be it empirical or fictional) as well as their re-writing are blurred.

The psychoanalytical approach on the model of palimpsest, furthermore, allows interesting insights for developing our understanding of script as intervention. We share the theoretical
premise of the non-possibility of forgetting and the permanence of memory traces, which are reflected in the works of Freud, De Quincey and Dillon on the palimpsest (see Dillon 2007: 30). The complexity of how memory traces or different layers of scripts are expressed – sometimes not accessible by consciousness – opens up a huge scientific field of investigation and theorizing within psychoanalysis. We will follow just one of the psychoanalytical tracks - the distinction between introjection and "cryptic incorporation":

[The] crypt reposes - alive, reconstituted from the memories of words, images, and feelings - the objective counterpart of the loss, as a complete person with his own topography, as well as the traumatic incidents - real or imagined - that had made introjection impossible (Abraham & Torok 1980: 8, cited by Dillon 2007: 28).

According to Abraham and Torok (1980), in contrast to the psychoanalytical term of introjection, which signifies a way to accept a loss through mourning, the “cryptic incorporation” keeps the loss “alive inside” though indecipherable. The cryptic incorporation forms a palimpsestic layer of its own. The concept of cryptic incorporation - an experience swallowed whole, undigested and indigestible at the same time and, thus, alien, but nevertheless constitutive of the psychic apparatus - allows for an understanding of how traumatic experiences can create a mute psychic zone within the individual. In our reading of transformative scripts, we use the process of turning points as a way of transcending the “otherness” of the cryptic incorporation, as a possibility for transformative intervention.

Methodology

Our methodology is both textual and empirical: we combine readings of empirical data with readings of fiction. We will develop our ideas about script as intervention reflecting on scripts of violence and sexual experience. First, the empirical example is part of a larger qualitative interview sample of 30 transcribed interviews conducted in 2003 with women who have experienced physical, sexual and/or psychological violence at some stage in their lives. The participants consist of a sample of women aged 18-60 years, randomly selected through a three-step selection (see Samelius et al., 2007) from the population register in the county of Östergötland, Sweden. The main purpose of the interview study was to address “coping” and “meaning-making” of abusive experiences. In this article we focus on one empirical narrative to illustrate and discuss transformative scripts for intervention. This narrative, in our opinion, elucidates most clearly the processuality of turning points and interrelatedness with body and language. Second, we draw on Verena Stefan’s *Shedding* (1975) – a coming-of-age-novel.
from the 1970s which puts bodily experience at the very heart of the account – as a script addressing change of (hetero-)sexual practices. Her account, a “rewriting” of her “falsified history,” (Stefan 1994:34) is based on a critique of a sexist entanglement (with both, men and women), supporting a patriarchal order of dominance and subordination. Both textures engage with intimate involvement in sexual encounters, where the accumulation of experiences leads to turning points. Although there are differences in both textures in relation to the material reality of violence, both engage in the inextricability of vulnerability and intimacy. Combining fictional and empirical sources, the analysis focuses on the palimpsestuous textuality of turning points.

A key concern in both textures relates to the methodological approach of “risky reading”. The involvement of the production of meaning within our (disciplinary) background causes a crucial moment of contingency and disparity. In this respect we use Dillon's term risky reading, thus accepting “the insecurity of reading” (2007:3). Risky reading points to the involutedness of deciphering with the production of a scientific text as a further layer of the palimpsest. For example, Maria’s story is written through the interpretive lens of the authors, including the choice of focus. Similarly, our interpretation of Shedding is shaped by re-inscriptions through our risky reading. Linking reading and writing as inextricable layers of “new narratives” we refer to Ricoeours (1991) theorizing on narrative identity. He argues that,

> the self does not know itself immediately, but only indirectly by the detour of the cultural signs of all sorts [...]. Narrative mediation underlies this remarkable characteristic of self-knowledge - that is self interpretation (Ricoeur 1991:199).

Understanding the two narratives we analyze as “cultural signs of all sorts”, and reading one over and against the other and vice versa, allows them both to contribute to our risky reading as (self-)interpretation.

**Sexing the Scripts**

In their 1973 study of *Sexual conduct: The social sources of human sexuality*, John Gagnon and William Simon (inspired by the Chicago School of Sociology) introduced the twin notions of the social construction of sexual behaviour (the meaning of the sexual within the social) and sexual identity (Simon & Gagnon 2003:495). The fact that sexual behaviour is fluid and constantly changing, “might have served as a potential blueprint for reconstruction
by those who were trying to understand rape, violence and pornography as something other than an inevitable expression of some putatively male biology” (Kimmel 2007:xiii).

Kimmel argues that Gagnon and Simon saw human beings as, “less creatures of instinct than actors following ‘sexual scripts’ - the normative cultural context that gives sex its meaning...” (Kimmel, 2007: xi). They emphasize that everybody has to learn sexual scripts in order to be able to turn sexuality into lived experiences.

In our view there is no sexual wisdom that derives from the relatively constant physical body. It is the historical situation of the body that gives the body its sexual (as well as all other) meanings (Simon & Gagnon 2003:492).

Without the proper elements of a script that defines the situation, names the actors, and plots the behavior, nothing sexual is likely to happen (Gagnon & Simon 1973:19).

Their understanding of sexual scripts on three levels – "cultural scenario", "interpersonal scripts" and "intrapersonal scripts", opens up possibilities for transdisciplinary understanding.

If we think of script as intervention, the three levels are useful tools for analysing the complexity of the multi layered interconnections of cultural scripting processes, intrapsychic mechanisms of appropriation and sexual interaction among people. The metaphor of the palimpsest links the different levels of the scripts, discussed above, in a relation of inextricability. Janice Irvine (2003) gives a good brief interpretation of the three levels:

Cultural scenarios are collective patterns that specify appropriate sexual goals, objects and relationships. They are historically and culturally specific guidelines for how, when, where, why and with whom to be sexual. Intrapsychic scripts take form in the internal world of desires, fantasies and wishes. As Gagnon and Simon note, although intrapsychic scripts are experienced as originating in a core recess of the self, they are not biological drives, and are not the opposite of cultural scenarios, but are, in fact, shaped by culture. Interpersonal scripts are patterns of interaction that allow us to function in sexual situations (Irvine 2003: 489).

In psychology, the concept of script is often used from a cognitive viewpoint (originally based on Schank & Abelson 1977) in reference to memory organisation, knowledge representation, and understanding, although the function of scripts in performance is also recognised. For example, Custers et al. (1994) have used script theory to explain expert physicians’ ability to keep large amounts of knowledge practically and “effortlessly” available during consultations.
in order to advance educational tools for medical students. Furthermore, Frith and Kitzinger (2001) point to the division between an individualistic, cognitive perspective and a social constructivist perspective as the basic underlying difference between script theory in psychology and sociology. They themselves criticize the term as an analytical tool restricting human ability to change patterns (see Frith and Kitzinger 2001). They further argue that script theory as used in sexuality studies, although claiming otherwise, often incorporates cognitive individualistic assumptions:

> What feminists and other sexuality researchers who use ‘script theory’ do seem to have in common, however, is that they understand scripts as things that reside inside people’s heads (as cognitions), which are merely emptied out in self-report data (in questionnaires, focus groups, interviews, etc). Thus, despite the fact that script theory is claimed to offer a fundamentally social (indeed social constructionist) account of sexuality, it is in fact - even in the most social version of the theory, as used in sexuality research - fundamentally cognitive (Frith & Kitzinger 2001: 212).

Instead they draw on Edwards’ (1995) concept of “script formulations” to contest contemporary sexual script theory, making use of understandings rooted in discursive psychology, which can be more productively linked to social-constructivist understandings than those rooted in cognitive approaches.

In referring to script formulations as actively constructed in interactions (through talk), Frith and Kitzinger’s (2001) analysis shares similarities with the social-constructivist understanding of script developed by Sharon Marcus (1992) in *Fighting Bodies, Fighting Words: A Theory and Politics of Rape Prevention*. Marcus understands rape as a “linguistic fact”, seeing the violence of rape as enabled by “narratives, complexes and institutions which derive their strength not from outright, immutable, unbeatable force but rather from the power to structure our lives as imposing cultural scripts” (Marcus 1992:389). Only by understanding rape in this manner can one begin to “understand it as subject to change” (Marcus, 1992: 389). Marcus defines rape as a scripted interaction through language which supports conventional forms of masculinity and femininity. She understands script as, “a framework, a grid of comprehensibility which we might feel impelled to use as a way of organising and interpreting events and actions” (Marcus 1992:391). The rape script takes its form from what Marcus calls a “gendered grammar of violence” (rules and structures by which people are assigned specific positions within a script) which structures an instrumental theory of rape,
contributing to a “‘culture of resignation’ in which violence is normalised” (Thapar-Björkert & Morgan 2010: 32). A rape script implies a narrative of rape and the “narrative element of a script” offers the flexibility and space for revisions and changes (see Marcus 1992:391). She argues against seeing rape as a fixed reality and proposes instead to disrupt the gendered grammar of violence (in turn disrupting the rape script) by “fighting back”, for instance by “flight [...] instead of rational negotiations (with the rapist)”; “verbal self-defense” or “directed physical action” (Marcus, 1992: 397). In other words, we need new cultural productions and reinscriptions of our bodies and geographies, which will help us to rewrite the gendered polarisation of the grammar of violence.

While Frith and Kitzinger (2001) have highlighted the regularity and scripted nature of social interactions, Marcus (1992) provocatively suggests the ways in which a script can be re-written. In this article we would like to build on these analyses by using the notion of the palimpsest, which relates to scripting and re-scripting as a complex layered process of dominance(s) and subordination(s).

Scripting Narratives – Narrating Scripts

In psychology, narrative understandings of identity have emerged, contesting or complementing mainstream identity theories. Central to these theories is the idea that identity is an internalized and evolving life story; that the self is a story, a construct (see e. g. McAdams 2001). Within the psychology of life stories “[i]dentity is not an individual achievement but a work of (and in) culture. Identity is a psychosocial construction” (McAdams 2001:116). Bruner (1991), when discussing self-making in terms of narratives of the self, sees biographical narratives as providing a dual function. They serve the purpose of presenting the individual as comprehensible in her or his culture, by using a set of cultural ‘givens’. At the same time they also have the function of presenting individuality, and in order to do so, a story needs to hold as well as transmit some kind of exceptionality, although these counter-expectancies also have to be culturally tellable and intelligible: “a story that is at once recognizable and recognizably noncanonical […] - that is, the breach of convention must itself be conventional” (Bruner 1991:71-72). This, however, is not a static condition. Bruner views literary genres as offering possible violations of the canon and points out literary inventions (in a broad sense, including new psychological ideas) as new breakaway paths from the cultural canon. Feminist studies of literature have paid special attention to processes of challenging the canon. As the female voice has had to fight for its
right to speak for such a long time, female authorship was confronted with challenging
borders of intelligible narratives. The move of “taking up authority” is interpreted by Lanser
(1992) as a core element of women’s writing that involves a decision to challenge or change
patterns.

“Taking up authority” can be read as a scripted (cultural) “turning point”. Bruner finds the
presence of turning points as crucial in presenting individuality within narratives. He
conceives of turning points as episodes in a narrative which the narrator marks as decisive for
a certain change in the story and which are attributed to a certain belief, thought or conviction
of the protagonist of the story. Denzin’s contribution to the theorizing of turning points gives
some further insights. He calls them “epiphanies” – overwriting the religious imprint of the
term:

Epiphanies are interactional moments and experiences which leave marks on people's
lives […]. They are often moments of crisis. They alter the fundamental meaning
structures in a person's life. Their effects may be positive or negative. […] The
meanings of these experiences are always given retrospectively, as they are relived
and re-experienced in the stories persons tell about what has happened to them
(Denzin 1989:70).

Denzin (2001) distinguishes four forms of epiphany: (1) the major epiphany: the major
event, which touches every fabric of a person's life; (2) the cumulative epiphany, as a result of
a series of events that have built up in a person’s life, for example, a woman, after years of
battering, leaving the perpetrator (3) the minor epiphany, which symbolically represents a
major, problematic moment in a relationship or a person's life; and (4) the re-lived epiphany:
those episodes whose meanings are given in the re-living of the experience (see Denzin

In studies of women leaving violent men, the concept of a turning point is often mentioned as
part of the process, although conceptualized in different ways. Enander & Holmberg (2008),
when addressing the issue of battered women’s leaving processes, found an experience of
“hitting rock bottom” as something that preceded or coincided with the turning point. The
experience of hitting rock bottom was often described as a bodily, almost organic experience
that somehow entails a sense of giving up. Enander & Holmberg found that violated women’s
break-ups were initiated at a turning point, and they describe these turning points as being of
two kinds: a) when it is a matter of life and death, and b) when someone else is at risk. The
giving up could be about e. g. giving up the struggle of adaptation and resistance or giving up hope for the relationship. In their analysis of the leaving processes, Enander & Holmberg describe three overlapping processes in terms of action, emotion and cognition. Moreover, they discuss battered women’s acts of resistance and conclude that while battered women do put up resistance, these acts can, paradoxically, function as obstacles to leaving the violent partner, i. e. resistance as meta-adaptation. Enander & Holmberg also found that battered women’s redefinition of the relationship as abusive, often seen as the important step leading up to the termination of the relationship, is a separate process usually taking place after the woman has left the abuser – as Denzin has pointed out, the meanings are constructed retrospectively.

Looking at processes of resistance from a different position, James C. Scott (1990), in Dominance and the Arts of Resistance provides insights on different levels of scripting processes during social interaction among dominants and subordinates. The publicly expressed speeches and practices (public transcripts) in contrast to the hidden thoughts and moments of resistance (hidden transcripts) to power structures – are not only used by the subordinates but are equally practiced by the dominants, who articulate hidden transcripts among their peers. Scott mainly distinguishes the public and the hidden transcript the latter referring to discourses that take place off-stage: “the hidden transcripts of dominant and subordinate are, in most circumstances, never in direct contact” (Scott 1990: 15). The interaction of public transcripts with hidden transcripts can be transposed to intimate situations like sexual encounters. Even if the hidden transcript is masked, Scott points to an idea which overlaps with our understanding of turning point:

I believe that the notion of the hidden transcript helps us understand those rare moments of political electricity when, often for the first time in memory, the hidden transcript is spoken directly and publicly to the teeth of power (Scott 1990: 1).

Later he clarifies: “Who, having been insulted or suffered an indignity […] has not rehearsed an imaginary speech he wishes he had given or intends to give at the next opportunity? Such speeches may often remain a personal hidden transcript that may never find expression, even among close friends and peers” (Scott 1990: 8). But sometimes, at rare moments, the hidden transcript breaks through the mask of silence. As we understand it, Scott’s use of the term transcript points to the palimpsestuous quality of appropriation of dominant norms and the rare possibility for transformative resistance. Therefore one way of thinking of script as
intervention is to address these hidden transcripts, silently articulated against indignity, which might not yet have found expression, but which nevertheless exist among subordinates having suffered oppression. In the rare moments in which the hidden transcript finds its way to public expression, it breaks the frequent interest of both parties “to tacitly conspire in misrepresentation” (Scott 1990:2). Scott makes clear that many thoughts, speeches and practices and disguised forms of resistance exist as hidden transcripts, never uttered directly. At the same time these hidden transcripts can be read as resources of resistance, which can be addressed as scripts for intervention. Similarly, fictional sources, such as women’s literature, can be seen as a cultural site where hidden transcripts are expressed by marginalised and subordinated groups.

Maria’s narrative as an “escape plot”

Maria, a 45 year old respondent, was married and had lived together for ten years with her husband when she met another man, and together they experienced great passion. Consequently, she separated from her husband and her four children to live with the new man. She felt rather vulnerable and fragile after having made the decision to leave her children. The new relationship soon became very violent. Maria says that in the beginning she made excuses for the beatings: for example him experiencing difficult and dramatic changes in his life by moving together with her and having her children come to visit every second weekend. After a while, she said that it all became “a matter of survival”. During the relationship she was taken to the hospital emergency room three times, twice after suicide attempts and once after experiencing a physical breakdown. Her body was marked by both old and fresh bruises. None of these times was she asked about the bruises. The husband was present during all the medical examinations, as well as during the interview with the psychologist after the suicide attempts, narrating to the medical staff that Maria was “fragile” and “under stress” due to a recent divorce. Later, with some help from a friend, she got in touch with the police. There was a court trial and the man was sentenced for six months. After the man was released from jail, she lived together with him for nine days before he again (with help from a social secretary and Maria’s previous husband) was reported to the police. There were new court trials and he was sentenced again. During this period she divorced the violent man.
In Maria’s narrative, we highlight two episodes with reference to turning points. In the first episode, when she was taken to the emergency room with physical breakdown, Maria narrates:

I did not give up, but the body gave up. And it was very... unpleasant. It was probably some kind of panic attack, I think. But it was a really horrid experience and I felt like I couldn’t breathe and that my heart had stopped. [-- ] I had this strange perspirations and numbness and nauseous and breathlessness, but they [the hospital staff] could not find anything wrong… and they kind of decided that it was stress and I did not tell them about the situation at home… so they decided that it was work that was very stressful and they bought it and I bought it and then I went home.

This physical breakdown could be described as a turning point where the body speaks before the subject. The three defining characteristics of the hidden (tran)scripts, as mentioned by Scott (1990), become evident in this study. First, the hidden transcript - as well as the public - is specific to a given social site (emergency room) and to a particular set of actors (medical staff vis-à-vis a patient). Second, it contains not only “speech acts but a whole range of practices”. The medical staff does not acknowledge the bruises, despite the fact that her body is so clearly marked. This is particularly surprising in the context of a medical setting where medical staff is trained to recognise bodily injuries. In the interaction with Maria, the staff completely ignores her positionality, including the possibility of intimate violence. The unrelenting presence of her husband in the medical room does not allow any other narrative to surface. Thus an insidious act of dominance takes place; the rationality of the husband’s explanation and the rationality of the medical explanation of stress at work get doubly conjoined to “overwrite” any alternate explanation. Third, there is a constant zone of struggle between the public and the hidden transcripts. The public transcript comprises of stress as an explanation for the physical breakdown, while the hidden transcript encompasses the ongoing intimate violence. The staff concludes that it was stress at work and Maria, who is put in a vulnerable and subordinate position, accepts this explanation.

If we understand (individual) agency as always socially constructed, then this situation at the hospital - laden with a possibility for change, a turning point - became non-agential as the marks on the body were not acknowledged and not given any significance in the public discourse. For Maria, her bodily experience is not officially recognised and “intelligible”,

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neither by others nor by herself. In a way, it remains within her as a known unknown, further contributing to the “internalised strictures on what can be spoken and on what is unspeakable - which restrict men and women differently” (Marcus 1992:389). In terms of Abraham and Torok, this "known unknown" can be understood as a cryptic incorporation, as a layer of the palimpsest that is not attainable by language.

At this point of Maria's story, the fear of loss (of her self) can be read as a cryptic incorporation, as a layer of the palimpsest that expresses itself through her body but is not (yet) intelligible for her. As such, the palimpsest "does not conform structurally to psychoanalysis of surface and depth, latent and manifest. [...] Rather, the palimpsest presents a complex structure of cryptic incorporation" (Dillon 2007: 29).

The second episode is about Maria telling her friend that she is subjected to violence. Her friend has already suspected that Maria is being violated. She has seen bruises and asked Maria about them, but Maria has denied any occurrence of violence. About a month after Maria had married the new man, she was cleaning up the blood in the kitchen after a severe beating, after the man had patched her up with plasters. While cleaning up, she realised he might kill her one day and she thought that if she died someone should know who’s fault it is. When the man went out to do some errands, she called her friend and first made her promise not to tell anyone – the struggle became “circumspect” (Scott 1990:17):

And in a feeble moment she promised that she wouldn’t. And here our lifeline was created... Every morning at 6.30, when he slept, I went downstairs and into the back of a closet with a portable phone... I went into the closet and called her every morning at 6.30 and said that I am still alive.  Good, she said... And after a while she said that this won’t do. We must do something. So we made plans. That is probably what made me survive. Just like slaves and prisoners do, we planned to release me. [...] We planned even small details… This kept me alive.

Maria demonstrates her ability for change, together with a friend. The possibility for a shift in perspective where she is taking action is itself a turning point, as well as part of a cluster of cumulative events. Physically enacting the hiding by going into the closet, the hidden transcript first gets voiced as a secret, shared with a friend. More and more it becomes a crucial element of a process which contributes to a break-up from the violent relationship - the break-up constituting a cumulative epiphany, using Denzin’s terminology. The shift of perspective that Maria describes here, giving her a sense of competence and self-worth within
this terrifying situation and an opportunity to position herself differently in relation to the perpetrator, constitutes an important site of agency as a way of re-writing her story, herself. In re-telling her narrative, she names it her "lifeline". This major change can be described as an ability to decipher the cryptic incorporation: The disconnection of her lifeline from the violent relationship, facing the loss of him and gaining the security to survive, has been made possible by the new lifeline she creates with her friend "out of the closet". The strength of this new belonging is impressive: it enables her to make the hidden transcript public, to transform the crypt into a script which is intelligible.

"For me it was a question of rewriting my own falsified history": Verena Stefan’s *Shedding* (1975)

We will proceed to look at a different life narrative, an autobiographically rooted text which has been published in 1975, at the peak of the German Women’s movement. In so doing, we will highlight the interrelatedness of body and language. Our "risky reading" of *Shedding* will not only concentrate on the escape-plot as such, but on the interrelation of bodily experience and language, focussing on turning point as a narrative element indicating change as transformative agency.

For the German-speaking readership, Verena Stefan is maybe the most important critic of (hetero-)sexual scripts articulated by women writers in the Seventies. To her, one of the most obvious domains of female subordination is sexuality and sexism. The German subtitle (which has been left out in the English translation) says: autobiographical notes, poems, dreams and analysis. Stefan marks the text as being an authentic account about personal experiences. *Shedding* clearly claims to be an intervention: an intervention against the sexist use of language about the female body and against the permanent and universal abuse of women’s bodies by men. In the first part of the book the “I”, the central female character of the book called Veruschka (as Veruschka is a nick-name of Vera, the connection between author and I is clearly marked), describes several relationships with men and how she gets fed up with playing the passive part in the common patterns of heterosexual encounter. Veruschka reflects a great deal about how and why inequality, dependency and (sexual) violence between women and men emerge again and again. To her all women are subordinate to men.
and therefore sexual encounter is equally marked by this dependency: “A man can always void his emotional vacuity into the vagina of a woman – without his perceiving her as a person, without her essentially being able to defend herself, to escape being dependent on him” (Stefan 1994:21). On the level of the plot, the most important turning points are marked by the decisions of Veruschka to leave all men behind, then to live a period with no sex at all, and finally to look for new bodily experiences with women.

One major concern of *Shedding* is how to represent “new experience” linguistically:

When I wanted to write about sensations, experiences, eroticism among women I went completely speechless. […] Nature itself seems to be a trite topic, it has been destroyed by patriarchy. our relationship with it is a broken one, we have to investigate it anew (Introduction to German edition Stefan 1975: 4, translation CB).

Stefan herself remarks that the new she is investigating is not *that* new. By re-ascribing the female body to nature, it’s mainly the relationship with it that has to be investigated anew, in order to experience “authentic” female sexuality. As Ricoeur (1991) argues, “the self does not know itself immediately, but only indirectly by the detour of the cultural signs of all sorts” (Ricoeur 1991:199). The detour of cultural signs, which enable Veruschka to gain self-knowledge, is on the one hand given “from books films and experiences that affirmed that which we know from books and films, we know what she/he wants” (Stefan 1994: 27). But, the protagonist is determined to “destroy familiar contexts. I question terms which can’t explain things any more and I sort them out. […] they have to be replaced by new descriptions if a new way of thinking shall be initiated” (Introduction to German edition Stefan 1975: 3-4, translation CB). Her desire to “destroy familiar contexts” is related to the language of the body. One scene at the beginning of *Shedding* offers some understanding of Stefan’s notion of the new female sexuality:

Before I started going to school, there was a time when I bathed myself in the kitchen. [...] It was during one of these evening hours that the feeling of actually being alive so overwhelmed me that I was unable to stir. For a few seconds I was intensely aware of every fiber, every pore of the skin that enveloped my body. Then in a flash the tingling pores came together again, bonding together to yield a sensation of completeness which was new to me. This is how it must have been when the first human being was created, I thought (Stefan 1994: 5).
The bodily sensation of “completeness” and her longing for it can be read as a “cryptic incorporation” and followed through her story. First the protagonist seeks to re-experience “completeness” in sexual encounters with men: “To postpone for a few seconds the icy death, to interrupt the anonymity and aloneness: To become flesh. To be recognized by someone, to get the feeling of really existing as a person, singular and unique: To become flesh” (Stefan 1994:28). Her experience of heterosexual intercourse, like her experience in the bathroom-scene, is linked to a “re-lived epiphany” (Denzin 2001: 37), evoking the feeling of being created anew. But then she realizes that this wholeness gets lost more and more through her living the life of a heterosexual adult woman. She discovers that the linkage between (romantic) hetero-normative love and epiphanic experiences has to be destroyed, as its script is invented in order to satisfy the male part and to subordinate the female part. “Intercourse as learned and practiced, is an undertaking too inconsequential to create happiness […] An act of desperation. I push it aside” (Stefan 1994: 44). She undertakes a long and demanding journey to re-inscribe the “re-lived epiphany” through female same-sex-intimacy: “We could never take refuge in sexuality; for us it could never serve as a substitute language for things left unsaid” (Stefan 1994: 63). As love among women is not yet scripted – according to Stefan – there’s no language for it and even the experience itself is affected by “emptiness”. The “I” describes an attempt to get close to a woman she’s in love with the following way:

We found ourselves in empty space. We didn’t want to imitate; we wanted to create new ways and means of behaviour drawing on our selves and on the untapped reserves of eroticism lying between us (Stefan 1994:50).

As there is no pre-script, the sexual script has to be (re-)written anew, and therefore it incorporates the possibility of transformation. The palimpsestuous involutedness of the interpersonal "new" sexual script with the sexual script as a linguistic and cultural layer of shared knowledge becomes a cause of considerable struggle in Shedding. As Richardson argues, “the individual is both the site and subject of these discursive struggles for identity and for re-making memory (...) one’s subjectivity is shifting and contradictory – not stable, fixed, and rigid” (Richardson 2005: 962). Most interestingly, in the last part of Shedding, a major narratological shift - a narratological turning point - is put into place, which has not yet attracted much attention, but which is very interesting in the light of the models of "cryptic incorporation" (Dillon 2007). On the last pages of Shedding the "I" of the narration disappears, the autobiographical perspective gets changed into an auctorial description of a heroine called "Cloe", "I" Veruschka transforms into “she, Cloe”. Writing itself becomes a
bodily experience of fulfilment, questions about authenticity get directly linked to matters of change: “Whenever Cloe showed something she had written to anyone it was already obsolete by the time she got around to discussing it. The words and the sentences were constantly changing in her head. [...] A book a process a piece of life, Cloe said to herself – all changeable” (Stefan 1994:78). This shift indicates a meta-reflection in the sense of a palimpsestic understanding of body and language: No experience - be it hetero- or homosexual - can ever be expressed directly. The auctorial perspective describes Cloe, preparing herself for writing, as follows: "Today was one of those days when layers of dreams, fragments of conversations that she'd had or read somewhere, half-forgotten encounters, all hovered in the air like particles of soot after a great fire" (Stefan 1994: 78). Cloe herself reflects about her writing in the following paragraph: "I don't know how all these things get into my head. [...] I must guide them into my head so that I can express them in familiar signs, so that others will be able to understand them. These numerous processes of assimilation and alienation must evolve in such a way that the signals emerging from my head and going into the typewriter correspond as closely as possible the original experience, though in another form" (ibid.). Recognising the double process of assimilation and alienation (or sometimes even destruction, as the metaphor of the great fire evokes), the search for authentic, complete bodily sensation turns into a process of fragmentation, overwriting or becoming part of the palimpsestuous fantasy of wholeness. In the very last paragraph, Cloe, walking on the street "bears traces of her old skins. She is dappled [...]” (Stefan 1994: 79). Being visibly fragmented becomes part of the cryptic desire for wholeness; and it is this turning point on the meta-level of writing, which enables the protagonist for the change, she has been looking for. The process of change, represented by the metaphor of shedding, is a process of recovery.

Maria’s narrative differs from, but also shares similarities with, Veruschka’s in Shedding. Both scripts evolve from the intertwining of the language of the body with the narratives. However, neither the development of Veruschka’s account nor the narrative of Maria is understood by the authors of this article as the only possible way for a transformative script. There is a potential variety of “new” scripts, each of which holds possibilities for agency.

**Conclusion**

Historical, cultural and social contexts create a ceaseless ongoing and simultaneous inscription and deciphering of meanings which we address in this article through the
metaphor of the palimpsest. As scripts get constituted through both narratives and lived bodily experiences, script as transformative intervention becomes part of the embodied palimpsest. Palimpsestuous academic writing links our different disciplinary backgrounds, coming from therapeutic, pedagogic and socio-analytical points of departure. Our understanding of palimpsestuous (sexual) scripts draws on our transdisciplinary reading and writing – a “risky reading”, which aims at a disruption of dominant canonical understandings of the sexually scripted body. As such, it can be deciphered as a transformative script for intervention.

The ongoing process of overwriting (trans-)scripts and the interconnectedness of its layers as a site of constant struggle incorporates many moments of agency. It is in this context that we develop our ideas on turning points, lying at the heart of “script as intervention” and understood as ever evolving process. In our readings of sexism, patriarchy and intimate violence in the narratives of Maria and Veruschka/Cloe, we draw on Ricoeur’s theoretical reflections which highlight the impossibility of knowing oneself immediately and the necessity of cultural signs in order to make sense of the self (see Ricoeur 1991: 191). The reading and re-writing of Maria’s narrative through Veruschka/Cloe and vice versa interrelates the layers of their palimpsests as cultural signs. Thus the fixity of the script gets disrupted, which enables us to enact a palimpsestuous reading of both texts, blurring disciplinary boundaries and using script as a transdisciplinary tool for intervention. In our reading, Maria’s “marked” body (materially marked) which spoke during the physical breakdown is comparable to Veruschka’s language of the body (a body that is symbolically marked), which longs for the sensation of completeness. In both narratives the language of the body – deciphered as “cryptic incorporation” (Dillon 2007) – leads to a process of turning point. Although in this article we have primarily focused on turning points as an ever evolving palimpsestuous process of textures, we point to the usefulness of turning points as scripting therapeutic intervention, moving beyond the dichotomy of passivity and resistance.

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1 The three authors met as GEXcel (Centre of Gender Excellence) research fellows at the University of Linköping (2009). We would like to thank GEXcel for providing the opportunity to engage in a scientific triologue; with special thanks to Nina Lykke for initiating our discussion on “script as intervention” and Cecilia Åsberg for encouraging us with our ideas. Furthermore, many thanks to Margaret Bridges for her proofreading.

2 In a discussion on Freud, Dillon 2007 points to the fact that even if Freud has recurred to the palimpsest as a model (he was using it in order to describe the superimposed structure of the meanings of dreams), his model of the Mystic Writing-Pad has much more in common with the palimpsest (see Dillon 2007: 30-33).

3 The German women’s movement apparently emphasized more on women’s differences from men than the Anglo-American counterpart did. See a detailed discussion on this topic by Tobe Levin with regard to Shedding (Levin 1994: 156-158).

4 At the same time she makes clear in the after-word that the text is a product of collective reflection: she was an active member of a women’s circle which wrote Brot & Rosen: Frauenhandbuch Nr.1, the German equivalent to Our Bodies, Ourselves. These women discussed and corrected the text and supported its publication. In that sense, the authenticity articulated within Shedding is the product of a collective story (see Richardson 1990: 25).
PART II:
VIOLATIONS OF FEMALE SEXUALITY
Chapter 4

Inner Labia Elongation as Violence against Women

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Introduction

The African continent has been described as a hotbed of sexual diversity and sexuality controversies (see Wekker, 2006). Sexual orientation and sexual pleasure have become hotly debated issues and are also subject to contested legislations. Despite the dynamic nature of culture and the increasing evidence of a liberal sexual ethic on the African continent, many traditional practices and customs relating to sexuality have endured, thus making Africa a prime example of how traditional culture continues to impact on different aspects of sexuality. An example of such practices is the traditional preparation of girls for marriage and sexual intercourse through inner labia elongation among the Basotho of Lesotho.

Traditionally, sex education, counselling and preparation of young girls for womanhood and marriage for Basotho were done by older sisters and aunts under the supervision of grandmothers. The older women were responsible for the transmission of sexual knowledge and acceptable sexual practices to girls. The sexual preparation of the female body mainly involved girls being taught how to elongate their inner labia as a rite of passage into womanhood. It was through this socialisation process that a girl acquired knowledge and skills and her attitudes and values towards sexual relationships were constructed (Gay, 1986).

The practice of labial elongation in Africa has been studied by various researchers (Bagnol & Mariano, 2008; Gallo et al., 2006; Johansen, 2006; Koster & Price, 2008; Larsen, 2010). These researchers have established that labial elongation begins very early in a girl’s life before her first menstruation. They argue that in Buganda, Tanzania, Rwanda and Mozambique, elongation is through massaging and stretching the labia from the top to the bottom, with the tips of the thumb and index finger of each hand. To ease the pulling, girls use different locally available herbs which are ground into a paste. These are believed to soften and lu-
bircate the labia such that the pulling does not cause any skin laceration and allow the labia to stretch.

It is worth noting that practices aiming to reduce, enlarge or beautify the external female genitalia are highly controversial, with the World Health Organisation classifying inner labia elongation as a Type IV female genital mutilation (FGM) (WHO, 2000), and the United Nations classifying it under “harmful traditional practices” (United Nations, 2006: 45) while some scholars prefer “ethnic genital modification” (Gallo, Tita & Viviani, 2006: 65). According to the United Nations’ (2006: 45) report on ending violence against women, more than 130 million girls and women alive today have undergone female genital mutilation/cutting mainly in Africa and the Middle East. Mwenda (2006), on the other hand, has taken a rights approach to labial elongation and looks into the extent to which labial elongation violates the rights of women in Africa. He argues that “as long as labial elongation is undertaken freely, and with full consent, it does not violate the rights of women” (353–354). According to Mwenda (2006), there should be a distinction between voluntary labia elongation and other forms of FGM that either compromise the health of women or are non-consensual.

The stance taken in this paper is that labial elongation is a form of genital modification because it does not compromise the health of women. My understanding is that African women and women from other countries who practice labial elongation do so to augment their sexuality. The elongated labia make their genitalia more attractive and supposedly more effective in pleasuring their sexual partners. I am, however, troubled by the apparent silence on labial elongation and its effects on female sexual desire and pleasure, in the context of Lesotho, and this has forced me to question the legitimacy of the practice. I am also troubled by Mwenda’s (2006) argument that if women undertake to elongate their labia freely then the practice is not violating their rights. If girls are expected to start elongating their inner labia before their first menstrual period, then the legitimacy of free and consensual elongation stands to question. How free can an eight year old be to decide for or against labial elongation? If it is a rite of passage into womanhood, then it means those women who do not conform are supposedly not complete women. My next question then is how easy it is for women to choose the ‘shame’ of being incomplete. In this paper I aim to highlight how the practice of labial elongation perpetuates the violation of women and girls’ rights to sexual pleasure. Despite the many debates raised on labial elongation, little has been written about its role in the construction of female sexual identity, and more specifically in relation to sexual pleasure, eroticism and desire among women.
This paper aims to highlight the silences around sexual pleasure and desire for Basotho girls and women through discussing the importance of labial elongation in the construction of sexual identities. It presents the challenges that women face as they negotiate the spaces between the social constructions of proper womanhood and female sexualities within a hetero-patriarchal society.

Methodology

This paper draws on a study (see Motalingoane-Khau, 2007) which employed autobiography, memory work, one-on-one in-depth interviews and focus group discussions to explore the memories of adolescent sexual experiences of purposively selected Basotho women science teachers tasked with teaching sexuality, HIV and AIDS education. The purpose of the study was to explore women teachers’ lived experiences of adolescent sexuality in order to understand how such experiences have shaped their approach to teaching about sexuality in schools. Ethical clearance was sought from and granted by the University of KwaZulu-Natal. The participants were informed of the purpose of the study and were given an option of withdrawing from the study whenever they felt uncomfortable. The participants were also free to withdraw any content of their discussions which they felt uncomfortable to disclose to the wider community.

Because of the sensitive and taboo nature of the research topic it was important to get the participants to feel at ease with discussing their intimate lives with me. Under Customary Law Basotho women are constructed as children and therefore, by implication sexually ‘innocent’ (see Motalingoane-Khau, 2007, 2010). This means that women are expected to be sexually pure and hence in the same manner they should not talk about sex. Within this context it was a challenge to get women to talk about their personal adolescent sexual experiences. Thus the data production involved three phases. The preparation phase, a pyjama party, was aimed at building rapport between the participants and to address the power dynamics within the group. The second phase was the actual data production in which, as a participant-researcher, I shared my experiences with the other participants. The last phase was a debriefing session, the purpose was to allay any fears and discomforts that could have arisen during the data production phase and to discuss how being involved in the study affected us as women teachers.

Locating myself within a feminist approach to research, I acknowledge my own position as both a participant-researcher and a producer of the narratives of female sexualities, while deconstructing traditional conceptions of truth and objectivity in my analysis. Feminist research
brings to light the practical and lived experiences of women in everyday life through problematising the meanings associated with the complexities of women’s daily lives (Grumet & Stone, 2000). Thus, while I present and problematise the women’s lived experiences of labial elongation together with mine, I have valued their voices in the meanings they make of their experiences.

A number of feminist researchers note that women researchers often choose topics which mean something to them, and argue that drawing from and theorising on one’s own personal experience is valuable (Cotterill & Letherby, 1993; Stanley and Wise, 1993; Ribbens & Edwards, 1998). My topic was also chosen because I have personal experiences relating to it and it is of importance to my development as a woman, mother and scholar-teacher. This paper draws only from the data produced through focus group discussions as they provide collective views and perceptions of the participants on their experiences of labial elongation. Focus groups are important in the advancement of social justice for women because they can serve to expose and validate women’s everyday experiences of subjugation and their individual and collective survival and resistance strategies (Madriz, 2000).

The data was analysed using thematic inductive analysis, whereby themes are generated from the data and coded for meaning (Patton, 2002). Braun and Clarke (2006) argue that although thematic analysis is widely used in analysing qualitative data, it is poorly demarcated and acknowledged in its own right as a method. In this study themes have been generated from women teachers’ memories of their adolescent sexual experiences.

**Findings**

**Manner of elongation**

The participants remember applying some herbs to the inner labia before elongating. They state that the elongation could be done individually or sometimes girls pulled each other’s labia:

Lineo: At the river the older girls showed us what to do. We would sit in pairs and pull each other every time we went to do our washing...

Mpho: Yes... we did it when we went to the forest to collect firewood. We also pulled each other...

Bonang: I pulled them every night before sleeping...
Thato: My sister and I never helped each other... each pulled on their own...

The practice of girls assisting each other in pulling the inner labia was, according to the participants, a way of ensuring that girls did the pulling. During such sessions they state that they even competed about who had the longest labia and this would encourage others to do more pulling. While some participants argued that the pulling was a painful experience, other participants talked about experiencing pleasure when pulling the inner labia:

Bonang: We went to the river almost every day with my 'mommy' because we enjoyed pulling each other so much...unfortunately we were told that we were pulling the wrong part, *naoa* (bean) and not *litsebe tsa mutla* (rabbit ears)...

Thato: I enjoyed it too... Sometimes I did it during the day because it felt good. I didn’t feel any pain because I was also pulling the wrong part... sadly, when I started pulling the right part... hei... it was terrible...

The women also pointed out that having a ‘mommy’ or ‘baby’ to help with the pulling was important because one felt at ease with having a friend helping them. Thus they could relax and not feel too ashamed having someone else looking at and touching their genitalia. It is however worth noting that the element of pleasure is only associated with pulling the clitoris and not the inner labia.

**Negative experiences of labia elongation**

Despite the reasons given on the importance of elongating the inner labia, some of the participants recall going through very traumatic experiences to get their labia elongated. Because of the competition that girls got into in terms of the length of their labia, some girls found themselves resorting to dangerous measures to get the desirable length.

Bonang: One girl in our group tied a piece of string to the labia and attached a stone to the string to assist with the pulling. She tied a head-scarf around each thigh so that the stone would not cause any friction on her inner thighs as she did her daily chores... unfortunately for her, the string got too deep into the skin of the labia and severed the tip...

Lineo: One girl in our village had used the wrong herbs because she had been told that they would make her labia grow faster... it was funny because they really grew. They were swol-
len and had a nasty rash. She smelt really terrible and had to go to the hospital.

Mpho: I also had the same experience...I applied an herb that looked like the one we used and I could not walk for two days. My labia were so painful and sore that I swore I would never use herbs again...

The fact that most of the pulling happened unsupervised left room for girls to make mistakes that could affect their health negatively as exemplified in these experiences. It is also possible that the silence surrounding the practice of labial elongation could have led to the lack of clarity on what to use as lubricant. Apart from this, some of the women talk about the negative comments and beatings they got from elders if they were found lacking in terms of elongating their labia. They were not allowed to sleep until they had elongated for a certain period of time before falling asleep. For most of the women this was a torture they would have gladly gone without.

Thato: My aunt would come into the room when we were bathing or when we were about to sleep and she would inspect us to see if we were doing 'mosebetsi oa matsoho' (hand work). There was no time to rest or relax...it seemed like the only thing that the grown-ups were thinking about was the elongation. It really made us feel like prisoners...

Mpho: What I hated most was showing every adult woman my genitals. I felt like I did not own my body anymore...that it was for somebody else and I was just preparing it for that person. Sometimes I refused to show the women and I would be severely reprimanded and even beaten. I really hated that.

Lineo: I remember one mother who supposedly threatened her daughter with a hot iron if she did not elongate her labia. She did not want the in-laws to accuse her of not raising her daughter well.

Limplo: Yes...it is very shameful when the in-laws are informed that a newly-wed is not a complete woman...my in-laws were not very happy with me because I had not elongated enough. They even wanted my husband to marry another woman...

These discussions show the value that was placed on the elongated labia in a woman’s life. They show the lengths to which young women went to in order to conform to the norms of womanhood prescribed in their
communities as well as the stigma and discrimination targeted at those who do not perform the desirable scripts.

Reasons for elongation
The participants recall being warned that they would not get married without the elongated labia because they would be ‘cold’. They argue that a woman without elongated inner labia was, and is still called a ‘cold woman’. The women also argue that upon finding a woman without elongated inner labia, a Mosotho man would say “kobo li nyane kea hatsela...” meaning “I am feeling cold because the blankets are too small...”. Such a man would be justified to find himself another woman who was not ‘cold’ (see Khau, 2010; Motalingoane-Khau, 2010). As the women put it, the shame of being told that one is not hot enough to sexually pleasure one’s husband is something they did not want to experience and hence they did the pulling. Thus the elongation improved women’s chances of marriage. They were also given stern warnings that if they did not pull, they would either be unable to give birth or they would experience complications during delivery. They argue that:

Mpho: I was very scared of all the bad things that would happen to me if I did not elongate my labia...I just had to do it despite the pain...

Lineo: I wish I had known that naoa was my clitoris... I would have stopped pulling the inner labia and pull it instead because I enjoyed pulling it more than the labia. I only pulled the labia because I was afraid of not getting married...

Bonang: I have always wanted children and if pulling was going to help me get them I would do it... so I pulled my things...

Thato: It was painful to pull those things but I did it because I did not want to be ‘cold’...

The women, however, argue that they are unable to say whether having elongated their labia eased the delivery process for them because they experienced the same pain as other women. They also point out that they cannot vouch for the effectiveness of elongation on keeping their husbands happy because, as they say, their husbands are having sexual affairs with women who have not elongated their labia.

Pain, shame and silence
The practice of labial elongation is said to be painful especially in trying to reach the desired length of labia. The participants remember com-
petitions among young girls to see whose labia were the longest. They also remember the shame that accompanied those whose labia were the smallest.

Limpo: I hated those times when we went to the woods for firewood and then they would start showing off their lengthy inner labia...we would sit in circles and see how many twists one could make with their labia...

Lineo: Yes we did that too. The most desirable was three or more twists. We also checked how far they could go backwards if you pull them towards your buttocks...you know...like a pad...

Thato: I was always teased and insulted by the other girls because I could not get my labia long enough. It was painful to pull them and that is why I ended up pulling the clitoris instead. I was ashamed to walk in the village because I thought that everyone knew the small size of my inner labia. I never even thought I would get married.

Limpo: Me too...and the worst part was I could not tell my mother about all the discrimination and torture from the other girls. She would have beaten me as well. I had to keep quiet about it...

The stigma attached to small inner labia made it possible for young girls to be tortured and discriminated against. Because inner labia elongation was regarded as a rite of passage, it was difficult to report any instances of teasing and discrimination and thus young girls endured their shame in silence. It is also worth noting that the shame did not stop with young girls keeping quiet about their short inner labia. The participants talk of situations in which women who had not elongated were tortured so that they would not steal husbands.

Lineo: My own aunt told me that the village women took one woman who was having an affair with their friend’s husband into the forest and burnt her clitoris with a hot iron rod. They were teaching her a lesson against stealing other people’s men.

Bonang: What if the woman having an affair was one with elongated inner labia? Would they still burn her?

Limpo: No...The competing women would just sort it out between themselves or even agree to share the husband. My
mother once told me of two ladies in our village who ended up being best friends because they agreed to share a man.

Mpho: One then wonders what the threat is from women who have not elongated their labia...is it because they are said to enjoy sex more than others?

Thato: That is a good question. I always wonder what men enjoy more, women with or women without elongated inner labia? I think if I was a man I would want to be with a woman who enjoys sex too so that I could have more fun with her.

This discussion brings to light some of the unanswered questions in relation to the practice of labial elongation. It shows the lengths women went to in order to secure their territory of proper womanhood.

Discussion

There are many beliefs concerning the importance of elongated inner labia as exemplified in the findings. It was believed that elongated inner labia kept a woman hot as they blocked the vaginal entrance and kept the heat inside (Gay, 1986). Young girls were told that if they did not elongate their inner labia they would lose favour with their husbands as they would be sexually unpleasant (cf. Arnfred, 2007; Parikh, 2005; Tamale, 2005). In other African contexts the practice of labial elongation seems to be premised on the sexual satisfaction of both partners despite the fact that emphasis is still on male sexual pleasure, thus showing the role of culture in the construction, manipulation and conditioning of desire and sexual pleasure (Bagnol & Mariano, 2008; Gallo et al., 2006; Johansen, 2006; Koster & Price, 2008; Larsen, 2010).

In contrast, Basotho people believed that elongating the inner labia made girls less sexually excitable because elongating the inner labia forced the clitoris to retract into the labial folds (Gay, 1986). This practice was done to keep girls and women ‘good’. Thus the main reason behind inner labia elongation has been the need to control girls’ and women’s sexuality. However, young girls were not given this information. As a Mosotho woman having gone through this practice, I do not think I would have elongated my inner labia given this reason. I believe the negative messages that were given were the only way to get Basotho girls to elongate due to fear of the consequences. The blame placed on women who have not elongated their inner labia and the shame they are forced to endure within societies perpetuate women’s silence regarding the violations they endure within marriages and other social structures. The public humilia-
tion of deviant women, mostly by other women, serves to reinforce this violation of women’s right to sexual autonomy and pleasure.

Basotho women used labial elongation as some form of contraception by preventing girls from desiring and enjoying sex. This argument was valid during the days when other forms of contraception were not available. However, it still stands to question whether on getting married the young woman with elongated labia was expected to enjoy sex with her husband or just to please him. If the practice was mainly to promote heterosexuality and male sexual pleasure, then it does not hold sway in today’s generation of Basotho women because not all of them get married to men. The question is if Basotho women know that pulling the inner labia reduces women’s sexual excitability, then why are they still passing this tradition on to their daughters? With today’s variety of contraceptive devices and sexual identity choices, should labial elongation be stopped?

Reference to labial elongation being used to reduce girls’ sexual excitability, as far as my research has gone, appears only within the context of Lesotho. Some of the participants state they only learnt about this reason for elongation after getting married, however they attest that girls who do not pull their inner labia are promiscuous and fall pregnant in big numbers because “ha ha ea fokotsa bohale...” that is “they have not reduced their sexual excitability...” and hence pursue sexual pleasure more than those with elongated labia. In Basotho communities, a proper girl waits for sexual advances from a man and never goes in pursuit of sex, let alone her own sexual pleasure. By implication they see girls without elongated labia as deviant and pursuit of sexual pleasure by girls and women as wrong.

These arguments show that female sexual pleasure is an absent presence in the practices of preparing girls for womanhood and marriage in Lesotho. If preparing Basotho girls for womanhood centres around labial elongation whose specific aim is enhancing male sexual pleasure and reducing female sexual pleasure, it means female sexuality is constructed as not needing pleasure. Young girls are forced to construct their sexual identities around sexual restraint and passivity because pursuing sexual pleasure transforms good Basotho girls into bad girls (cf. Kimmel, 2004). By not conforming to the norms of proper girlhood, girls without elongated inner labia are said to be able to pursue their own sexual pleasure. This means, in this context, non-conformity is good because it gives girls and women the space to enjoy sexual autonomy and pleasure.

It has been common for Basotho girls to have ‘mummies’ and ‘babies’, with older girls being the mummies. However, this practice has been forbidden in many church schools because it is believed to promote
lesbianism. Some participants talked of kissing their mummies or babies and engaging in mutual masturbation in the form of fondling and pulling each other’s inner labia. Despite this, homosexuality ‘does not exist’ in Basotho culture. The practice of girls assisting each other in stretching the inner labia served to reinforce the importance of elongated labia. Despite the homo-erotic implications of this practice, the apparent and crucial objective of the elongation rite was to enhance heterosexuality. However, young women ended up exploring many aspects of their sexuality during these pulling sessions which proved to be against societal expectations of proper girlhood.

Additionally, Kendal (1999) reports that women she interviewed in Lesotho, who engaged in what was seen with Western eyes as same-sex practices, did not see this behaviour as sexual at all. To them sexuality had to do with penetration. Their argument was that “you cannot have sex unless somebody has a koae (penis)” (Kendall, 1999: 167). This means that women’s ways of conveying passion, love, and lust, or joy in each other were neither immoral nor suspect. This, however, does not mean that mutual sexual pleasuring among girls (or boys) was socially accepted. Masturbation was also not an openly discussed issue because it was regarded as sinful and against nature. Thus, labial elongation provided a context in which Basotho girls explored their bodies and inherent sexual identities while also engaging in forbidden sexual practices within the safety of established friendship groups as evidenced by the testimonies of the participants who enjoyed being assisted to pull their labia. Despite the intended suppression of female sexual desire and pleasure, the practice of labial elongation created a space for the exploration of pleasurable female sexuality and hence in some situations became an arena for challenging traditional sexual norms. The fact that girls enjoyed mutual sexual pleasuring in their partnerships shows that the practice of assisted inner labia elongation challenged the hegemony enjoyed by male sexual pleasure and heterosexuality.

The practice of labial elongation, in many African communities, shows that even though girlhood sexuality is highly policed, it is never completely silenced. The challenge, however, is that girls are socialised to believe that “the pursuit of sex transforms good girls into bad girls” (Kimmel, 2004: 240). Ericsson (2005: 131) also argues that “a delinquent boy is criminally active; a delinquent girl is sexually active...” Growing up with these perceptions makes it difficult for girls to fully embrace their sexuality and its pleasures because good girls should not pursue sex or be sexually knowledgeable. Female sexuality in this context is only legitimate if it is in relation to heterosexuality and male sexual pleasure. This positions auto- and homo-erotic experiences for girls
As deviant, and thus denies exploration of such alternative avenues of sexual pleasure. The conceptualisation of girls’ homo-erotic experiences under the rubric of lesbianism reflects the embedded heteronormativity in Basotho society.

The deviance attached to the pursuit of sexual pleasure by females and homosexuality is also testament to the perceived abnormality and immorality of homosexual practices which is a reflection of Christian moralistic teachings. In European traditions, women were seen as assets in state building as mothers of the nation (Amadiume, 2007). They therefore had to adhere to the strictest and highest Christian standards of purity in order to produce citizens of high moral standing. In this context the purity of motherhood inhabited a different world to the desiring body. According to Ifi Amadiume,

In Victorian English culture, women were not expected to experience sexual arousal, and these cultures were enforced on Africans by Christian missionaries and through modern Eurocentric education. These were not originally African practices... (2007: 5).

Thus through appropriating colonial sexual practices as their culture, Basotho eventually promoted the passive Victorian female (Wekker, 2004) as a virtuous norm for female sexuality. According to Wekker (2006: 5) black women’s sexuality is represented in Euro-American history as “excessive, insatiable, the epitome of animal lust, and always already pathological...” Thus through Christianity, this supposedly deviant and pagan sexuality was abolished in many colonies including Lesotho. As recorded by Kendall (1999) Basotho women enjoyed woman-woman relationships which were neither immoral nor suspect within communities. Thus it could be argued that the homo-erotic experience of assisted inner labia pulling is not deviant but reclamation of what has naturally been part of Basotho female sexuality.

Bourdieu (1993) argues that agents in any field conform to norms or prescribed rituals depending on their interests. He argues that people, as actors in the field, are not rule followers or norm conformers but strategic improvisers who respond to the opportunities and constraints offered by various situations in accordance with their dispositions. Basotho women as players in the field of “becoming a woman” (Butler, 1990: 33) seem to have a vested interest in labial elongation despite its drawbacks on female sexual pleasure. Women’s performance of this normalised womanhood corresponds to their formative socialisation and thus legitimates the sexual inequality between men and women. Basotho women are strategically complicit in the symbolic violence or ‘othering’
directed at those without the elongated labia because they stand to gain from this practice. Those women with elongated labia, as existing holders of power, use labial elongation as an entry fee into the field of womanhood for young girls as new players, or a way of blocking or excluding ‘unfit’ players in the game of being a woman.

Labial elongation forms part of becoming a Mosotho woman and thus an integral part of sexual identity formation. However, the hegemony enjoyed by this practice excludes resistant ways of sexual identity formation which could be available for Basotho girls. The question of who benefits from labial elongation requires further research within the context of Lesotho. From the discussions in this paper, it can be argued that while it was good to use labial elongation as a contraceptive measure, it denied young women the full extent of sexual pleasuring that their bodies could attain. Should young girls continue to form their sexual identities around labial elongation?

To pull or not to pull, that is the dilemma!

Conclusion

This paper has discussed the practice of labial elongation among the Basotho and how it is implicated in the constructions of female sexual identity. The policing and control of female sexuality within hetero-patriarchal contexts remains one of the major drivers of violence against women. Significantly, most societies privilege heterosexual male desire, either by enacting prohibitive laws on other groups or by promoting social mores and cultural observances that tend to circumscribe the sexual desire of the others. This paper provides only a glimpse into the violation of women and girls’ rights to sexual autonomy and pleasure and the mechanisms of blame and shame that perpetuate women’s silence in the face of violence.

Due to the taboo nature of sex talk, inner labia elongation is hardly talked about within the public sphere except in cases of blaming and shaming deviant women and girls. With the majority of Basotho women still being economically dependent on men, there is little likelihood for them to stand up for their rights. There are therefore few individuals within Lesotho, mostly women science teachers, who are standing up against the practice of inner labia elongation as there are hardly any organizations or movements against this practice within communities. However, these women teachers are only able to teach a few girls about their bodies in relation to sexual pleasure without any support from the wider community. As Petchesky (2000:12) rightly points out, “sexual rights for women will remain unachievable if they are not connected to a strong campaign for economic justice and an end to poverty”. Thus
campaigns for women’s sexual rights in Lesotho would have to tie in with strategies for economic independence to enhance women’s decision-making powers.

However, without the support of men who currently are still the decision makers in relationships and families, there would be minimal progress. Thus it is important for re-education programs to target men to stand against this practice. With the understanding that a woman who enjoys sex makes it more pleasurable for her partner, it would be easier to persuade Basotho that it is for the good of all if women and girls stopped this practice. With buy-in from the men, women would be released from the fear of not being marriageable and pleasurable and thus the shame and blaming placed on women and girls would stop; thereby creating spaces for a society that values and enjoys pleasurable and healthy sexuality.

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Chapter 5
Trafficking of Women and Girls from Nepal to India for Prostitution; What is Known about its History, Nurturing Factors, Health Effects and Prevention?

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Introduction
The aim of this chapter is to present a general overview of the trafficking of women and girls (W/G) from Nepal to India for prostitution, including what is known about its history, nurturing factors and health effects as well as the ongoing activities against W/G trafficking in Nepal.

By trafficking we mean “the transportation, selling or buying of women and children for (forced) prostitution within and outside a country for monetary or other considerations with or without the consent of the person subjected to trafficking” (SAARC, 2002).

Trafficking and prostitution are two distinct but linked phenomena. The main objective behind the trafficking of W/G is to involve them in forced prostitution. The majority of trafficked W/G are enticed away from their homes with false promises, or unwillingly and unknowingly abducted, lured, drugged or otherwise dragged away. By law, forced prostitution is a criminal activity in Nepal. Sometimes the W/G are taken with the consent of their family and relatives. Because of poverty, illiteracy and myths of prosperity abroad, parents are motivated to consent to the migration of their daughters. No existing policy or legislative documents speak about such “voluntary” prostitution.

The trafficking of W/G for the purpose of sexual exploitation occurring around the world is a deliberate and medieval human rights violation. The United Nations (UN) has stated that human trafficking is
the world’s third largest criminal activity and the second most lucrative business. It is considered to be a demonstration and outcome of sexual power relations: relations in which men are dominant and women dominated (Shrestha, 1997). According to the UN, approximately four million W/G are victims of international trafficking every year for different purposes, such as labour or prostitution, (recently, the UN Office on Drugs and Crime denounced the fact that, although the victims of sexual exploitation are predominantly W/G, in 30 percent of the countries that provided information on the gender of traffickers, women make up the largest proportion (UN Report, 2009).

History

The trafficking in Nepalese W/G for sexual exploitation began in Nepal with the rise of the Rana rulers in the mid 19th century, when the Rana ruling classes started keeping Tamang girls (a tribe from Janajati) as concubines and servants in their palaces in Kathmandu. The Rana rulers were subsequently overthrown in 1950, and had to escape to India with their young Tamang concubines and household servants. As those girls aged, the Rana “husbands” sold them into prostitution in Indian brothels. Some of those prostitutes later started their own brothels in India and periodically returned to Nepal to recruit more Tamang girls into prostitution. Similarly, with the downfall of the Rana in Nepal, the brokers who used to supply young girls to the Rana palaces subsequently established connections with brothels in Indian cities like Mumbai and Kolkata (Mahila Attama Nirvar Kendra, 1997; Sangroula, 2001).

With the success of the carpet industries in Nepal during the 1980s, labour contractors began to bring young girls from villages in the mountains and lowlands of Nepal to Kathmandu. Usually the workplaces were congested and dusty with poor lighting and ventilation. The girls were exploited within the carpet factories with long working hours, low salaries, job insecurity and sexual harassment. They were also vulnerable targets for forced prostitution as the carpet entrepreneurs had links with trafficking networks and child labour was phased out from the carpet industry in Nepal in early 2000. The exploitative working conditions in carpet factories were helpful for traffickers, who preyed on those girls by promising better jobs in India which in fact turned out to be forced prostitution (Sangroula, 2001). Other high risk areas included workplaces such as domestic work, dance bars, restaurants, beauty parlours, stone quarrying and construction worksites, and brick kilns production.

The trafficking of Nepalese W/G to Indian brothels was fully established by the 1960s. Criminal links between Indian sex traders and the
Nepalese traffickers were well established by the 1970s, and the trafficking increased tremendously during the 1980s (Coomaraswamy, 2000). The statistical data on trafficked W/G in Nepal still vary widely; figures range from 5,000 to 12,000 annually (McGirk, 1997). According to the “Fact Book on Global Sexual Exploitation, Nepal, 1999”, the estimated number of Nepalese W/G trafficked to Indian brothels up until 1999 was over 200,000 (Fact Book on Global Sexual Exploitation, Nepal 1999). The government of Nepal and the Ministry of Women, Children and Social Welfare has stressed the importance of research into human trafficking. However, political instability, lack of commitment from political leaders, corruption within government structures, internal conflict, the scarcity of trained manpower and financial constraints have so far made these goals unachievable.

Vulnerable districts

It has been widely noted that trafficking for the sex trade began in the hilly districts of Nepal, like Nuwakot, Sindhupalchok and Makwanpur. However, trafficking has now spread throughout the country (Bal Kumar, 2001). In a study on 67 trafficked W/G it was found that they originated from 27 districts. The majority (40 cases) had been trafficked from workplaces in urban areas and the rest (27 cases) had been trafficked directly from rural areas (Bal Kumar, 2001).

Similarly, the National Task Force on Trafficking recognised 26 districts as being trafficking-prone after examining the cases of trafficking registered by the Nepal police in 1998 (MOWCSW, 2008). A report published by the Institute for Development Studies and United Nations Development Fund for Women in 2004, based on newspaper reports (1994–2001), showed that trafficking takes place in 36 districts (Status and Dimensions of Trafficking within Nepalese Context, 2004). A baseline survey conducted by Lutheran World Nepal and SAATHI in 2006 identified 10 districts as highly affected by trafficking: Sindhupalchok, Sarlahi, Makwanpur, Kanchanpur, Rupandehi, Dang, Banke, Sankhuwasabha, Nuwakot and Kavre (SAATHI, 2006). All these figures can be expected to be afflicted with report bias and therefore underestimated. The trafficking of W/G is possible throughout the 1,740 mile-long open border between India and Nepal. No passports or visas are required for Nepalese people to travel to India, and the citizens of both countries can easily cross the border for business or shopping.
Nurturing factors

Many actors are involved in the trafficking business, from the initial recruitment and procurement of W/G to their transportation within and across borders. These agents could be anyone, e.g. either or both of the parents (biological or step-parents), husband, family members, close or distant relatives, neighbours, employment agents, brothel keepers, corrupt law enforcement officials or government staff, crime syndicates with bases in many countries etc. In India there are numerous Nepalese brothels, where the recruitment of new W/G is often conducted by older prostitutes or brothel owners returning to their home villages.

For the traffickers and the brothel owners, W/G trafficking is a highly profitable business. The trafficked W/G are sold to the brothel owners in India for US$ 2,000–2,400, and they have to work in the brothel until they pay back the debt along with interest. This may take a decade and sometimes it is a never-ending contract. Brothel owners use physical and mental threats along with severe beatings to keep the W/G under control. The US Central Intelligence Agency states that a trafficked W/G who works as a prostitute is worth approx US$ 250,000 on the sex trade market (WNN, 2010).

The main reason behind the trafficking of such a large number of Nepalese W/G to Indian brothels is the high demand for them. Not only are the Nepalese people working in India a source of “buyers of sex”, but the fairer complexion of the Nepalese W/G is attractive to most native Indian “buyers”. Similarly, for the brothel owners, importing Nepalese W/G is safer than buying local Indian W/G, as ignorance of the local languages and customs makes Nepalese W/G less likely to complain to the police (Sangroula, 2001).

The one and a half decade long political conflict, followed by economic instability in the villages, compels people to migrate to bigger cities. This urge contributes to an increased risk of trafficking. W/G are easily lured by local recruiters, neighbours or relatives promising a better life elsewhere. To convince the family, traffickers may provide them with a few thousand Nepalese Rupees as the first instalment of their daughter’s future salary. This convinces the family to let the traffickers take their daughter with them and places the W/G in a state of indebtedness.

The average age of trafficked W/G from Nepal to India fell from 14–16 years in the 1980s to 10–14 years in 1994 (McGirk, 1997). Young girls are highly sought after, as they are less likely to suffer from sexually transmitted diseases and HIV. Obscure beliefs, such as “HIV/AIDS is cured by having sex with a virgin”, has also contributed to the preference for younger girls (Rights, 2001).
There are various factors nurturing W/G trafficking in Nepal. There is a consensus that unemployment, extreme poverty, conflict situations, lack of infrastructure and the supply of basic needs, social norms such as the low status of W/G in the family and society, tradition and culture, illiteracy or ignorance about being trafficked and sold, lack of political commitment, administrative deficiencies, urbanisation, globalisation, the highly profitable nature of the business for brothel owners and the high demand for Nepalese W/G in brothels in India are the major factors contributing to trafficking for prostitution (Bal Kumar, 2001; Rajbhandari and Rajbhandari, 1997).

Ill-health

The health consequences that are relevant to the trafficking of W/G globally are based on three broad categories (Beyrer and Stachowiak, 2003):

- The direct health consequences are an increased risk of exposure to STDs, HIV and sexual trauma. The long-term complications of STDs include infertility, ectopic pregnancy and malignancies such as cervical cancer and AIDS.

- Threats to mental health, such as depression, substance abuse, post-traumatic stress disorder and the complex psychological burden of rape, slavery and sexual exploitation.

- Difficulties in gaining access to health care (e.g. prevention services) compared to non-trafficked prostitutes.

- Most of the HIV-positive W/G are sent back to Nepal from the brothels in India. Due to social stigma and the limited economic opportunities available to them, is it likely that they will take up the same profession in Nepal. They are suffering from multiple mental health disorders and often even attempt to commit suicide (NHRC, 2002).

Rescue and reintegration

Nepal and India are signatories to the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation Convention on Prevention and Combating Trafficking in Women and Children (2002). Their aims are the repatriation and rehabilitation of trafficked W/G and to prevent the use of W/G in international prostitution networks, particularly when countries in the South Asian region are the countries of origin, transit and destination. Similarly, rescue and integration is an area of interest in the National Plan of Action against Trafficking in Children and their Commercial Sexual Exploitation, 1998. In order to implement that National Action Plan, anti-trafficking networks were established at the national, district, vil-
lage and municipality levels in the form of task forces. Task forces are to coordinate activities against trafficking at those respective levels. The minister of the Ministry of Women, Children and Social Welfare is the chairperson of the National Task Force.

At the district level, task forces are headed by the Chief District Officers. The Chief District Officers are mandated to communicate with their counterparts in adjoining provinces of the neighbouring countries in order to solve problems related to trafficking.

If victims and culprits are found, e.g. at the border, police arrest the culprit and hand over the victim to the relevant NGOs. Both Nepalese police and NGO personnel have indicated that there is a good cooperation between the Nepalese and Indian police in order to control all forms of crimes, including W/G trafficking (Suwal, 2001).

The state law enforcement organs and NGOs of both Nepal and India work in close cooperation to prevent W/G trafficking and to facilitate the rescue and rehabilitation of the trafficked W/G.

A few NGOs are concentrated on the interception of trafficked W/G at border crossing points, arresting traffickers with the help of the police (both Indian and Nepalese), and rehabilitating the intercepted W/G in transit homes, offering counselling and family reunion. Other NGOs, with the support of the Indian Police Service, raid Indian brothels to rescue trafficked W/G and arrest brothel keepers and traffickers.

Integration is seen as the most difficult part of anti-trafficking programmes. There is a great risk that society will not accept the rescued W/G, and it is risky to send them back to the community that has already abused them. In a study among adolescent girls, nearly all (94.0 percent) reported that the community looked upon the returnees with hate (Community Perceptions of Trafficking and its Determinants in Nepal, 2001). Because of discrimination and threats, some trafficked W/G do not want to return home. Is it always right to perform rescue operations aimed at the reintegation of trafficked W/G without their consent? Some argue that it could end up being another incarceration of the victim, from a brothel to a shelter (Child Trafficking in Nepal, an Assessment of the Present Situation, 2003).

**Preventive activities**

The government of Nepal has made significant improvements in its law and policies aimed at averting W/G trafficking and other activities focused on opposing violence against women.

Below we have listed examples of Nepalese anti-trafficking initiatives to empower women and children in general and to combat trafficking in particular:
1. The first legislation against trafficking in Nepal was the New Muluki Ain (Civil Code) which has been in force since 1964. New Muluki Ain lays down as an offence the separating of a minor below the age of 16 from her/his guardian or enticing the minor to “cross the border with the intent of trafficking or strike a deal in this regard.” Article 3 prohibits the sale or purchase of any person.

2. Under the Human Trafficking Control Act of 1986 (an amendment to the New Muluki Ain, 1964), transporting a person to a foreign country with the intention of selling them or forcing a woman into prostitution are offences punishable with imprisonment of up to 20 years.

3. In 1990, the Constitution of Nepal included a provision which allows for special laws to prohibit traffic in human beings, slavery, serfdom, or forced labour in any form and thus seeks to protect women and children by making trafficking punishable by law.

4. The Ninth Plan (1997–2002) acknowledged a need for different measures for gender mainstreaming in activities such as national development, the elimination of gender inequality and the empowerment of women. Similarly, it has focussed on the identification of crimes, the necessary punishment system, a remedy and rehabilitation system and raising social consciousness in order to reduce all forms of violence against women.

5. The National Plan of Action against Trafficking in Children and their Commercial Sexual Exploitation 1998 has focussed on the prevention of W/G trafficking through measures such as: i) Policy, research and institutional development; ii) Legislation and enforcement; iii) Awareness raising, advocacy, networking and social mobilisation; iv) Health and education; v) Income and employment generation; and vi) Rescue and reintegration.

6. The National Plan of Action against Trafficking in Children and Women for Sexual and Labour Exploitation 2001 was formulated on the basis of the previous action plans. The major areas of this National Plan of Action were i) Policy research and institutional development; ii) Legislation and enforcement; iii) Awareness creation, advocacy, networking and social mobilisation; iv) Health and education; v) Income and employment generation; vi) Rescue and reintegration; vii) Trans-border, regional and international issues; and viii) Monitoring and evaluation.

7. In 2004 the National Plan of Action for Gender Equality and Women’s Empowerment was developed, covering the 12 critical areas of concern identified at the Beijing Conference (UN, 1995). These were: i) The burden of poverty on women; ii) Inequalities, inadequacies and unequal access to education and training;
Inadequate conditions for health for many women; iv) Violence against women; v) The impact of armed conflict and other deep-rooted conflicts on women; vi) Inequality in all realms of economic structures and policies; vii) Inequality in all power and decision-making structures and processes; viii) Insufficient mechanisms to promote the achievement of women; ix) Lack of respect and inadequate protection of the human rights of women; x) Media stereotyping and inadequate access for women to communications systems; xi) Gender inequalities in the management of natural resources and the environment; xii) Discrimination and violation of the rights of girl children.

8. The National Expert Committee’s recommendations on the implementation of the United Nations Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) in 2004 opened doors for new laws and legal reforms, such as the Legal Aid Act, under which free legal aid is available in cases of abortion, trafficking, sexual exploitation and domestic violence in Nepal.

9. The Women’s Commission Act of 2006 and its Regulation in 2008 have been introduced to protect and promote the rights of women and involve them actively in mainstream national development. The National Women’s Commission five-year strategic plan (2009–2014) was developed based on the core values of the rights of women such as Gender Equality, Social Equity/Inclusiveness, Diversity, Participation, Independence and Autonomy, Integrity, Accessibility and Accountability. The Interim Constitution of Nepal 2007 protects the interests of children and women by conferring on them certain fundamental rights and imposing certain duties on the state in the form of directive principles and policies of the state.

10. The Human Trafficking (Control) Act 2007 has come into existence as a reformation of the Human Trafficking Control Act, 1986. The aim of this act is to control the sale and trafficking of human beings, and to offer protection and rehabilitation to trafficked W/G and survivors. It defined human selling to include the selling or buying of a human being with a motive, insisting on or forcing any person into prostitution with or without taking profit, the illegal dismembering of human organs, and any person having sexual intercourse with prostitute women. This means that prostitution is illegal in Nepal, and if arrested, both the prostitutes and their customers are prosecuted under this act. The scope of this Act is sufficiently wide to establish extra-territorial jurisdiction, i.e. to reach offences that are committed outside Nepal.
11. The Domestic Violence (Offences and Penalties) Act, 2009. “Domestic Violence” includes any form of physical, mental, sexual and economic abuse perpetrated by any person to any other person with whom s/he has a family relationship. The definition also implies to the acts of reprimand or emotional abuse.

The Government of Nepal is signatory to the followings International Conventions:


The forms of trafficking are changing with the shifting socio-political contexts of Nepal. Trafficking routes vary depending on changes in legal environment, political commitment and the level of vulnerable groups’ knowledge, means of transport and destination. The trafficking routes appear as an integral part of the map of human mobility, both legal and illegal, within a given time frame and geography. The governmental and non-governmental authorities do not have proper data to determine the course of trafficking in W/G over recent years.

The major constraints on preventing trafficking in Nepal are the illegal network of trafficking, the community’s eagerness to migrate, traffickers’ vested interests, inefficient government mechanisms to implement national and international commitments and a lack of actual information/data and proper networking among stakeholders. Effective policy requires conceptual clarity in the framework that addresses trafficking for sexual exploitation. The state and civil society should take social and economic initiatives to alleviate the factors that make W/G vulnerable to trafficking, such as poverty, unemployment, illiteracy, violence against women, social exclusion and discrimination.

Furthermore, there is a lack of institutionalised reporting systems in W/G trafficking from Nepal. Thus, in order to set priorities, reliable and uniform data on trafficked W/G should be made available and the findings of studies conducted by various agencies should be disseminated to all stakeholders. Without comprehensive, carefully documented research on trafficking, it is impossible, for example, to identify vulnerable districts. Research can motivate the government and civil society to take ac-
tion once the extent of a problem is proven. Therefore, it is important to improve research methods and techniques in order to gather more reliable quantitative and qualitative data in the changing Nepalese context.

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Introduction

Throughout South Asia, women and girls (W/G) are trafficked within countries and across international borders against their will in what is essentially a covert slave trade (Sanghera, 1999). Worldwide, approximately four million W/G are victims of international trafficking for different purposes each year (UN Report, 2009). Although it has become an issue of national, regional and global challenge, the implications and outcome of the actions against trafficking that have been implemented so far are not sustainable – probably due to the complicated nature of this practice.

The definitions of trafficking vary widely and no consensus exists. The first United Nations definition of trafficking includes moving, selling and buying women and children, especially for prostitution (United Nations, 1949). In the context of Nepal, the definition of trafficking en-
compasses the trafficking of males and females for both sexual and non-sexual purposes.

However, since this study focuses on the trafficking of females for forced sex labour, we use the following definition of trafficking, adopted by the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation Convention on Preventing and Combating Trafficking in Women and Children for Prostitution: “the transportation, selling or buying of women and children for (forced) prostitution within and outside a country for monetary or other considerations with or without the consent of the person subjected to trafficking” (SAARC, 2002).

There is almost no systematic research into W/G trafficking in the context of Nepal. The statistical data on trafficked W/G varies widely. The estimated number of Nepalese W/G trafficked to Indian brothels up until 1999 was over 200,000 (Fact Book on Global Sexual Exploitation, Nepal, 1999). Today figures range from 5,000 to 12,000 annually (McGirk, 1997).

Trafficking of W/G within Nepal has a long tradition, associated with the country’s feudal and patriarchal social structure (Sangroula, 2001). Trafficking in W/G is easy along the 1,740 mile-long open border between India and Nepal. The trafficking of Nepalese W/G to Indian brothels has been fully established since 1960, and has lately expanded dramatically across the entire sub-region. Traffickers’ networks have extended from villages to urban areas in Nepal as well as in India and other countries (NHRC, 2007). In these aspects, Nepal is often characterised as the “sending” country, or country of origin.

Studies have revealed that trafficking exists in all castes within all the 75 districts of Nepal. These studies refute the belief that only a few particular castes are vulnerable to trafficking. It appears that the highest proportion (45%–55% of the total trafficking survivors) of trafficked W/G consists of hill Janajati, followed by hill Dalit (Bal Kumar, 2001).

No single factor is responsible for W/G trafficking in Nepal. The major factors contributing to migration, trafficking and prostitution of W/G are believed to be patriarchal socio-cultural norms (the low status of W/G in the family and society), extreme poverty and unemployment, dysfunctional families, lack of political commitment at grass-root levels, and the highly profitable nature of the business for traffickers and brothel owners (Bal Kumar, 2001; Rajbhandari and Rajbhandari, 1997).

Nepal and India both signed the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation “Convention on Prevention and Combating Trafficking in Women and Children” in 2002. The state law enforcement organs and NGOs of both countries work in close cooperation to prevent W/G trafficking and to rescue and rehabilitate trafficked victims. If the Nepalese
W/G trapped in the brothels inform the authorities about their situation and ask for help through someone, mainly through their clients, the Indian Police Service raids the brothels in coordination with non-governmental organisations (NGOs) to rescue them and arrest brothel keepers and traffickers. If the adult prostitutes report that they are being held there by force, they will be rescued, even if raids by the police are performed mainly to rescue the underage girls. However, as the W/G are confined within the four walls of the brothels under the strict control of brothel owners, it is very difficult for them to establish contact with people outside and proactive action by the Indian police is not common, even if they know that brothels keep underage girls.

There is also a lack of coordination among NGOs involved in the rescue of victims. There is a legal provision for reporting the number of repatriated W/G upon arrival in Nepal, but not all the NGOs follow this rule. A few NGOs are concentrated on the interception of trafficked girls at border crossing points, arresting traffickers with the help of the police (both in India and Nepal), rehabilitation of W/G in transit homes, counselling and family reunion.

Re-integration is seen as the most difficult part of an anti-trafficking programme. In a study conducted by The Asia Foundation in 2001, nearly all (94.0 percent) of the girls reported that the community looked upon the returnees with hatred. Many W/G are unwilling to go back to Nepal or return to their communities because of the social stigma (Foundation, 2001) they have to endure.

The government of Nepal's Ministry of Women, Children and Social Welfare has also stressed the importance of research into human trafficking which is urgently required in its Action Plan to combat women's and child prostitution (National Plan of Action against Trafficking in Children and Women for Sexual and Labour Exploitation, 2001). However, instability, internal conflict and financial constraints have so far made these goals unachievable. Nevertheless, the changing context of the state and the inclusion of marginalised communities in the reconciliation process may help to address this critical issue. Thus, there is a need for area-specific research (sociological as well as epidemiological) that clearly demonstrates the current situation, its inherent trends and existing behavioural changes in trafficking; to create a basis for developing appropriate intervention strategies.

**Aims**

1. To identify risk groups: Who is being trafficked?
2. What factors motivate W/G trafficking?
3. To identify the routes of trafficking
4. How were the W/G rescued and how effective is the integration of rescued survivors as perceived by them?

**Methodology**

This study was performed in cooperation with two Nepalese organisations called Community Action Nepal (CAC Nepal) and Shakti Samuha. CAC Nepal is a non-governmental organisation that works in the area of women’s and children’s rights, based in Kathmandu, Nepal. Shakti Samuha works against trafficking and is operated by survivors of trafficking. A series of meetings were held with these organisations to discuss the research aims and guidelines before they approved the research project. We interviewed eight trafficking survivors who were living independently in various parts of Kathmandu Valley and six who were currently staying at a rehabilitation centre.

Interviews with the W/G living independently were conducted in the visiting rooms of the central office of CAC Nepal, and the interviews with the W/G living in the rehabilitation centre were conducted in the meeting rooms at the centre. The interviews lasted 45–60 minutes, and were conducted by two female interviewers in separate quiet rooms. No other staff or research team members were present.

The semi-structured interviews were conducted according to an interview guide developed by the authors. All the interviews were recorded digitally. Two interviews of the women living independently were excluded as one survivor later denied being trafficked and one interview was not recorded properly due to technical problems. All interviews were conducted in Nepalese, recorded and transcribed verbatim and translated into English by the authors. To answer the research questions we used thematic content analysis (Silverman, 1993).

**Ethical considerations**

The study was approved by the Ethical Committee of Kathmandu Medical College, CAC Nepal and Shakti Samuha rehabilitation centre. Similarly, oral consent was acquired from all informants. Confidentiality was assured to all participants before the interviews. It was also explained to informants that they could withdraw from the interview at any time without an explanation. It was considered a risk that the interviews would touch upon very sensitive issues that might upset the informants. A psychological counsellor was therefore present during the interviews in another meeting room to offer help to the informants if needed.
Results

Below we describe the process of trafficking in chronological order according to the narratives collected from twelve survivors of trafficking.

Who were the women before being trafficked?

The interviewed women were between 16 and 40 years old when interviewed, they represented three castes and only two out of twelve were literate. They had been trafficked between the ages of 13 and 35.

After being trafficked, they had spent between one week and four years at Indian brothels; eight women in Mumbai, two in Kolkata, one in Delhi and one in Shreenagar.

After being rescued, five of the informants now earned their living as prostitutes, one was a housewife, one had her own shop and five were at a rehab centre. The W/G at the rehab centre were younger (aged 16–18) than the women living outside the centre.

All the women were trafficked from districts close to Kathmandu. Even though most of the informants came from poor backgrounds, their socio-economic background varied from extreme poverty, e.g. when the father had abandoned the family and the mother was struggling hard before she eventually died and the children could never go to school, to moderate economic status with the possibility of sending all their children to school.

Most of the W/G were single, either due to their young age (not yet married) or divorced or widowed. However, by no means all of them came from fragmented families and some of them described their families as supportive and harmonious.

What factors motivate W/G for trafficking?

Most W/G were tricked into being trafficked. The most commonly used bait was the promise of a nice job in Kathmandu or abroad, with a good salary so they could buy “nice clothes” and eat “good food”.

The trafficker, who in ten out of the twelve cases was a person known to the W/G, usually spent time and effort in building a good relationship with the W/G before taking them with him or her. In the present study, traffickers represented both sexes to almost the same extent.

I was working as a caretaker in a house in Kathmandu. That was a good job, but they fooled me by saying that they would arrange good work with a good salary for me. We could eat and dress nicely...“Do not worry...we will help you”...they said. We were all together three girls...They used to give us snacks
and behave like caring persons for two weeks before we left for Butwal.

Routes and means for trafficking

We can see from the map (Figure 1) that the traffickers used various routes to take the victims to Indian brothels. Though the victims, as stated in cases 1 and 2, were living in districts near the Indian border, they passed through various other towns in Nepal before they crossed the border to India.

Figure 1. Routes used in trafficking from Nepal

The traffickers used public vehicles, mainly intercity buses, to reach the Indian border points. A majority of the victims reported that they were fairly treated during the transportation within Nepal. Only three out of twelve victims were given drugs that made them drowsy on the way. When the victims were crossing the Nepal-India border, the majority (eight out of twelve) reported that there was no inquiry made by the
border security forces about their journey. One victim reported that she was very sleepy and could not remember the inquiry at the border. The remaining three victims gave misinformation about the relationship between themselves and the traffickers to the security personnel, as they had been instructed or threatened to do by the traffickers. Once they had crossed the border, the common means of transportation in all cases was train followed by a local vehicle to the final destinations in different parts of India.

As suggested by my husband, I went to his new posting place with his friend from my home in Morang. My in-laws saw me off. That man told me that it would be easy to go to that place through the Indian border, so we went to India by bus. On the way, though I was resisting, he gave me some drug to prevent me from vomiting, after which I felt sleepy. There we took a train. I had a huge luggage, mainly my husband’s army uniforms and other personal belongings. I was told by other travelers later that he told the security personnel in the train that he was my husband and that he worked for the Nepal Army.

After arrival at their final destinations, not all of the W/G were taken directly to a brothel. Three were first brought to a local hotel where the human trade between the traffickers and the brothel owners took place.

One of the young survivors (13 years old when trafficked) claimed that the woman who came to pick her up at the train station in Haryana explained to her clearly about her duty at the brothel. When she refused, she was taken to another woman who also sought her consent. Later she was taken a long way from Haryana to Kolkata where she was sold to a brothel.

Another young girl, also 13 years old at the time of trafficking, was not accepted by the brothel owner as she looked too small. She was kept with another lady in her apartment for a year and a half until she reached menarche. The lady was feeding her frequently and giving her vitamins and other supplements to accelerate her physical growth.

Life at the brothel

Life at the brothel was described as a prison, where the W/G instantly and at any time of the day or night had to obey the brothel owner (who was often a woman, and sometimes Nepalese) and her “guards” (male or female). If they refused or did not act appropriately they were severely punished, often by physical means, e.g. being deprived of food, burned with cigarettes or hit with hard objects.
When I resisted they called a few gangsters who hit me severely in my face, chest, and abdomen and broke my wrist with a big stick. They did not take me to the hospital, but only did first aid treatment in the brothel which deformed my hand. (She showed us various swellings on her body.)

Their working hours usually started after lunch and continued until well after midnight. They were treated as objects: "They stick numbers on the door and the boys came according to the numbers..." The W/G had to look attractive so they would attract many customers every day.

There is a so-called sitting room to select girls. The owners force the girls to be attractive and attract clients. They have to act happy and smiling. The room is of low height. The girls have to get made-up and smart and should stay in the sitting room from three until midnight. The gharawali (brothel owner) hits the girls with a bottle of beer, with a stick, and passes electricity into their bodies if the girls refuse to work, if they cannot earn much or if they attempt to run away...

Most of the girls did not realise that they had left Nepal or that they had been brought to a brothel even when they arrived there.

They kept us in different rooms in the same brothel and made us satisfy the customers on the same day (as they arrived)........ Only then I realised that it was a brothel....When I disobeyed...they hit my cheek very hard and burned my neck and chin with cigarettes......So I had to satisfy four to five customers every day. That place was like a living hell.

Most W/G were not allowed to leave the house, and a few of them did not understand where they were until later on they were able to ask someone.

I was not aware...I asked another Nepalese girl who was staying in that place about the person who brought me there. She told me that I had been sold by that person, and that now it wasn’t possible to leave the brothel. I begged her to help me run...and she told me that if I did that, they would kill me...beat and stab me. So she made me just curse my fate.
The rescue

All participants described the Indian brothels as being like prisons. The owners of the brothels were usually sitting at the main entrance and other guards were always around. The doors were locked during their time off, and opened only early in the morning by the guard to bring in water and groceries. Then all the girls were usually sleeping. If the toilet was located outside the brothel, the guard used to open the door and escort the girls to the toilet. Thus it was very difficult to escape without meticulous planning or good luck.

However, two survivors fled from the market place with the support of the brothel guards, and four were rescued by customers. One rescuer was a Nepalese policeman who went to the brothel as a customer and rescued three Nepalese girls. Another customer paid compensation to the brothel owner and then took the girl to Nepal.

My husband used to come to that brothel (as a customer)...but not regularly.....He fell in love with me and wanted to marry me...He said that it was a bad place and that I had to move from there before I got some dangerous disease. My husband paid money to the brothel owner and we returned to Nepal. We came directly to Kathmandu and we got married...

Some escapes were more dramatic:

After analysing the situation, he told me to come to a nearby bridge exactly at nine o’clock one day...I was excited and waiting for that day. We were about to eat around nine in the brothel. I pretended that it was urgent to go to the toilet. The toilet was outside the building, on the corner...I ran away from the gate to the bridge. He was waiting for me with another friend on a motorbike. They put me in the middle, between them on the motorbike, and drove away immediately like in a film...They were worried about where they could keep me that night...One of them made a phone call to his mother from his mobile, and asked for her permission to bring me for a night to their home...We had a meal and I slept well...They gave me seven thousand rupees for the bus fare and clothes...They accompanied me to the railway station and guided me all the way to Nepal. That boy was acting as if he had fallen in love with me. He said they would come to Kathmandu in two years time to see me. I don’t know if they came or not! I do not have their address. Now I am married...
One survivor left the brothel in her night-gown when she realised that no one was following her to the toilet.

I will never forget that day. The owner was busy chatting with her brother. They were sitting in the guestroom drinking beer; I looked quietly out of the door. The other girls were also busy inside their rooms. The demons (the guards) were gossiping... Otherwise they would have locked the door when I went to the toilet. I thought that was my best chance to run away, and I started to get down the ladder very fast. There was a big local store outside the brothel. I was terrified when I entered that store and hid there. I started to weep desperately, and the shop owners asked me why I was crying. I told them everything that had happened to me...I told them that I had to return to Nepal because my two small children were waiting for me...Then the brothel owner came in looking for me and asked them if they had seen me. They said no. They gave me food and some money and instructions about how to get to the train station and then to Nepal. I was very lucky to escape from that hell.

Another survivor escaped by cutting the railings of a window. The remaining four survivors were rescued by the police force that came to raid the brothels. As they were less than 18 years old, they were taken to shelter homes owned by the Indian government, where they stayed for between six and twenty-two months. There they were given various kinds of vocational training and education before they were transferred back to Nepal in coordination with the Nepalese police and NGOs.

**Coming home**

The relief of finally returning home to Nepal was often clouded by difficulties. Only one of the women we interviewed had been able go directly back home to her family. She was well accepted by her husband and in-laws, but she had to face a lot of resistance from other community members. Though she was well received at her husband’s house, she later decided to leave as she realised that her husband was also to blame for her being trafficked.

Yes, they (villagers) asked....but I explained to them. I told the truth. I told them that as suggested by my husband I went with his friend and I was trapped. They do not say anything in front of me, but I know they talk a lot behind my back. But my family members are good to me.......Now I have been living in Kathmandu since last year. I left my husband because I am doubtful
about his role in this. Because of him, I went with his friend and he took me to the brothel. I do not like him because of that... he may be connected with the traffickers, I think, though the policemen couldn’t prove it. I am running a small business now and managing to keep myself and a small child though it is very hard.

The reintegration process seemed to be especially difficult when the survivor came from a dysfunctional family or had no place to return to. Only the underage survivors had the opportunity to stay at rehabilitation centres run by NGOs. In our study, five survivors were staying in such a rehabilitation centre. One survivor who was rescued by a customer married him when they returned to Nepal. At the time of the interview her husband was in prison for some alleged drug-related crime, and she had gone back to prostitution to sustain herself and support her husband in prison.

What can I do? I do not have any skills....I have to bring food to my husband in prison every day, otherwise he will starve... what can I do? I had no way to survive...I had to start the same work. I tried to find other jobs, but I couldn’t find...If I get a job, I will leave this work immediately......I do not know how long I will have to do this...

Four survivors could not be reintegrated into their families or communities. They were living with their children in Kathmandu. Prostitution was the only source of income for them, and they were hiding the fact of their profession from their children and close friends. They had not been able to disclose their history of trafficking to other people.

When I returned from India, I went to my village, to my mother. My children were with her. We were in debt, so I had to come to Kathmandu to earn money and pay back that debt. I also brought my two sons with me. In Kathmandu, I worked in a Madwari’s (a businessman cast) home and I did all things like washing dishes, clothes...... But I could not stay because I had the responsibility to raise my sons and I was earning too little money. I went to Ratna Park (in the city centre). There were girls waiting for customers. I stood there beside them. A boy came and asked a girl to go with him. She demanded 700 rupees and the boy went away with her. I followed them to Bagbazar (a busy street near Ratna Park) and then I returned back to Ratna Park. A drunken person came and asked me to go with him to have sex. I asked him about place and money. He was
ready to go to Bagbazar and pay 500 rupees. He gave me 500 and also added 100 rupees for the bus fare home. That's how I started this work. Now, I have friends here. I come here at ten and return home at six or seven. My sons do not know where I go and what I do. They go to school.

Discussion

This study shows that W/G fall prey to the actions of traffickers when they go in search of a better life for themselves and their families. Traffickers’ networks used different propaganda to lure W/G into trafficking. At the brothel, life was reduced to one purpose: “how to satisfy the brothel’s customers.” The W/G’s personal experiences and feelings, desires and rights were denied by the widespread use of violence against them. Threats or physical punishment, mental torture and deprivation were common experiences of all of the survivors. The survivors revealed that their experiences were usually kept a secret both during and after trafficking.

Furthermore, W/G who had escaped from brothels on their own were rarely offered a place in rehabilitation centres. Disrupted reintegration processes caused further suffering among survivors and left them unable to support themselves. When the reintegration failed, prostitution could be the only choice for W/G once rescued after being trafficked to India. Successful reintegration necessarily includes minimising the extreme stigma attached to W/G who have been trafficked and forced to work in prostitution.

The trafficking of W/G for non-sexual purposes and the trafficking of males is not covered in this article. This study focused only on survivors’ perspectives and did not obtain data from the traffickers in jails or from the brothels’ owners.

The general arguments regarding the factors that give impetus to the trafficking of W/G from Nepal encompasses a wide range of factors related to place of origin, presence of traffickers and their network, border control and the high demand for sex labour in Indian brothels. In this context, contact with alleged traffickers gives W/G a ray of hope for materialising their desire for a better life; especially when traffickers appear to be sympathetic, caretakers and good travel companions. It is also generally argued that there is a nexus between corrupt police administrations, traffickers and brothel owners, and a lack of effective action to break such a nexus by the State. In the place of origin, it appears that the migration decisions of W/G and their trafficking is an interface between
economic hardship, the desire for better work and a better life, and pressure on W/G to sustain their families.

Coming home from the brothels is like reincarnation into a new life to the survivors as per their perception which was made possible by the help of police and NGOs, kind-hearted customers or their own attempts to flee. But the next difficult story begins when they reach home because of the problem of reintegration. This is also consistent with previous studies; trauma is often complicated by societal refusal upon their return from the brothels (Foundation, 2001, “Child Trafficking in Nepal, an Assessment of the Present Situation”, 2003). Survivors know who the traffickers were, but their reputation for cruelty, and the failure of the police and legal system to enforce the law, contributes to creating a sense that there is no point in making official reports.

What measures are used to promote reintegration, and improve the effectiveness of rehabilitation? How can survivors left out from rehabilitation and reintegration programmes be reached? These are urgent issues for future studies. The treacherous path that leads people into the situation of being trafficked also requires much more in-depth research and understanding. There are no studies, even at the village level, that examine trends of trafficking in Nepal (ADB, 2002).

In this regard, comprehensive studies are yet to be carried out to investigate the current state of the phenomenon and the effects of socio-economic and anti-trafficking programmes on W/G trafficking. All concerned stakeholders believe that the magnitude of W/G trafficking is increasing tremendously in Nepal, and our study shows that the routes and means of trafficking have also extended. Therefore, it is urgent to focus more on the ethnographic aspects of the trafficking phenomenon which can help to better understand the trafficking nexus and its impact on the community and whole society (Masud Ali, 2005; Kelly, 2002; Nelson, 2004).

During the last two decades, Nepal has made significant improvements in policy formulation and in designing anti-trafficking programmes, and has been committed to implementing new laws. Still, the prevailing facts show that trafficking is a growing problem. The question is how this situation can prevail in Nepal where more stringent anti-trafficking laws and regulations have been enforced and expanded trafficking prevention programmes are in operation. One side of the argument posits that the present state mechanism is aware of the problem but is not strong enough to deal with it properly. If this is the case, then another question naturally arises: have the efforts of more than two decades of anti-trafficking programmes been in vain? The hypothesis that there is a nexus of corrupt state mechanisms, networks of trafficking and brothel owners
should also be assessed in terms of how this nexus is accountable for the failure to handle the problem properly. Without the reintegration of survivors into their families and society, the attitudes towards survivors will not be changed. It is urgent to conduct in-depth research on the trafficking phenomenon to better understand this problem, to dismantle its networks and carry out effective preventive activities to prevent W/G trafficking from Nepal.

Summary

This paper studies the factors motivating and nurturing the trafficking of W/G from Nepal and aims to identify the routes used for trafficking, the methods used to rescue trafficked W/G from the brothels and the reintegration process as perceived by W/G.

We interviewed fourteen trafficking survivors, aged 16–40 years. Eight were living independently in various parts of Kathmandu Valley, and six were currently staying at a rehabilitation centre. Semi-structured interviews based on an interview guide were conducted and digitally recorded. Twelve interviews could be included, were transcribed verbatim, translated into English and analysed using thematic content analysis.

We found that the traffickers spent time and effort in building a good relationship with the W/G before taking them away and that the most commonly used enticement was a nice job with a good salary. They used mainly public vehicles to go to the Indian brothels. W/G described life at the brothel as a prison, where they had to obey the brothel owner and her guards, otherwise they were severely punished, often by physical means. Their experiences were described as sex slavery and “a life in hell”. Rescue and reintegration of the trafficking survivors emerged in the interviews as a difficult task.

References


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PART III: THE MEDIA AND GENDERED VIOLENCE
Chapter 7
“Porn Chic” – An Underlying Cause of Gendered Violence in Intimate Relationships? An Update

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Introduction: What is “Porn Chic”? 

Western culture is currently experiencing a thoroughgoing sexualisation and pornification. The boundaries between pornography and mainstream culture are vanishing; pornography is fast becoming our “cultural wallpaper” (Scott and Sarracino, 2008: 47; see also Amsden, 2007). In 2002, McNair called this process “Porno Chic”, or Porn Chic which describes the cultural process by which pornography enters into our everyday lives (McNair, 2002). It signals “the infiltration of representations of pornography into mass culture, thereby becoming an accepted, even idealized, cultural element of the mainstream” (Nicola Steffen, cited by Harvey, 2007: 68). New media have played a major part in fuelling this process as developments in communication technologies facilitate the access to and distribution of pornographic content. Today, Porn Chic is discernible throughout our culture and across all media forms; it is highly visible in art, popular culture and advertising, and in particular at the heart of youth culture: The song lyrics, stage costumes and dance choreographies of performing artists such as Lady Gaga or The Pussycat Dolls are highly sexualised.

“Celebrity Culture” has played a big part in the increasing pressure on young girls and women to look good. The promulgated beauty ideal is unrealistic, as it is largely nourished by airbrushed images of women who invest a lot of time and money in their appearance. In addition to that, looking good nowadays means imitating the physique of a porn star, another of the various manifestations of Porn Chic. But the eerie resemblance to porn stars goes further: Teenagers are now producing and distributing pornographic material via social networking sites and mobile phones (“sexting”). As a consequence, the gap between porn star and everyone (young people included!) is closing.
These developments have not only changed our visual habits and moral norms, but they have also brought about profound changes in gender roles. It is children and young people who face the greatest challenges in being confronted by and dealing with the mass of sexual information. The pressure to conform to this, to perform displays of sexual freedom, thereby constructing a highly attractive and sexual persona, is believed to have contributed to a rise in mental health problems amongst young people – this may be associated with violence in intimate relationships, as I will demonstrate later. And there are other potential areas for friction.

The not-so-rigid-anymore gender roles permit the expansion of phenomena such as gender b(l)ending, metrosexuality and a general camping up of mainstream culture. Men too are now subjecting themselves to cosmetic surgery, and the proportion of men who suffer from “bigorexia” (muscle dysmorphia), “manorexia” (male version of anorexia nervosa), or bulimia is rising. These challenges to male identity, a “crisis of masculinity” (McNair, 2002: 19), have led to some men feeling threatened and reverting back to traditional gender roles – the “New Lad” (McNair, 2002: 159) – whose simple pleasures include beer, “birds” and football (McNair, 2002: 159); it comes as no surprise that such a man’s view of women is an objectifying one. Advertising and product development have reacted to this with provocative and aggressively marketed products such as “lads’ mags” (e.g. Loaded, Nuts and Zoo) which cater for these interests.

Another major problem with the current situation is that the sexualisation, like pornography, is gender specific, meaning, on this occasion, that it is constructed from a male perspective – “gendered sexualisation” or “hetero-pornification” (Ringrose, 2009). This leads girls and young women to do certain things they believe will impress boys and men, like simulating oral sex and kissing other girls – “bisexual” or “lesbian chic” (Levy, 2005). However, this behaviour is merely the result of a defence or reaction to pornography; and there are many problems connected with it.

Even more worrying is the fact that, as the sexualisation progresses, increasingly younger audiences are targeted; the concept of childhood almost seems to be disappearing, as nowadays a ten-year-old girl may wear the same – highly sexualised – clothes as a 40-year-old woman. The consequences for children of this early sexualisation are as yet unknown. Due to the sensitivity of the subject, research with young people is very limited. Nevertheless, there is strong evidence that the co-mingling of childhood, sexuality and womanhood has alarming consequences: Viewing women who are made up to look like young girls (as in high fash-
ion photography and pornography) conditions men to view children – outside of a sexual context – in a sexual manner (McDermott, 2009). Moreover, it is feared that this early sexualisation may “groom” children for paedophiles (cf. Rush and La Nauze, 2006: 21; see also Dines, 2010; Singer et al., 2007: 35), and some academics believe it to be only a matter of time before paedophilia and incest, two of the few sexual taboos that remain in our society, will cease to exist (Rüdiger Lautmann, after Scott and Sarracino, 2008: 86).

As the retreat of institutional forces frees individuality, the quest to discover one’s identity has shifted from working life to private life. The self is shaped in a sexualising culture, where sexuality is crucial to defining who and what you are. Considering that 8 to 18 year olds spend a whopping average of 7:38 hours a day engaging with media (this only includes being online, games consoles and TV) (Rideout et al., 2010), the influence of the media on children can be considered more crucial than ever. In the light of the shift of paradigm towards a culture of primarily visual orientation, the so-called “pictorial turn” (Mitchell, 1997), more research on visual content is needed.

Original hypothesis

After moving to the UK in 2003, I noticed an increase in the quantity and acuteness of the pornification of English culture which also seemed more pronounced compared to other European countries. The beauty regimes and lifestyle choices of teenagers and young people being so heavily influenced by the porn industry, in turn, brings with it a whole range of issues. One of the consequences feared by scholars such as Gail Dines is that fewer women are considered “porn-worthy” – they have to choose: to compete and be “fuckable” or refuse the trend and risk being “invisible” (Dines, 2010). My research on Porn Chic (Steffen, forthcoming) supports the claims that pornography can indeed influence appearance, behaviour and attitudes.

Against this background, I started wondering whether the rise of Porn Chic was one of the reasons for England’s teenagers being sexually more active and having sex earlier than any other teenagers in Europe, and for the rise in alcohol and drug consumption as well as violence that goes along with it (Barter et al., 2009; Plant et al., forthcoming 2011). Therefore my research interest shifted towards the pornification and sexualisation of English society and in particular the sexualisation of children and young people (Steffen, 2010). The initial hypothesis for my project at GEXcel therefore was: Certain tendencies in Western culture (English in particular), such as the sexualisation and pornification of the mainstream (“Porn Chic”) as well as the (relative) increase in violence
in the media and in pornography, result in a dangerous concoction that contributes to the occurrence of violence in intimate relationships. As the pornification of culture conditions men to look at women with a pornographic gaze, this brings with it a certain degree of objectification that reinforces men’s tendency to see and treat women as inferior. This, in turn, promotes violence. Violence has, of course, always existed, and its occurrence in our culture is relatively low compared to other times and places, but my theory is that certain factors characteristic of current postmodern society act as amplifiers/catalysts, and maybe the pornification of mainstream culture is one of them.

Refining my research questions

Having worked on the project for a couple of weeks, as well as having attended presentations during the week of the GEXcel conference on “Violences and Silences” and having exchanged views with fellow researchers, I realised that the topic was too broad and too complex and I split it into two more specific topics – 1) (Pornography and) violence, and 2) (Pornography and) childhood. Working titles were formulated:

1. “A Content Analysis of Internet Pornography: Are Violent Images Increasing and Are They Mirrored in the Phenomenon of ‘Porn Chic’?”

2. “Intersections between Childhood and Pornography – Childified Porn, Child Pornography and Children’s Exposure to Pornography”

So far, I have only delved into the first question, though I have done some research on the sexualisation and pornification of children and young people (see Steffen, 2010). Following Wosnitzer et al.’s study (2006) which one of the authors, Chyng Sun, presented at the conference, I decided – as a first step – to conduct a similar analysis of popular internet pornography to see if the claim is true that there has been a sharp increase in extreme/violent porn. Recent developments in technology (“digital revolution”, “Web 2.0”) have led to an enormous expansion of pornography and to its differentiation into (more) subgroups which is especially beneficial for alternative pornography; this is believed to have resulted in a rise of both violent pornography and amateur porn (Scott and Sarracino, 2008: 157). In the last few years, hard-core pornography (particularly on the internet) seems to have gravitated towards degradation and humiliation, with subgenres such as “Pinkeye”, “Ass-to-Mouth” (“ATM”) and “Vivisection Porn” (cf. Scott and Sarracino, 2008: 157). On a different level, human suffering and death which were traditionally granted the protection of privacy, have now entered the public
sphere (via reality TV, etc.) as the private sphere is rapidly disintegrating. Violence is therefore not only more visible in pornography but also in media such as television and video games. But what I want to look at is mainstream pornography; I am not referring to subgenres such as BDSM or intersecting genres between pornography and horror (e.g. “torture porn”) or images of real violence and conflict (“warporn”) (cf. Attwood, 2009); for the issue is not the wide spectrum of images that can be found on the internet – since its very beginnings it contained extreme images from bestiality to child porn – rather, this study analyses what images the “average” user may come across when browsing for porn.

To find out what this might be, I used a “common sense” approach by typing “porn” into google.com. The first site that came up was www.pornhub.com. This is a way in which many users will attempt to find pornography and this is (currently) the top site they will be directed to. Pornhub is the second most popular pornographic site on the internet (http://www.alexa.com/siteinfo/pornhub.com, 2010). Visitors from the USA make up 28.4% of its viewers. The UK and France follow with 4.9% each (http://www.alexa.com/siteinfo/pornhub.com, 2010; Pardon, 2010). I have so far analysed 30 clips and aim for a total of 50 to match the samples used in similar studies. The results presented here are therefore only to be regarded as preliminary.

The reason for choosing popular pornography on the internet is because of its growth and expansion – bringing with it anonymity, accessibility and affordability. The internet will soon overtake the video market which so far has been the biggest outlet for pornography. User-generated “Porn 2.0” sites in particular, such as Pornhub, are quickly outranking other pornographic websites requiring subscription, as well as magazines and DVDs (Ayres, 2007; Swartz, 2007). I’m thereby acting upon Mehta and Plaza’s appeal to investigate whether the increasing commercialisation of the internet has led to a change in the type of pornography that is available (Mehta and Plaza, 1997: 65), at the same time providing an important update on existing content studies. With regards to content and effects, popular and frequently viewed pornography, such as the kind circulated on Pornhub, is likely to have the biggest impact on individuals and society as a whole due to its quantity – I agree with Wosnitzer et al. and McKee that it is important “to analyze not only what is available to consumers but also what they are really watching” (Wosnitzer et al., 2006: 22; see also McKee, 2005).
Previous content analyses

The closest parallels to the research at hand are previous content analyses of pornographic videos. Other forms of media that have been subject to content analysis include magazines and the internet. Regarding the prevalence of violence, there are differences between media: Prevalence varies between 3% in cartoons (Scott and Cuvelier’s analysis of magazine pornography, 1993) and 42% in Usenet scenes (Barron and Kimmell, 2000).

In the most recent content analysis, beside Wosnitzer et al.’s, McKee (2005) merged the best-seller lists of the two major adult mail-order companies; he also conducted a study with more than 1,000 Australian users of pornography. The first measures were: stereotypes, reciprocity, initiating sex, number of orgasms in each scene, kinds of sex acts, kinds of sex acts causing orgasms, time spent talking to other characters, time spent looking at the camera and time spent talking to the camera. Violence was measured, including both physical and verbal acts. McKee found no bestiality, no child porn and little violence. He claims that most of the few scenes that contained violence were in videos that were explicitly marketed to women. His findings concluded that “women were no more objectified than men in the mainstream of pornography” (McKee, 2005: 288).

Wosnitzer et al.’s content analysis of popular pornography

Wosnitzer et al. (2006), however, came to a very different conclusion: In their content analysis of popular pornography, they analysed a total of 304 scenes from 50 films of the most frequently-rented pornography film titles as deduced from several video rental lists. They coded characters – race, gender; aggressive acts (verbal, physical) – gender of perpetrator and target, response of target to aggression, positive behaviour (e.g. kissing, caressing, compliments), use of condoms, sex acts (vaginal, anal, oral in all its combinations, double penetration (DP)) and ejaculation position. I added other “notable things” such as a particularly loving or degrading atmosphere, props like children’s toys, etc. Another difference to Wosnitzer et al.’s study was the coding of female orgasm which I counted towards positive behaviour. Finally, I included “oral” in the category of DP-variations as it is a penetrative act just like vaginal or anal, and I don’t see any difference in terms of its possible degrading nature; if anything, the opposite is true.

My preliminary results match Wosnitzer et al.’s (cf. Wosnitzer et al., 2006: 17 ff.), with a few notable exceptions: Physical aggression is
featured in 88% of their analysed scenes, in my study it was less than 50%, of which more than 90% was (light) slapping (compared to 14% of Wosnitzer et al.’s findings). Positive behaviour was only present in 10% of their scenes, but in approximately 75% of mine. DP (vaginal/anal) was present in 95% of Wosnitzer et al.’s sample but only in about 30% of mine (50% if you take the inclusion of “oral” into account).

The “unequivocal rise of aggression in pornography” found in Wosnitzer et al.’s study is not reflected in this study. A further rise in aggression was expected due to the nature of the medium, i.e. internet. The rather “average” occurrence of violence in comparison to other studies and the high percentage of positive behaviour in my study is notable. I still need to consult with the authors to eliminate methodological errors/deviations in order to substantiate these claims.

A comparison by Wosnitzer et al. of the sexual practices observed in pornography with those prevalent in “real life” reveal, at least partly which practices observed in pornography are normative and which are not. Interestingly, those sexual practices found to be frequent in popular pornography, such as anal sex, are “rare in real life and are desired by neither men nor women” (Laumann et al., 1994; Wosnitzer et al., 2006: 1). Unfortunately, questions about particularly “non-normative” practices were not posed in Laumann et al.’s study, so the prevalence of all of the acts that can be observed in pornography – such as ATM and DP – cannot be compared to the prevalence of real life acts. It is worth mentioning, though, that Sun et al. are currently conducting an international study on sexuality and pornography that promises to fill this gap.

Many Words, Same Meaning?

Research has largely targeted the effects of pornography consumption; there is little research on the actual content of pornography. The current state of research is inconclusive in terms of the exact nature of any effects (and other areas of research, too), even conflicting (this is in part due to unscientific research methods in the past), and there is little agreement even over basic statistics such as user demographics. Apart from problems with terminology and methodology (which at times have been unsystematic, subjective and ad hoc), some studies have focused on certain genres whilst others used random sampling methods which limit the generalisability, as these samples are mostly too small to be reliable. The long-running discussion within the research community about whether pornography is “good” or “bad” seems never-ending.

There is, however, general agreement among researchers that exposure to non-violent pornography has no negative effects on consumers (see for instance Donnerstein et al., 1987). On the other hand, according
to Wosnitzer et al., if degradation is present this encourages dominant behaviour towards women (Mulac et al., 2002), it causes men to evaluate their partners more harshly (Jansma et al., 1997) and to display a more negative attitude towards women or sex (Zillmann, 1989; Zillmann and Bryant, 1982), as well as the presence of degradation increasing the likelihood of coercive sex (Check and Gulioien, 1989) (all after Wosnitzer et al., 2006). There is also reason to believe that pornography is more likely to have a negative impact on consumers if it contains aggression (e.g. Donnerstein et al., 1987; Linz et al., 1987).

Central to many debates about pornography is the matter of aggression and degradation (Wosnitzer et al., 2006: 3). Synonyms for “degradation” (cf. Cowan and Campbell, 1994) include “objectification” (Dines et al., 1998) “dehumanization” (Monk-Turner and Purcell, 1999), and “domination” (Barron and Kimmel, 2000). There is disagreement in the research community not only over the exact definitions of these terms, but also as to how they relate to one another. Moreover, there are great variations in their occurrence in different types of media. It is therefore difficult to make comparisons between previous content analyses (and other types of research).

Potential problems of “Porn Chic” and Pornography

Firstly, there is the issue of objectification (in both pornography and Porn Chic) which may promote violence, as discussed in the introduction. Linked to this, the predominantly favourable response of the victim to a violent or aggressive act, as can be observed in popular pornography, is very likely to have a negative effect on consumers (e.g. Donnerstein et al., 1987). Social cognitive theory suggests that whether an individual will be influenced by aggression in a media text depends largely on whether or not the act was rewarded or punished. In light of the overall favourable reactions of the victims, one can reason that viewers learn that aggression during a sexual encounter is pleasure-enhancing, and, as a consequence, there is reason to believe that these men may be more likely to show aggression against their own, real-life partners (Bandura, 1994). Others fear sexual violence towards women (Krome, 2003; Ray Wyre, after Marriott, 2003), sexual abuse (Hamilton, 2004) and sexual crime (Marriott, 2003) as a result. Wyre claims that pornography legitimises the distorted views of sex offenders, and that they present it in order to excuse their behaviour and justify their actions (Ray Wyre, after Marriott, 2003). Coffman even claims that pornography may have an influence in some acts of murder (Coffman, 2004). However, as with any potential effects of pornography, its links with sexual crime continue to be much argued-over and controversial.
Secondly, current research provides evidence that a number of mental health problems affecting women, including issues surrounding academic performance, self-esteem, eating disorders and depression can be linked to violence (cf. Flood, 2009). This can be regarded as a direct result of the objectification of women – objectification virtually rules out the ability to empathise with the person involved. And low self-esteem is closely linked to the acceptance of victimisation.

Last but not least, there is evidence that the violence portrayed in (mainstream) pornography is creating or influencing sexual scripts in that certain men wish to re-enact practices observed in pornography with their partners. This, too, has the potential to cause problems. On the one hand – as concern increases that degradation/extreme porn is becoming the norm – acts that were rarely observed a decade ago are now porn staples: DP, gagging and ejaculation in the face, eyes and mouth – it is feared that harder material is needed to keep viewers excited and that all pornography will end up with BDSM. With regard to the sexual scripts, this means that the practices men want to re-enact are increasingly non-normative in nature (see above comparison of “real life” practices with practices observed in pornography) – they become more degrading and violent.

But even on a more common, everyday level, “[l]ost in a world of pornographic fantasy” (Marriott, 2003: 46), men are in danger of becoming less able and less inclined to maintain relationships with women. The underlying message of pornography – ever-available women, shallow, transient relationships – is, at least in part, responsible. To understand the appeal of pornography for men, and perhaps more importantly the emergence of degradation, one has to look at the current notion of masculinity. This is characterised by uncertainties and challenges to the male identity due to the breaking up of rigid gender roles (see “crisis of masculinity” in the introduction). Marriott explains: “Unlike real life, the pornographic world is a place in which men find their authority unchallenged and in which women are their willing, even grateful servants” (Marriott, 2003: 46). He continues: “Running like a watermark through all pornography use, according to [David] Morgan at the Portman Clinic, is the desire for control” (Marriott, 2003: 46).

Questions and further research

There is an abundance of paths that can be followed for further research. Some more specific questions that should be looked into are:

1. Are there differences between media with regard to gender and objectification, e.g. art, film, advertising, fashion and pornography?
2. What about differences in various subgenres of pornography such as amateur porn, BDSM or even gay porn?

3. A qualitative single case analysis of a highly popular, frequently viewed pornographic clip might be helpful to grasp the finer nuances of violence (and also affection and positive behaviour, respectively), as there is a danger of methodological shortcomings in relying on quantitative studies alone.

Conclusion

The intersection between pornography and culture provides many interesting research topics. Pornography, especially in connection with gender relations, is a highly relevant field of study, because it is so widely viewed. Almost a decade ago, Frank Rich made an interesting observation which today is truer than ever before: Porn is “no longer a sideshow to the mainstream [...] it is the mainstream” (Rich, 2001: 51). The Porn Industry is a major industry; each year more than 10,000 hardcore pornographic films are produced in Los Angeles, compared to just 400 Hollywood movies. The majority of young men use pornography on a regular basis, and the number of women doing likewise is growing (Kolbeins, 2006: 127; see also Carroll et al., 2008). Therefore it is high time that pornography lost its stigma, not only in culture but also in academia as a highly relevant and serious research topic. The violence in pornography is an issue that needs to be monitored by scholars, as its effects are not to be underestimated; a whole lot more research is needed.

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A report on television in Romania published by the Open Society Institute decries the “tabloidisation” and “trivialisation” that are currently pulling Romanian television away from the realm of “serious” politics into “non-events, that is, events that are irrelevant to the wider community such as … cases of domestic violence” (Open Society Institute, 2005: 1235–1236). The authors’ position might be considered an accurate reflection of the indifference with which the issues of domestic and gendered violence are met in mainstream politics in Romania, to the extent that they dismiss both the social reality of domestic violence and its media representations as bearing no relevance to a larger social context. I claim, however, that these “trivial” matters of “tabloid” representations are an important site for the understanding of various discourses shaping contemporary Romanian society, given the role that television has in creating meaning and as an influential shaper of public opinion. With this in mind, and also as a feminist intervention, not least in response to the above-mentioned report’s example of the representation of domestic violence as a matter of social irrelevance, I turn towards the overarching question of this paper: how are gendered violence, its victims and perpetrators represented on Romanian television? The question is further complicated by the background of a documented widespread acceptance of violence against women, in its many forms, in Romania and by statistics that indicate the ubiquity of gendered, especially domestic, violence across all social and ethnic groups. It is against this background that the question must be tackled in terms of looking to identify a politics of representation of gendered violence which has “a formative, not merely an expressive, place in the constitution of social and political life” (Hall, 1996: 444). Although this paper is grounded in research about Romanian television, as a critical and analytical intervention it aims to avoid
the pitfall of particularism (Lykke, 2004) by claiming that its scope carries significance for other cultural and political contexts.

The way in which I intend to establish the mechanisms of representation of stereotypical perpetrators and victims of gendered violence is by examining a controversial reality show on Romanian television, *Emergency Counsellor* which I consider symptomatic of the way in which the media approach cases of gendered and domestic abuse: i.e., a spectacular re-working of a routine phenomenon, exploited for its shock value, but with no concern for it as a social issue. This programme is one of many subjecting various interpersonal relationships to the penetrating gaze of the expert, where television becomes a new medium of governance with a “civilising” mission through self-surveillance (Wood & Skeggs, 2008; Andrejevic, 2004; Palmer, 2004); but the only one organised entirely around cases of domestic abuse. My analysis here draws on a body of feminist cultural and media scholarship, most notably the work of Helen Wood and Beverly Skeggs on the re-production of class relations in British reality television, a genre that they recognise as being attuned to neoliberal modes of interpellation, especially through “the promotion of self-management as a form of pedagogy” (Wood & Skeggs, 2008: 178).

For the purposes of this paper, I will examine several compelling features of *Emergency Counsellor*, revealing how the politics of representation of gendered violence is actually dictated by the convergence of “systems of race, gender and class domination” (Crenshaw, 1996: 363), and to discuss the implications of such representations in the wider context of contemporary Romanian society.

My analytical intervention is projected against the landscape of post-socialist television which, in its various genres, forms and formats, is a major actor in the neoliberal scenarios and anti-communist backlash scripting Romania’s endless “transition” to an indefinite and elusive future as a “market economy”. A characteristic of post-1989 Romania, though not unique to it, is the intense circulation of the spectacle of physical, emotional or symbolic violence against the nation’s *others*: women, the Roma, the rural poor and the urban working class. I suggest that the representations of violence against these groups and their various intersections always take on gendered forms. Instances of prime time violence range from television shows that pit men against “blondes” in “intelligence” contests which the latter invariably fail to talk-shows where racialised women serve as soft porn “sidekicks” to the white male host and infotainment shows in which Roma men are presented in feminised or pathologically criminalised ways.

I will now turn my attention to *Emergency Counsellor*, a show situated somewhere towards the extreme in this continuum of violence, which
is also (but not solely for this reason) unusual in that it openly claims to have an “educational” function. It has a reality show format which, it has been argued, is one of modernity’s sites for the dramatic and emotional production of the moral self, through its concerns, mechanisms and modalities (Skeggs et al., 2003). The moral self that needs to be confirmed and re-constructed is the implicit “we” of the audience, defined against those represented onscreen, who often inhabit the abject spaces of modernity, both physically and morally (slums, peripheries, impoverished countryside; promiscuity, alcoholism, crime) (McClintock, 1995).

The “educational” design of this programme is well formulated by Irina Petrea, the psychologist who performs the role of expert on the show, and the “emergency counsellor” herself:

Yes, people hit and swear at each other on the show. Nobody is trying to sweep the dirt under the carpet, the children [in the family], as well as the adults know the situation all too well, and they are experiencing it live. But when one experiences this on a daily basis, one is no longer aware of what one is doing, it becomes routine. However, when you see it in other people, in all its ugliness, it functions as a mirror: you can recognise yourself in front of the television, and you can blush thoroughly, alone in your bedroom. [Emphasis mine] (Cotidianul, 22nd May 2008)

The “misunderstandings”, or “communication problems” as they are euphemistically referred to by the specialist, are, without exception, nothing short of severe cases of verbal, emotional and physical abuse committed by men against their partners/wives and their children. The representation of aggravated cases of violence poses an entire host of ethical issues, especially when the mediation of personal suffering is cashed in on for sensational effect and for profit. Moreover, the incidents of abuse that the programme builds on are always located in the home of the other (the rural poor, urban lower classes, Roma) which raises important questions regarding the underlying premises and political agendas involved in the production process. From this perspective, the “mirror of shame” that Irina Petrea refers to in her vision of the programme, becomes in fact a voyeuristic, objectifying window through which the moral “we”, good subjects of the audience, are invited to stand at a distance from the already marginalised. It seems here that Allen & Hill’s comment that “television not only represents social groups; it also helps to construct and maintain the norms and values through which society is ordered” (Allen & Hill, 2007: 367) resonates thoroughly. The normative effect of the programme is also visible in the way it seems to offer a “redemptive” narrative of transformation (transcending violence and passing
into moral selfhood), which is then invariably cancelled out. Gendered violence is used here to construct the other through a process of difference, deviance and threat, not only to the implicit “civilised” body of the nation, but also to themselves. That is why the other is in need of control, here embodied by the white, upper-middle class, properly feminine psychologist. The expert’s knowledge as well as the dynamics of class, ethnicity and gender play out in show’s scenario “to offer up a melancholic, endlessly prolonged possibility” (Ringrose & Walkerdine, 2008: 236) of transforming the abject into a subject which never actually takes place.

One might say that perhaps the appeal to the audience to recognise themselves in the educational mirror of the television screen is a brave attempt at inclusive representation, especially in a Romanian public sphere currently animated by intensely racist anti-Roma debates. However, on closer inspection, this premise fails to stand: the violence and othering of the protagonists are fetishised for entertainment purposes; their inclusion is “objectifying and voyeuristic” and “at least as disempowering as complete exclusion” (Crenshaw, 1996: 370).

In addition to being deeply racist and classist, the programme is not favourable to sensitive understandings of the nature of domestic violence, either in minority, underprivileged, or culturally dominant groups. On the contrary, it reinforces harmful stereotypes that rationalise or justify gendered violence, such as the image of pathologically violent Roma masculinity, and the unruly working-class/peasant woman who needs to be disciplined into acceptable femininity. Irina Petrea sums up her professional approach to gendered violence in a newspaper interview about the programme:

> Without considering herself old-fashioned, our “emergency counsellor” believes that the responsibility of keeping the household in balance lies with the woman rather than with the man. “There’s no point in openly challenging your man, with your hands on your hips, all you’ll manage by this is to provoke him. Femininity implies softness, diplomacy, wisdom, but also self-esteem. A woman who accepts degrading situations – illegitimate children, living together unmarried, especially in the Romanian countryside – should not expect to be respected.”
> (Cotidianul, 22nd May 2008)

There are many issues that come up when discussing this fascinating and problematic instance of “educational” television. Firstly, by failing or refusing to name what takes place onscreen as gendered/domestic violence, this programme effectively cancels out any connection between the violence and wider structures of discrimination organised around gender,
ethnicity, class and their intersection. This in turn leads to the inability
to formulate a social critique or to create solidarity or alliances around
it, and hence leaves potential solutions unaddressed. Secondly, there is
in effect a de-gendering of gendered violence in this programme. The ex-
pert diagnosis and advice carefully sidestep issues of domestic violence,
making great efforts to discuss it in ways not related to gender. Since the
violence is always taken on a couple-by-couple basis, the lens through
which it is presented is always individualised and deconstructed by look-
ing for its roots in the victim’s behaviour (bad cooking, disobedience
etc.). By not addressing it as gendered violence, the show perpetuates
harmful mentalities and behaviours; oftentimes conflict management
becomes unabashed victim-blaming. Thirdly, one of the most harmful
and misleading effects is that it relegates violence to the domain of the
“other”, thus perpetuating the belief that violence against women is not
a real issue within Romanian society; while doing so, the actual suffering
of the victims of onscreen violence is also silenced and erased (often by
editing cheerful cartoon music or playful folk music as the soundtrack
to scenes of abuse). Fourthly, this message further pathologises margin-
alised, underprivileged groups and constructs them as socially deviant by
suggesting that their lack of social/cultural capital is the cause of their
“civic” failure. While studies have indeed shown that poverty and mar-
ginalisation do exacerbate the effects of gendered violence, the incidence
of violence in interpersonal relationships transcends economic and social
determination. Finally, this disturbing programme organised around do-
mestic violence uses the spectacular instances of violence against women
by members of “othered” groups as an instrument of the post-socialist
neoliberal zeal to produce a “civilised”, “European” subject projected
against the “uncivilised”, “backward” elements of society.

In conclusion, I will point out that this paper has looked at a spec-
tacular instance of the emergence of violence from the private sphere
into the public discourse of television in order to open up a space for
feminist intervention which has provided a critique of the fetishisation
of violence against women in the Romanian media at the expense of a
real discussion of the routine character of incidents of gendered violence.
Exposing the politics of representation of gendered violence in the mass
media is one necessary step in subverting the currency of harmful cul-
tural representations that betray racist, sexist and classist investments.
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PART IV: STATE, LAW AND VIOLENCE
Chapter 9
Working Rape: Feminisms and the Rise of Rape and Sexual Violence in International Law

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Some of the latest collaborations between legal and academic advocates and scholars have focused with particular intensity on the problem of rape and Sexual Violence in Conflict Zones, or SVCZ – a specialized topic in the burgeoning new field of post-conflict studies. While, as Elizabeth Heineman has noted, SVCZ might seem like “unwieldy bureaucratese for ‘wartime rape,’” sexual violence as a legal term of art references a broad array of crimes. Such crimes include, but are not limited to, forced prostitution, forced pregnancy, forced abortion, female infanticide, sexual mutilation and sexual humiliation (Heineman, 2008). As a result of sustained legal, academic and activist work around SVCZ, the U.N. Security Council in 2008 unanimously adopted Resolution 1820, thereby empowering the Council to intervene in conflicts where sexual violence is deemed a strategy of warfare. Recent international attention has also focused on designations of rape as genocide. The most formative and heated debates on this issue involve the 1990s-era conflicts in the former Yugoslavia and Rwanda.

The rise of rape and sexual violence within international law raises several questions. How do feminist ideas get taken up into government apparatuses and legal frameworks? How is sexual violence against men or genderqueer persons understood or elided in international legal analysis? How does the increasing militarization of rape as a punishable war crime intersect with feminist theorizations of and conflicts over other criminalized sexual acts and sexualities, exemplified by the 1970s and 1980s U.S. culture war debates over pornography and S&M? What legal mechanisms – including but not limited to those exclusively addressing gender and sexual violence – hastened, shaped and were shaped by cultural appeals to these ends? How does recent international attention to rape and sexual violence correspond to changing understandings of warfare?
I take these questions as entry into a project that begins with the law, its development, justifications and applications. Doing so will contextualize the multiple movements against rape and sexual violence within larger cultural and legal debates about race, gender and sexuality – debates that touch on issues of bodily integrity and ownership and range from abortion and reproductive rights to prostitution and what constitutes sexual mutilation. In other words, the expansive understanding of sexual violence typified by emerging work on sexual violence in contact zones will be given full historical and critical treatment within the conflicted theorizations and cultural debates surrounding gender, race and sexuality. My research contextualises sexual violence and rape as part of larger international (as well as transnational) legal and cultural debates over gender, race, sexuality and property and demonstrate the global material and political effects of these complex and contingent relationships.

Accordingly, this project engages and intersects several disciplines, including law, gender and sexuality studies, and postcolonial studies and histories. It begins with the supposition that interdisciplinarity is necessary to comprehend international legal precedent – genealogies of both statutory and case law – in its most expansive, material dimensions. While introducing insights gleaned from each of these areas of scholarship to the topic of rape and sexual violence is a critical aspect of this project, I will not pursue an additive approach that solely supplements extant analyses with new information. I do not seek to supplant prior readings of legal precedent or the origins of legal conceptions of rape and sexual violence with “correct” ones – this research is not about amending the law to remedy a poor line of reasoning. I approach this project instead as an intellectual history of how 1960s and 1970s feminist organising around rape and sexual violence became institutionalised within international law and jurisprudence. To this end, I examine how divergent conceptions of and select responses to rape and sexual violence became enshrined in international law by undertaking a combination of archival work, legal textual analysis, people-based research and engagement with theoretical writings on gender and race, state violence and the relationship between law, justice and property.

Legal scholar Janet Halley and others have termed the institutionalisation of feminist ideals “Governance Feminism” (Halley et al., 2006) They date the rise of Governance Feminism to the mid-1990s, when human trafficking and sexual violence during times of conflict gained international notoriety and legal charters, such as the one establishing the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia (ICTY), began to incorporate explicit feminist language into their mandates and even
job descriptions. The international humanitarian and legal focus on gender and sexual violence, however, can be dated at least from the 1960s and 1970s global focus on “violence against women,” culminating in the United Nations’ designation of 1975 as “International Women’s Year” and its subsequent dubbing of 1976–1985 the “Decade for Women.”

By the 1990s and the Cold War’s end, several United Nations documents and conferences – including CEDAW, the Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women – discussed or expressly named the elimination of violence against women as a fundamental human right. The international fixation on “violence against women” arose in part from western mainstream feminists’ own self-conscious grappling with questions of difference. In response to critiques of class and racial insularity, these feminists vigorously advanced “violence against women” as an organizing principle for international feminist action. The recourse, however to what in 1984 American feminist Robin Morgan would term “global sisterhood” has sustained heavy critiques from feminists who insist on reckoning with the fissures racial, sexual and economic difference – not to mention the legacies of colonialism – offer to monolithic accounts of gender (Morgan, 1984). Over time, such critiques have shifted the parameters of what constitutes “violence against women” away from a presupposed collective interest in combating direct male oppression and domination of women. Instead, transnational feminist approaches to “violence against women” consider the circulation of ideas and social practice on a global scale through attention to gender diversity – to inequalities and commonalities produced by late capitalism within specific historical, if not solely national, contexts. My project follows and builds on the insights of transnational feminist theory and hopes to produce a transnational feminist legal and intellectual history of current international law on rape, sexual and gender violence.

Through careful examination of both primary and secondary sources, I consider how rape and sexual violence laws and policy entered the international legal arena via subtle re-workings of the discourse on women’s reproductive health – itself a legal legacy of the racialised logic of population control. In the aftermath of World War II, U.S. foreign policy envisioned the poverty of the decolonising Global South as a potential hotbed of communist activity necessitating both military intervention as well as the active management of women’s reproductive lives. During the 1990s, women’s sexual liberty and freedom from sexual violence were engaged as a subfield of this larger international discourse on women’s reproductive health. Almost a decade after the U.N. Decade of Women, the 1994 International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) convened in Cairo. The ICPD marked a sea change in the pop-
ulation discourse. It was in Cairo that international consensus shifted from a narrow focus on slowing population growth to a broad mandate to improve the quality of women’s lives. The ICPD eschewed the demographics of the family planning model in favor of a larger emphasis on reproductive health which included services for healthy and safe childbearing, care for sexually transmitted diseases, and post-abortion care.

I also consider how and when the crime of rape first became codified within international legal instruments. As armed clashes during the last quarter of the twentieth century became increasingly characterized as ethnic conflict, 1993 and 1994 also saw the founding charters of the ad hoc International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia (ICTY) and the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda (ICTR) become the first international instruments to name rape and sexual violence as crimes against humanity and as war crimes, respectively. This newfound recognition of rape and sexual violence coincided with a companion understanding of rape as an instrument of genocide which the 1948 Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide defines as acts “committed with intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnical, racial or religious group” as such killing members of the group or causing serious bodily or mental harm to members of the group. These trends in international law largely emerged to popular acclaim, with criticism reserved for disagreements over the most fair or efficacious interpretations and applications of the mandate to end global rape and sexual violence and the shortcomings of the legal instruments available for its enforcement.

While the ICTY and ICTR gained notoriety for ushering rape and sexual violence into the international legal spotlight, their limited and ad hoc jurisdictions are also routinely cited as factors that propelled the formation of the International Criminal Court (ICC) – a permanent court empowered to hear allegations of genocide, crimes against humanity (committed by state or non-state actors), war crimes and the crime of aggression for the nation-states that are its signatories. First proposed in 1954, it took the United Nations over forty years to ratify the ICC which it did on July 17, 1998. While legal scholarship has characterised the resurgence of genocide and the rise of ethnic cleansing exemplified by the former Yugoslavia and Rwanda as reinvigorating proposals for a permanent International Criminal Court (ICC), it has not paid sufficient attention to how accounts of rape and sexual violence, their changing definitions and the increasingly racialised laws around them, further the notion of and the need for international criminal justice. To my knowledge, little scholarship has also addressed how the pitched rhetoric of “violence against women” turned “international human right” turned
“war crime” functions within a world distinguished by racist histories of imperial and colonial occupation, marked economic disparities, unequal access to resources and global militarism. For these reasons, my research takes up these under explored issues, examining how and why rape and sexual violence law emerged within international law and policy.

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Sovereignty and Security in Post-9/11: Queering Migration Politics

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Post-9/11 politics have created a global association between migration, religion and terrorism. The US “War on Terror” has been explored through a variety of perspectives, but the relationship between destabilising symbolic aspects of the international order and reconstructing state sovereignty have not been central to studies (with the exception of Acharya, 2007). One of the international legal transformations propelled by the events of September 11, 2001, was that the US claimed the right to initiate wars in order to protect itself from future terrorist attacks. At the same time, and despite the links that US policy drew between the ungovernable nature of some Middle Eastern states and their peoples, the US also challenged the idea that the future was predetermined and called for the establishment of democracy in “violence-prone” regions, with the hope of ending terrorism through this approach. The conflicting accounts regarding the outcome of this global war, calls us to question the ideas which rest behind the US discourse on global politics since 9/11, particularly in relation to international enactments of sovereignty and conceptualisations of movement within this formulation.

The reality that the US “War on Terror” is interdependent with Israeli warring politics, also works to demonstrate the anxieties which are upheld in post-9/11 security discourses. Israeli’s long history of never-ending war provided a model for the US “War on Terror” (Hajjar, 2005: 242). Hajjar (2005: 243) argues that both states “domesticate” international law in an effort to meet national political agendas. Efforts to remake international law also suggest that discussions of post-9/11 politics need to be framed through global contestations over ideas of, and practices with, sovereignty. The US “War on Terror” has globalised a nexus that links movement with terror, and has also engendered further militarisation of other states in the international system. Symbolically shown by its extraterritorial movement and enforcement of “shock and awe,” this idea is also manifested materially through US foreign policy which has led to the rapid militarisation of other states and non-state actors since 9/11 (Ram, 2009). The destruction of symbolic aspects of the
global order provides the US and other countries, for instance Iran, with more local legislation and institutional flexibilities to transform public opinion and national political cultures. When in 2002 President Bush labelled Iran as a member of an “axis of evil,” then the reform movement within the Islamic Republic was slowly replaced by a neoconservative movement which was opposed to dialogue with the US (Ehteshami and Zweiri, 2008). Contrary to popular opinion, this movement also has significant societal support. The changing geopolitics of the region, including the possibility for US-Iran engagement regarding their mutual security concerns following the initial days after 9/11, also led to a heightened “anti-Iran rhetoric” in Israel (Ram, 2009: 77). The instability of a uniform understanding of global order, and the simultaneous insistence on the establishment of an alternative form of social organisation, can be detected through such moments of international and local competition.

Hidden under the false notion that US intervention in global politics began with the events of September 11, the question nevertheless emerges as to whether or not there is something unique about the interrelationship between terrorism, religion and migration, or does this formulation and historic moment point towards the emergent character of the post-9/11 state? Through the destruction and reconstruction of symbols that lead to the remaking of social order (Edelman, 2004), how does this association lose its novelty, and what other transformation may it be pointing towards? The relationship between US foreign policy in the Middle East after 9/11, violence, and the remaking of social order, has not been framed within discussions of sovereignty and as such, an important outcome of the September 11 attacks has gone unstudied. This paper begins to identify a theoretical framework which can assist in further exploring this question, but is only a progress report of what will be a long-term endeavour. This preliminary summary is part of a larger book-length project that I began working on during my one-month tenure as a fellow in the Centre for Gender Excellence at the University of Linköping, Sweden.

State-Making Re-theorised: Labour, Imagination, and State Formation

One of the reasons why intersects between sovereignty, migration, and terrorism have not been sufficiently examined, is because questions pertaining to sovereignty are continually explored through the confined understandings of state-making processes. Through this approach, moments when people and/or states demonstrate sovereignties, become framed solely through discussions of elite decision making and legal-rights struc-
tures. This trend is most evident in studies of refugees, immigrants, and migrants—research that focuses on social groups that are in transit, resulting in the suggestion that the rest of society is not moving through different sites. Scholars work through the foundational belief that elite manoeuvring should be the basis for studies of community-building and identity construction outside of one’s native territory. However, I question to what extent Diasporas are trying to (re)create their states away from “home,” and wonder how attempts at establishing sovereignty in their new homes should instead figure in investigations of community formation and citizenship. Moreover, these studies rarely compare the ways in which experiences in state-building within immigrant, refugee and migrant communities differ from the rest of the societies in which they live. The state and societal push towards an alternative global order which the previous section began to address, is one which rejects, whilst at the same time creates new sovereignties, and is interdependent with a discussion of independence. What is most peculiar about this process is the importance of individual and collective acts of constructions that seep through movement.

In an attempt to move beyond legal-rights structures and elite decision-making, I rely on my own theorisation of state-making (Saeidi, 2011). This paper postulates individual and collective movement within institutions as an alternative approach for deciphering the state formation process (Saeidi, 2011) and the state is understood here as always imagined. State formation on the other hand, is re-conceptualised as the consequence of individual and collective governance of local and international sites, and not merely a collective integration into the formal governing apparatuses of the state. While institutional form still remains central to this theorisation of state-making, it is also argued that structures develop through the ways in which people work within institutions. This approach requires a closer look at the negotiations, navigations and contentions of everyday life during periods of political violence.

Queer Assemblages and Sovereignty Debates

The previous section offered a theorisation of state formation that makes it feasible for us to account for everyday acts of construction performed by individuals outside of formal governing sites. Most importantly, this paper began by demonstrating how both the American and Iranian state and society are continually challenging the normative regulations of space in search of establishing their own independence. Through this movement, how do sovereignties take shape? This project seeks to understand not the state-making process, but the ideas behind it which give us an insight into how people imagine and indeed create sov-
ereignities, both in real-terms and in daily life when the normative form of the state has already been deconstructed. Feminist and queer scholars, among others, have challenged the idea that movement is symbolic of danger or home (Ahmed et al, 2003; Malkki, 1995). One of the foundational beliefs within the subfield of queer theory is the demand for creating alternative spaces that do not enforce social, sexual, political or economic assimilation into the mainstream. Inspired by the creativity of these works in relation to space and identity construction, my long term goal is to offer a feminist-queer theorisation of sovereignty. Although I find feminist and queer studies to be interconnected and interdependent, the ways in which space functions in relation to gender, sexuality and sex within queer theory is particularly central to my re-theorisation of sovereignty.

Feminist empirical and theoretical debates on sovereignty are missing, although feminist studies of geography have given insightful analyses of the gendered and transformable nature of space (Gibson-Graham, 1994; Massey, 1994). Debates on sovereignty and migration are dealt with separately and lack explorations that historicise how they exist and transform in relation to one another. Furthermore, the relationship between the formation of polities and political action in Diasporas has not been sufficiently framed within discussions of sovereignty. As such, empirical studies of migration increasingly account for gendered experiences, but often neglect theoretical questions on intersections of relocation, national identity, autonomy, gender roles and sexuality. Significantly, the transformative effects of physical and structural violence are rarely integrated into studies.

Along with immigration scholarship, queer theory and its commitment to challenge normative structures, particularly gender and sexual ones, provides useful analytical tools for studying the subversive, mobile and deconstructive politics of times, spaces and peoples. Queer theorists have provided more specific tools because of the urgency through which they link individuals and collectives to space, resistance, conflict and construction. They generally refuse to utilise a formal definition and understand their intellectual perspective to be a “becoming,” a process that is useful precisely because it does not take for granted apparent forms and material manifestations (Browne and Nash, 2010). At the same time however, other scholars challenge this idea of “becoming” and instead equate queerness with “embodying” due to its emphasis on rejecting the symbolic and reclaiming time (Edelman 2004: 25). Through either position however, the focus remains on contextualised particularities of the here and now which relates to how this project proposes that sovereignty should be studied. This perspective invites researchers to pay
attention to the intricate workings of processes, as opposed to applying empirical data to an already established and accepted form.

Additionally, working through queer theory, especially queer of colour critiques, allows for a fluid integration of sexuality, affect and eroticism into methodological approaches to question the heteronormative, as well as racial, ethnic and class spaces of social science research (Munoz, 2010). This is because as Edelman states “queerness can never define an identity; it can only ever disturb one” (2004: 17). The focus in research then becomes not defining or naming, but moves deeper into constructs by questioning social organisation. For instance, how is sexuality and sexual orientation contested, manipulated, and utilised as a strategic tool for survival during movement? How does it intersect with other levels of identity? Where do sexuality, gender, class and race crossings figure in our different ways of establishing sovereignty as travellers and for those already at “home”?

Based on my past research experiences, I firmly believe that when we integrate sexualities, the erotic and the culturally prohibited into our studies of social life, various analytical sites such as survival, governance and citizenry strategies emerge. Furthermore, the critical lens on gendered and heteronormative regulations of social life that queer theory focuses on, allows me to capture mechanisms, manifestations and intersects of different forms of “symbolic” violence in everyday life (Morgan and Thapar-Bjorkert, 2006). Symbolic violence is often “invisible” and is interwoven with societal gender and sexual norms, and as such, it can be difficult to analyse without a situated look at the data. Through this type of in-depth engagement with the findings, I can also detect “cultures of violence” and how forms of violence which intersect in the lives of immigrants and non-immigrants, result in both “social suffering” and cultural transformations (Thapar-Bjorkert, Morgan, Yuval-Davis, 2006: 438). With this perspective on cultures of violence, these two social groups can also be better compared and the larger mechanisms of violence identified. Moreover, terrorism is also argued to emerge from internal state structures (Beyer, 2008), and a focus on the symbolic will aid in studying violence from this perspective.

What I find particularly relevant to the study of authority and space is the field’s direct call to “challenge assimilation and embrace fear” (Edelman, 2004; Moon, 2010: 3; Warner, 1993). The two parts of this formulation support not only resistance, but also creation. The vision for a new social order, one that accepts alternative ways of living, rather than one that enforces assimilation, is central to various strands of queer theory (Browne and Nash, 2010). Despite its innovation as a social theory, we rarely see queer theories applied to area studies. However, I draw from
Warner’s definition (1993: xxvi) of queer as having the “effect of pointing out a wide field of normalization, rather than simple intolerance, as the site of violence.” Queer theory can therefore be used in a variety of social science research settings when a researcher feels comfortable with its radical intellectual and political perspective. The theoretical stances queer theory offers, carries important implications for the ways that performances and affects of everyday life can be linked to processes that accumulate to create sovereignties. It is this search for not only contesting the politics of space, but enacting the necessary political action to make spaces despite centralised authority. In many ways, queer theory enriches the discussions on space-making as it links the “grief” of “losing” one’s place, to the possibilities of making a world that can house everyone (Raitt, 2002: 31; Sedgwick, 1993). It is this concerted focus on contextualising resistance and construction that I hope to draw from to better understand how women and men enact sovereignties during movement. Furthermore, I hope to also theoretically contribute to this body of literature, for much like studies of sovereignty, it does not place a theoretical focus on the ways that movement factors into space-making.

References


PART V:
VIOLENCE AND WAR
Chapter 11
“I Want to Heal Myself by Unburdening my Heart”: Deconstructing Violence against Women in the Aftermath of War in Bosnia and Rwanda

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Introduction

This study is the second stage of a research project that I began at GEXcel Themes 4 & 5 (Sexual Health, Embodiment and Empowerment: Bridging Epistemological Gaps, sub-theme Gender and violence – mechanisms, anti-mechanisms, interventions, evaluations) in November and December 2009, with a project entitled Violence against Women at War in the 1990s: Bosnia and Rwanda. That work investigated sexual violence up to mass rape and psychological violence in two case studies: the war in Bosnia and Herzegovina (1992–1995) during the dissolution of the former Yugoslavia (1991–1995) and the genocide in Rwanda (1994). That research showed that the usual ethnic definition of both conflicts is inadequate and misleading. The massive use of sexual violence in wartime is rather a consequence of the construction of nationalism through women’s bodies; seen as the motherland to be protected from the enemies who violate her during the Eighties in Serbia and Croatia, or seen as the arrogant alluring woman in the early Nineties when the genocide was prepared in Rwanda.

Secondly, my previous study proved that in both countries mass rape was used not only as a weapon of war but also with the aim of affecting the future recovery of both societies through women’s bodies which were regarded as containers. This was achieved in Bosnia by the forced pregnancies of women who were kept prisoner to be raped in rape/death camps or “women’s rooms”, and in Rwanda by deliberately passing on the HIV/AIDS infection to raped women. In both conflicts, women were explicitly told about the purpose of their suffering: to bear the “enemy
child” in Bosnia, or to be left alive to spread the HIV/AIDS disease in Rwanda. The intentional project of destroying the possibility of future reprisals by the enemy community had among its consequences many “rape babies”, the so-called “children of hate” in Bosnia or “children of bad memories” in Rwanda. Those mothers who could not abort or who decided to keep their babies were often ostracised by their own communities and families, and their children were considered to be the “enemy child”. Salzman defines this as “the genetic cultural and patriarchal myth” which leads to the refusal of children born from rape, who are regarded as a product of their fathers, and finally and consequently the rejection of their mothers as bearers of the “enemy child” (Salzman, 1998: 365).

In the aftermath of war, both Bosnia and Rwanda faced similar problems in terms of new threats to survivors from former perpetrators, inadequate systems of justice and insufficient institutional answers to protect women from violence and to provide them with healthcare services and practical aid (in housing, education and jobs). Women are often silenced by domestic violence which, as I will show, increased after such a massive use of sexual violence during these conflicts – as reported also by other case studies such as post-apartheid South Africa (Armstrong, 1994; Posel, 2005) or the African world war in the Great Lakes area, for instance in the Ituri region of the Democratic Republic of Congo (Médecin sans Frontières, 2007: 15). Furthermore, women often distrust the post-war rhetorical official memory of the violence they experienced. This second study therefore aims, first of all, to investigate the extent to which recovery programmes are inadequate and exclude many women, besides the fact that rape survivors are marginalised and stigmatised and that women are used as instruments to attract men in the peace process and to reconstruct their society in the aftermath of conflicts, while their experiences and memories are usually forgotten (Cockburn, 2001) and excluded from the new public, male-focused, collective memory (Kesić, 2003: 11).

My research will then show how women tried to find answers to their problems in the post-war period through their own organisations and associations. This work thus questions the post-feminist focus on the psychology of rape victims and instead follows a new feminist approach to gender and sexual violence which discusses the excessive victimisation of raped women (Mardorossian, 2002: 747–48, 776): the core concern is still the woman, but the word “victim” is being challenged by women’s experiences after the violence, and it is necessary to look at the political, social and psychological aspects of survival and recovery. Women react to violence, and they may describe themselves not only as “victims” but
also as “survivors”. Women who survived mass rape can rethink their engagement in post-war societies as citizens more than as victims, and they can be involved in women’s organisations in fighting gendered violence and in supporting women’s rights.

The aftermath of violence: Silencing and new violence

There are at least three main problems faced by rape survivors in the aftermath of the wars in Bosnia and Rwanda: 1) the absence of psychological support and healthcare provision for persons who first of all need to talk and be listened to and then cured, 2) the denial of justice and 3) the insufficiency of legal protection against violence and for the implementation of women’s rights.

I agree with Siri Hustvedt’s concept that “all patients have stories, and those stories are necessarily part of the meaning of their illness” (Hustvedt, 2010: 36), and I believe that trying to let women express their stories is already part of a psychological support which started late and is discretionary. Healthcare, both physical and psychological, is only partially provided depending upon the degree of community and family stigmatisation, economic and geographic status, and especially due to the different evaluation of sexual violence in comparison with other legacies of war. For example, rape survivors are often excluded from insurance, and all those women who cannot afford healthcare or live in remote areas are excluded from getting help (Avdibegovic et al., 2008; CEC, 2008: 18). For instance, in the Republika Srpska, in the case of sexual violence a certified 60 per cent body damage is required in order to get financial support from health insurance, while for war veterans it is sufficient to have a certified 20 per cent body damage to be refunded (RS Law N. 25/93, n. 46/04 and 53/04 Art. 4). In the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina, there are the same quotas required for war veterans and civilian war victims, but the law does not specifically consider the case of victims of sexual violence during war (FBiH Law n. 39/06 Art. 5). Still, civilians are discriminated against here in comparison to war veterans in their monthly financial allowance, the maximum for civilians being 70 per cent of that provided to veterans (FBiH Law n. 39/06 Art. 9).

This creates a vicious circle: few women find adequate treatment, and few women seek help in Bosnia (Klarić et al., 2007). The case of Rwanda is similar (Human Rights Watch, 2008), where the situation is worsened by the spreading of HIV/AIDS infection during and after the genocide, not only because many women were raped by infected men, but also due to the lack of basic hygiene conditions and infrastructures in the aftermath (African Rights, 2004: 30; UNAIDS/WHO, 2008: 11–12). Rape
causes not only immediate damage but also long-term consequences, both psychological and physical. Even more than the sexual violence itself, HIV infection is linked to social and economic stigma and marginalisation, and women often cannot or do not even want to take the test, as A. remembers: “I’ve never gone to take the test; it would only worsen my situation” (African Rights, 2004: 50). One HIV positive woman, I., declares that: “I am not accepted in my community [...] people are so cruel to me” (de Brouwer and Hon Chu, 2009: 83), and G. was forced to leave her house because she was refused by her family, who would not accept an HIV-positive rape survivor (de Brouwer and Hon Chu, 2009: 110). Many men are suspicious and believe that survivors must have been collaborators of the perpetrators in order to stay alive (Amnesty International, 2004: 7; Gourevitch, 2000: 232). Many of them refuse raped partners or do not want to become engaged to rape survivors; as in the case of M.O., whose partner agreed to date her only after she denied (thus lying) having been raped during the genocide (de Brouwer and Hon Chu, 2009: 39). Finally, many women cannot afford anti-AIDS drugs (Mukagasana and Kazinierakis, 2008: 10).

This is just the tip of the iceberg which barely begins to count all the psychological and other physical problems faced by rape survivors. 14 years after the end of the war, T. (who lives in Republika Srpska) confesses: “If it wasn’t for the psychological support and the medicine, I would not be alive. [...] I can’t sleep without pills. [...] I need help” (Amnesty International, 2009: 3). Women’s traumas result mainly in post-traumatic stress syndrome or other psychological diseases (other anxiety problems, depression, somatisation, sexual problems, insomnia) and somatic diseases (cardiovascular disorders, diabetes, thyroid malfunctioning, psycho-organic syndrome, diseases of the bony-muscular system, diseases of the urogenital tract) (African Rights, 2004). As the director of the Kigali Central Hospital, Dr. Emile Rwamasirabo, notices, rape victims often do not seek medical care as they feel too ashamed. Etienne Mubaruto, a gynaecologist at the university hospital in Butare, adds: “you cure the direct illness, but psychologically, they are not healed. They continue to come back complaining of cramps or pain, but there is nothing physically wrong with them. These women are profoundly marked psychologically” (Human Rights Watch, 1996: 72–73).

The second problem faced by raped women relates to justice. Witnesses who testify both at the international criminal tribunals and in local courts report having been threatened and intimidated; they are not adequately protected and their identities are often made public. Rape survivors from Bosnia are intimidated and witnesses at trials are not protected. Their former assailants can easily discover their real identity,
and women do not benefit from any economic compensation for taking the risk of going to tribunals. The programme of witness protection at the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia (ICTY) does not follow women when they go back home. Some major criminals are still free and enjoy impunity. Among them are the Bosnian Serb general Ratko Mladić and the former leader of the Serbs of Kajina (Croatia) Goran Hadžić – the former accused of crimes linked with the Sarajevo siege, particularly in reference to the use of snipers against civilians, and with the genocide in Srebrenica in 1995, and the latter accused of the slaughter of hundreds of civilians taken from the hospital in Vukovar in Croatia. The capture of another important fugitive, the Bosnian Serb psychiatrist Radovan Karadžić, considered responsible for the removal and destruction of Croats and Bosniaks in Bosnia and of the genocide in Srebrenica, dates back only to July 20th 2008. Survivors, knowing that wanted criminals are well protected, often inside their own country, therefore feel abandoned.

In Rwanda, many former perpetrators threaten their victims that they will “complete the job”, that is, carry on the genocide, and several survivors have already been beaten or killed (de Brouwer and Hon Chu, 2009: 105, 123). Amnesty International reported from a visit to the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda (ICTR) in Arusha at the end of 1997 that “the witness protection scheme is weak and lacking in relevant experience. It may be putting witnesses at risk, discouraging witnesses from testifying and therefore putting justice in jeopardy” (Amnesty International, 1998: 6). “Living with the perpetrators of the genocide is a serious challenge for all of us who survived,” says M.C., referring to the fact that witnesses at Arusha and at the local courts gacaca are well known by the accused and their families (de Brouwer and Hon Chu, 2009: 71), and therefore survivors do not feel safe in telling the truth. Moreover, many perpetrators who have been declared guilty are liberated and are then able to threaten the women who accused them. That is why J. affirms: “I don’t go to the gacaca courts anymore, because the people we are accusing are being released. I don’t see the point of taking the risk of sharing my testimony there if it doesn’t make any difference” (de Brouwer and Hon Chu, 2009: 56), and P. adds that the gacaca “are bringing more tears than smiles” (de Brouwer and Hon Chu, 2009: 77). Also, monetary compensation is not enough if it does not go with repentance, and some women are humiliated by former perpetrators who try to “buy” their victim’s forgiveness with money or goods, without feeling really ashamed or guilty (de Brouwer and Hon Chu, 2009: 63).

Trials for crimes based on sexual violence are rare, both in the former Yugoslavia and Rwanda. For instance, the trial of Milan Lukić, former
head of a Bosnian Serb paramilitary force, did not include rape among the charges against him, even though the accused was among the main perpetrators in raping Bosniak women in Višegrad between 1992 and 1994, and many women testified that they had been raped by him personally (ICTY IT-98-32/1-T, 2007: 18). ICTR is instead criticised for the underestimation of witnesses’ testimonies, as in the trial of Sylvester Gacumbitsi, the local highest community head (bourgmestre) of the Rusumo Commune. The defendant was found guilty of genocide and crimes against humanity and he was also convicted of rape as a crime against humanity. Yet, he was acquitted on three counts of rape by the Appeals Chamber who cited both a lack of evidence that his incitement to rape Tutsi women had materially contributed to the three rapes, and a lack of credibility of witnesses (ICTR-2001-64-A: 34–35; Rushing et al., 2006: 38–39). A weak investigation resulting in inadequate evidence to prosecute sexual violence turned into a scandal in the so-called Cyan-gugu case, where in the end no rape charges were included, despite existing evidence. In this case, rape survivors were helped by the Ngo Avega to put pressure on the prosecutor to add sexual violence charges at court, but after six months of negotiations, the request for rape charges was dropped. When at trial some of the victims gave testimony of rape, the judge ruled that evidence of a non-charged crime could not be introduced in court (Nowrojee, 2005: 14–17), and the trial ended in 2004 with the acquittal of two among the three indicted (ICTR-99-46-T: 208).

The third problem faced by rape survivors, besides inadequate healthcare and denial of justice, is the insufficient legal protection from violence against women and the insufficient legal promotion of women’s rights. The Rwandan constitution of 2003 (arts. 10, 11, 16, 46 and 47) protects all citizens from discrimination (We-Actx for Hope, 2007: 2–3). Furthermore, there has been a long parliamentary debate on gendered violence (Draft Law, 2006) which finally resulted in a law on the prevention of gender-based violence and the punishment of perpetrators (Law 59/2008). The Rwandan government also created a gender helpline and a national Gender Monitoring Office (We-Actx for Hope, 2007: 54–63). There are even “Gender-based violence desks” in police stations and a Gender Desk in the military. Finally, the Ministry of Gender and Family Promotion created a National Gender Strategic Plan (MIGEPROF, 2009). The Genocide Law of 2004 (one among the many Genocide Laws passed by the Parliament since 1996) recognises rape and sexual violence as acts of genocide, and the Genocide Law of 2008 provides witnesses at the gacaca with trauma counsellors (de Brouwer and Hon Chu, 2009: 151). Still, the effectiveness of these tribunals and their ability to ensure justice and protection for witnesses are deeply challenged by their un-
derestimation of the problems associated with gendered violence and by the fact that so many perpetrators continue their lives in freedom. Another problem is that compensation is not included in the Genocide Law. While this is a general problem for most women in Rwanda, rape survivors are more vulnerable. Statistics from 2005 show that 31 per cent of Rwandan women have been subjected to domestic violence in the aftermath of the genocide, most of them from their partner, while they were too sick, too weak, or too psychologically threatened to be able to leave their houses and to refuse sex (NISR, 2006: 177).

Analogously, both the Republika Srpska and the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina have sanctions in place against domestic violence, but with few practical results in fighting violence against women. For instance, the Criminal Code of the Republika Srpska (O.G. 22/00) and a law against domestic violence (art. 208, O.G. n. 118/05, 17/08) penalise gendered violence, but women subjected to domestic violence are not recognised as a social category of beneficiaries or of social protection, and the Safe Houses (shelters) that host victims are not recognised as institutions of social protection (Udružene, 2008). After years of policy advocacy by women's NGOs, the Parliamentary Assembly of Bosnia and Herzegovina adopted the Law on Gender Equality (16/03) in 2003 which regulates, promotes and protects gender equality and guarantees equal opportunities to all citizens, both in the public and private spheres of society. The law also prevents direct and indirect discrimination based on sex, while art. 222 of the Criminal Code punishes “violence in the family” (O.G. 6/03, 37/03, 21/04, 69/04, 18/05). Similarly, the Law on Protection from Domestic Violence of the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina (O.G. 22/05, 51/06) prescribes fines and protective measures as basic sanctions with the aim of offering more effective protection to victims of domestic violence. Nevertheless, gendered violence is not paid enough attention in a more complex post-war situation characterised by severe human rights violations, especially in the rights to property and to return which all contribute to discrimination against women in property allocation, access to employment and the “prevalent, under-researched and underreported” domestic violence (Refugee Women’s Resource Project and Asylum Aid, 2002: 15). There is in fact a direct link between the increase in domestic violence and the previous war, due to problems in the reintegration of families, the increasing use of violence among men who were combatants during the war, and post-traumatic stress syndromes among men returning from war. Unfortunately, “there has not been a parallel increase in social or legal structures to address these breaches in elementary human rights” (Open Society Institute, 2007: 11).
Facing all the problems mentioned in the previous section, women are made to feel guilty and ashamed of the violence they have suffered, and often retreat into silence. Raped women are often rejected by their relatives, as a Bosniak woman underlines: “The women keep it secret. It is shameful. Thus, the mother conceals it if it happened to her daughter so she can marry, and if it happened to an older woman she wants to protect her marriage” (Helsinki Watch, 1993: 178). Rape survivors thus believe that the first important step towards regaining their self-esteem is to share their memory with somebody they trust and who can understand them. E. expresses this feeling by saying to her interviewer, a survivor herself: “I don’t tell my story to anybody […]. I agreed to testify because you too are a widow, who has lost her sons. We share a similar history and it is for this reason that I trust you” (Mukagasana and Kazinierakis, 2008: 22). Thus, it may help women who cannot access any psychological support to find a self-therapy group, first of all among other survivors, and secondly including other people who did not share the extreme experience of the genocide but who want to listen and can be trusted. F. affirms in fact: “Knowing that there is someone who cares enough to listen to my experiences really comforts me. Now that I am talking about my experience with other survivors of the genocide, I know that I will feel better” (de Brouwer and Hon Chu, 2009: 103).

This is indeed a difficult step to take. Research methodology concerning the Holocaust teaches us that survivors had no immediate audience for their stories, however traumatic and devastating their experiences had been. Survivors had great difficulties both in finding their voices and then in finding listeners, i.e. to be heard. There may be an inherently conflicting relationship between pain as an impulse to narrate and decency as an inhibition to testimony: the survivor is an exception, he is alive by mistake, he is a phantom who comes back. The price to be paid for being alive is the weight of memory: “To be silent is forbidden, to talk is impossible,” and even if it would be possible to talk it would not be possible to communicate (Semprún and Wiesel, 1995: 20). This may be even more true for rape survivors than for the Holocaust survivors, who face a greater shame, that of being accused of complicity with the perpetrators, and who are more stigmatised and marginalised within their own community. Regarding the process of talking if there is a listener who can be trusted, I use the theory of the liberation of the oppressed from their oppression and above all from the feeling of shame that makes them feel guilty: “liberation: not a gift, not a self-achievement, but a mutual process” (Freire, 2006: 43–72).
This process is also different from woman to woman, and if A. believes that “I want to heal myself by unburdening my heart” (de Brouwer and Hon Chu 2009: 57), other women are not ready to talk, as the journalist and novelist Slavenka Drakulić underlines: “I remember the first [rape] victim I talked to […] she was willing to talk – but it was impossible for her to talk about what happened to her… She could not stop shaking. It then occurred to me for the first time, her story was precisely in what she could not say. And I must find a way to say it for her” (Drakulić, 1999: 3–4, italics mine). This is the reason why women’s organisations and associations started to work to collect women’s memories of the war in the Former Yugoslavia. The aim was to build a gender dimension of memory that proved victims’ suffering and at the same time denounced the exploitation of the raped women, as it had been perpetrated during the conflict (Cockburn, 2001). The media participated in this by turning the violated women into a symbol of the violated motherland, and so did the post-war states by excluding women’s memories from the new patriarchal and male-oriented national collective memory (Kesić, 2003: 43). Women’s networks from the Former Yugoslavia believed in the necessity of an opposition to nationalism and violence. For this they needed a gathering of women from different national groups which many of them had already begun during the war (Žarkov, 1999) but also continued in the aftermath. A way of starting this women’s opposition network was by sharing memories of the war and by facing the past in order to reinsert previously suppressed narratives into the collective memory. This work was also done to counteract the exploitation of the Bosniak women – seen just as passive victims of rape – by trying to focus on the women’s experiences more than on their bodies (Kašić, 2000) and to go against the stereotypical oriental image of Muslim women as easily victimised because they live in a patriarchal Muslim rural society (Helms, 2003: 96).

More than in Bosnia, Rwandan associations face poverty, harsh labour conditions and a lack of adequate education and healthcare, as do many other post-colonial feminist movements in sub-Saharan Africa (Maerten, 2004: 1). As in Bosnia, Rwandan women’s rights were deeply challenged by the war, and after the genocide survivors struggled to improve their basic life conditions. Rwandan women responded to the deterioration of their situation by seeking political power to solve gender inequality, and today some of them hold important positions (Gallimore, 2008: 25). Nevertheless, their high degree of participation in politics is usually not reflected at local levels, and many women therefore developed other strategies to fight the increased discrimination in the aftermath of the genocide. They gathered activists together under
Pro-femmes Twese Hamwe, a platform of different associations (among which the most committed of the institutions is Avega Agahozo – Association des Veuves du Génocide) devoted to peace culture, gender promotion, legal affairs, combating violence against women, education, anti HIV/AIDS programmes, economic empowerment, training and housing and the supporting of widows and orphans of the genocide.

Also in Bosnia, the second stage developed by women after the recovery of memory was the development of aid and support. Associations like the NGO Medica Zenica, explicitly feminist and anti-nationalistic (Helms, 2003: 117), observed the overlapping of wartime violence and post-war domestic violence or violence by the former perpetrators and created shelters for victims, filling the gap left by the state which did not provide refuges for violence survivors (Refugee Women’s Resource Project and Asylum Aid, 2002: 29). As in Rwanda, raped women have often been stigmatised by their own families, and local NGO projects are being developed to protect people, as in the case of S., whose husband psychologically and physically abused and blamed her for what occurred during the war (Amnesty International, 2009: 59).

This process, from being just victims in need of recovery to the organisation of women’s own associations and NGOs to improve women’s rights, started a feminist reflection on women’s role in the aftermath of the war. This is what some feminists define as a new “philosophy of feminism” (Kesić, 2003: 49): a responsibility to find a feminist answer to past and present violence and to women’s victimisation, when women feel that the institutional answer is not sufficient in assisting them not only in ceasing to be victims of war violence and still victimised in the aftermath, but also in becoming conscious citizens fighting for their rights.

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As Sri Lanka emerges from thirty years of war, post-war citizenship, rights, entitlements and responsibilities are at the center of the debates on the country’s transition to a post-war and beyond that, a post-conflict phase. In this paper I foreground two communities which have been at the center of these debates: the Tamil Internally Displaced (IDPs) of the Vanni, and the female garment factory workers of the Katunayake Free Trade Zones (KFTZ) who are largely of Sinhala ethnicity. They are both targets of biopolitical regulation and viscerally linked to each other by how the war was fought and won. I mark the most recent histories of the IDPs and the KFTZ workers to locate them first within key features of Sri Lanka’s post-war Order, and second within current transnational thought on development as a key tool of conflict transformation. Given that the Sri Lankan post-war scenario is evolving fast, the shifts in citizenship, ethnic and gender relations can only be provisionally marked at this moment in time. But there is already sufficient evidence to point to exactly how these relations are being re-imagined from within the grounds of the violence that has shaped them for the last three decades.

**Camp Communities**

The IDP crisis resulted from the last days of the war when, from about 10th–19th May 2009, large numbers of Tamils who either opted to stay with, or were held hostage by the LTTE in Mullaitivu, broke through LTTE defense lines to what they considered a safer zone. Some of them were killed in the cross-fire as they fled, but a total of 295,136 IDPs

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1. My use of the term citizenship takes into account the significant variations in what it entails and therefore its different meanings for those it ‘inscribes’ (Molyneux 2007: 65).

2. See [http://www.dailynews.lk/2009/05/11/sec01.asp](http://www.dailynews.lk/2009/05/11/sec01.asp) for early reports of Tamil civilian crossing of enemy lines. Although the largest number of civilians were displaced during this final week of the war, from late January 2009 onwards the Sri Lanka military, in its final putsch, had requested civilians in the north to leave their homes for IDPs camps situated in Vavuniya.
ended up in 37 camps in four districts in the north. The largest of the
camps was Menik Farm in Vavuniya. Camp management soon became
a site of fierce controversy. All supply trucks and service delivery per-
sonnel were escorted inside by the Sri Lanka army. According to the Sri
Lanka government 89 INGOs/NGOs (11 UN agencies and 78 NGOs)
did have access to the north (Sri Lanka government, 2011). But the
procedures of selection drew criticism from those NGOs left out of
the service delivery process, and from human rights defenders who charged
the government with disallowing conditions under which the IDPs could
express themselves freely to outsiders and the international community
(Human Rights Watch, 2009). The screening of the IDPs also proved
contentious. A decision to issue all IDPs including children with identity
cards caused anger given that elsewhere in the country Identity cards
are required only from those over 18 years of age. Despite Zone 4 of
Manik Farm (where the last batch of IDPs coming out of the Vanni were
housed) being classified as the site for hard-core LTTE supporters on the
assumption that those who left the LTTE areas last were the most con-
ected to it, the long screening process of the IDPs in all zones of Manik
Farm pointed to how all IDPs were treated as potential LTTE suspects.
Contrary to an Agambenian vision of the camp as outside the law, camp
inmates were utterly mediated by the law and the judicial process which,
at times upheld the notion of national security by citing The Prevention
of Terrorism Act (PTA), and on other occasions, reinforced their funda-
mental human rights as guaranteed by the Sri Lanka constitution.

By end December 2010, the numbers of IDPs at Menik Farm had re-
duced to 6.7% (or 19,840) of its original population. For the government,
this re-settlement of large numbers of IDPs within 17 months of the war
ending was a significant achievement, given the considerably de-mining
and reconstruction work required before the IDPs could return to their
villages. For others, the precedence of security screening over freedom

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3 Amongst the INGOs/NGOs permitted were the ICRC, Caritas, Sarvodaya, and the
   Consortium of Humanitarian Agencies.
4 The leader of the Tamil United Liberation Front (TULF) wrote a letter to the Presi-
   dent of Sri Lanka protesting against this move and asked that ID cards be issued in
   the camps within the rules applicable in the rest of the country. Daily Mirror
   lk/DM_BLOG/Sections/frmNewsDetailView.aspx?ARTID=51097
5 For instance when the camps transitioned to open camps on 1st December 2009,
   families were permitted to leave either permanently or temporarily, but those who
   left had to obtain Sri Lanka army clearance. If traveling to Colombo, they were
   required to provide a letter of sponsorship from the householder in Colombo. This
   requirement was successfully challenged in the Supreme Court as an infringement of
   the fundamental right to mobility as guaranteed in the Sri Lanka Constitution.
of mobility was a matter of dispute (Gunadheera 2009), pointing to the fact that re-settlement is always constituted by contested priorities. Upon their release, insufficient aid including a shortfall in food rations by the World Food Program, the erratic disbursal of the Rs. 25,000 by the government for re-settlement due to shortage of funds, questions over access to land, lack of livelihoods, missing documentation, incomplete voter registration, and the Feb. 2011 floods continue to dog the Vanni IDPs. The sense of relief at the targeted closure of the camps by end January 2011 is tempered by the real implications of considering the job ‘done’. Activist Meerak Raheem (2010) noted: ‘In the rush to end displacement and declare that there are zero IDPs in Sri Lanka there is the danger that the true scale and nature of displacement, and the return as it exists on the ground is being ignored.’ If the Vanni IDPs were caught between camp conditions and the challenges of re-settlement signifying a liminal, yet emergent population because they are also the target of state sponsored development (I return to this aspect later in this essay), the female workers of the Free Trade Zone apparel sector constitute a group with very little political and developmental rights. Women form 70–80 percent of the workforce (de Mel & Ranathunga, 2008), and contribute significantly to Sri Lanka’s foreign exchange earnings. Yet they are commonly referred to as ‘garment girls’ or ‘juki kello’, and their labour is undervalued and within a politics of the diminutive in which docility and nimble fingers are upheld as the keys to productivity. The factory-scape of the KFTZ marked by high

6 The Sri Lanka government has responded to some of these issues through the Bim-saviya program under which fresh land deeds will be issued, and a program to provide death certificates if no information on missing persons is ascertained after one year of their disappearance.

7 My research on the KFTZ apparel sector workers is supported by the IDRC-SSA project on ‘State Reform from Below’ which focuses on the engagement between women and institutions of local government.

8 This is a high rate female participation in a context where, on average, 67.8 percent males and 32.7 per cent females comprise the workforce (Dept. of Census & Statistics 2010).

9 Throughout the 1990s the apparel sector grew at a rate of 18.5%, although from January to August 2008 Sri Lanka’s overall exports have grown only at 5.3%. In 2002 the apparel sector accounted for 6% of Sri Lanka’s GDP, 39% of its industrial production and 52% of its overall exports (Kelegama 2006; Central Bank 2008).

10 ‘Juki’ is the name of a sewing machine. Kello is the Sinhala word for girls. See Caitrin Lynch 2007.

11 They join the factories after leaving school early. Work and lodging conditions are harsh, and the usual tenure of work is for a period of five years. Many workers go back to their villages after this period, but increasingly, given the lack of rural development in the south of the country, they have returned to the KFTZs seeking jobs in factories that provide better work conditions.
walls, barbed wire fences, and elevated guard posts is of a camp. The hostel accommodation is in ‘line rooms’ (following colonial plantation architecture and its utilitarian extraction of labour). They work long hours$^{12}$ and research conducted between 2000–2004 indicates that sleep deprivation and the nutritional status of FTZ apparel workers are worse than of other industrial workers.$^{13}$ Treated as internal migrant labour, they lack the entitlements available to permanent residents of the villages around the zone in which they lodge. The workers do have sites of resistance – in dress codes, shirking, undermining supervisors etc. which are modes of ‘weapons of the weak’ (Hewamanne, 2008; Scott, 1985), but the fact that they regularly figure in popular culture as gendered, lumpen rural youth on whose backs the nation’s economy rests indicates the widespread recognition that they epitomize the feminization of labour under globalisation.

**GSP+**

Post-war, these workers risk their jobs not only because of the global financial crisis, but also because of how the war was fought and won. The link between the workers, the war, and the Tamil IDPs became visible because of a preferential tariff scheme known as GSP+. The scheme was worked out under the WTO for low and middle-income countries under which garments, ceramics and leather products are exported to the EU duty free. Sri Lanka obtained the GSP+ concession in April 2005, subject to review in 2009. Exemplifying the good governance-for-aid policy which has shaped international donor policy from the mid 1980s onwards (Wickramasinghe 2001: 58–9), the extension of GSP+ was dependent on the ratification and implementation of twenty-seven international instruments comprising sixteen core conventions on human and labour rights, and eleven conventions on good governance and the envi-

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12 42 per cent of the women work 10 hour shifts and nearly 22 per cent work 12 hour shifts (CPA, 2008). With overtime the women accrue a take home pay of approximately SL Rs. 15,000/- (or US$ 135/- per month) (Sarvananthan & Sanjeewani 2008). In the context of the current global financial crisis and the shrinkage of the apparel industry, the maximum hours of overtime have been capped at 60 hours per month leading to a downturn in the women’s income.

13 These include the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), core ILO conventions, the Convention on Torture (CAT), and The convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) (CPA, 2008).
Reviewing El Salvador and Sri Lanka, the EU issued a critical report in the case of Sri Lanka in December 2009 and withdrew GSP+ in August 2010. Three UN human rights conventions – the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), the Convention against Torture (CAT), and the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) – were singled out as areas where there was a shortfall in Sri Lanka’s performance. (Currently a similar process is underway in relation to the tariff scheme Sri Lanka has with the US.)

The militarisation of a society which precedes war, works towards political mobilisation, social polarisation, gender role transformation, and the fragmentation of local political economies as necessary for the larger solidarities required for large-scale violence (Wood, 2008; de Mel, 2007). Social discipline, surveillance, regulation, censorship, conscription and taxation by all actors in war (State and non-State) form part of the arsenal with which these revised socio-political cohesions are created to support the war effort. Citizens’ civil liberties and political rights are compromised. The run-up to the final phase of the Sri Lankan war (concluded by the end of May 2009) coincided with the EU’s review of Sri Lanka’s performance on labour and human rights. A shortfall was inevitable. In fact, the Sri Lanka government objected strongly to the EU verdict arguing that it was an infringement of sovereignty, and untimely, as the review was conducted during the final phase of the war and before the re-settlement of the Vanni IDPs etc. could be satisfactorily resolved.

**Post-War Order**

So, what does the post-war future hold for the IDPs and the KFTZ workers? A return to order and normalcy after disruption is commonly understood as a period of absence from violence. However, a significant body of scholarship today concludes that normalcy is reliant on force (Kalyvas, Shapiro, Masoud, 2008) incorporating both overt biopolitical regulation (operationalised through surveillance, camp administration etc.) and coercions which are structural, invisible, within language, discourse, and the everyday. Zizek calls the latter ‘objective’ as opposed to ‘subjective’ violence (Zizek, 2008); Gyan Pandey calls it ‘routine’ as

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14 Ngozi (2010) warned against macroeconomic instability and runaway inflation. Annual fiscal deficits of 7 percent of GDP and double digit inflation (12 percent) over the last three decades has given rise to questions of sustainability over the years, which has negatively impacted private investment. The fiscal deficit reached almost 10 percent of GDP in 2009. The public debt burden has at various times reached over 100 percent of GDP and the latest available data show it at 86 percent of GDP. These indicators were noted as key concerns.
opposed to ‘extraordinary’ (Pandey, 2006), and Veena Das names it the ‘ordinary’ as opposed to the ‘eventful’; and as ‘somehow obscured even though visible’ (Das, 2006:1–17). But even as the ordinary is characterized as oppositional to the eventful and its overt force, the intimate connections between them have been recognized, for the ‘mutual absorption of the violent and the ordinary’ (Das, 2006:7) has called into question their very separation. In this context Gyan Pandey’s question (2006: 10) what do we ‘gain or lose tactically by extending the boundaries of the phenomenon of violence?’ becomes important. For a society emerging from war, thinking about extraordinary and routine violence in a continuum – even if we insist that this continuum is non-linear, contingent and interrupted – holds possibilities for understanding what post-war Order entails. It enables a focus on the discursivities and materialities that underwrite Sri Lanka’s post-war project.

This is a project in which the predominant address to Sri Lankan citizens is one of getting ‘beyond ethnicity’ and forgetting past grievances for a focus on developmental goals. The ‘development for peace’ policy has the consensus of both multilateral agencies keen to lend money and provide aid for civilian targets of war, and governments keen to obtain donor funding for their sustainability. The visibility of development provides legitimacy to the actors delivering it (Orjuela, 2011: 21). It is therefore no coincidence that on a visit to Sri Lanka in December 2010, the Vice President of the World Bank endorsed the Sri Lanka government’s goals of increasing per capita income to US$ 4000/- by 2016, achieving 8% growth, and making the country a tourist destination and knowledge hub linking East and West. Ngozi (2010) spelt out the necessary policies: strengthening access to global markets; private sector and foreign direct investment enticed by tax reform, implementation of contracts, and simplified registration of property; increasing productivity; dynamic entrepreneurship; investment in education and health in order to export their services; and tight macro-economic policies.15 During the entire speech, there was only an oblique reference to the social and cultural post-war challenges the country faces. Warning against what she called ‘factionalism’ that would lead to the ‘division of the economic pie,’ she emphasized the need for leadership which would ‘unite the nation so that all move towards common goals.’

How can we make best use of these statements for an assessment of post-war order and citizenship in Sri Lanka? My task here is not to

15 The ‘postpolitical’ (and here I draw on a set of analytical interventions on the ‘postcolonial’ and the ‘postnation’ (Menon 2009; Deshpande 2009)) is a location from where scrutiny of the political – its discursivities, materialities, instabilities and effects – is possible.
dismiss development. It is an essential aspect of redistributive justice particularly in a context where underdevelopment of the Sri Lankan North and East was one of the grievances that led to the war. Understanding this, the Sri Lanka government inaugurated several infrastructure development projects such as *Nagenahira Navodaya* (East Awakening) after the East was cleared of the LTTE in July 2007, and *Vadakku Vasantham* (‘Northern Spring’), a 180 day program begun in December 2009 after the war ended to spearhead the reconstruction of the North. Likewise its 2011 budget pledged an investment of US$ 12 billion for the rebuilding of these war-affected areas. As essential as these project are, there is a need to caution against the reductionist ‘post-ethnic utopia’ that such development-as-security frameworks demands. This utopia is what Slavoj Zizek characterized as the ‘post-political’ which he sees as being ‘today’s predominant mode of politics… (which) claims to leave behind old ideological struggles and instead focus on expert management and administration’ (Zizek, 2008: 40). For Zizek the ‘post-political’ overlaps with the biopolitical, because ‘once one renounces big ideological causes, what remains is only the efficient administration of life (ibid).’ My interest for now is not on an Agambenian administration of bare life which Zizek sees as the flip side of the post-political, but on the analytical usefulness of the ‘post-political’ for post-war Sri Lanka.\(^{16}\) The ‘post-political’ is not a place devoid of politics, but one pregnant with questions about political and national futures. In a new world order characterized by global circuits of production and finance, it values global citizenship over loyalty to the nation-state as a unit of power. In turn, given asymmetrical geopolitical power relations today, most governments must as a matter of necessity think in terms of ‘post-nation’ (Deshpande, 2009: 44–5) – a term closely related to the ‘post-political’ – even as they construct a rhetoric around sovereignty. (Sri Lanka’s argument against the EU’s withdrawal of GSP+ is a case in point). The ‘post-political’ is therefore never a totalizing project. But in its appeal to leave ideology behind (even as it asks for our commitment to global capital and consumerism) it hold promise for Sri Lankan policy makers because it is a useful heuristic through which internal cracks can be papered over towards the country’s post-ethnic insertion into global capital and development.

\(^{16}\) Military training schools have been set up in Mullaitivu, Killinochchi and Vavuniya (*Daily Mirror*, 21st August 2009). The intimidating presence of the military on civilians in the north (T. Sritharan cited in Ranasinghe-de Silva 2010:9) and the need to de-mobilise paramilitary groups engaged in crime, abductions and killings in the north and east as a matter of priority were noted by the Committee of Inter-government Agencies (CIGA) appointed to implement the recommendations of the Lessons Learnt and Reconciliation Commission (LLRC). (*Daily Mirror*, 3rd Dec. 2010, p.1)
The Politics of Hurt

However, the ‘post-political’ comes undone when developmental expectations are unmet or delayed as happening in the Vanni, or jobs are being lost as in the KFTZs leading to a civilian politics of hurt. I take here Radhika Chopra’s (2008) definition of hurt as a term or affect which occurs in everyday [speech] to signal the sliding sense of deliberately wrought offense coupled with a politically intentioned wounding of community sentiment. For the IDPs the source of hurt is the Sri Lankan state and/or the actions of the LTTE. For the KFTZ workers, it flows from the EU’s disregard for them. The Head of the EU delegation to Sri Lanka remarked in January 2011 that no qualitative assessment had been carried out by the EU of how the GSP+ withdrawal would impact the country [Savage cited in Najmuddin 2011]). The workers were also disappointed with the Sri Lankan State which they felt did not do enough to safeguard their jobs. The workers’ occlusion from a greater participatory process over the GSP+ issue undermined their sense of ‘active citizenship’ which would have made them both valued and visible (Molyneux, 2007:73–4). It thereby encouraged the hurt of the marginalized. At the same time, in the case of the Tamil IDPs, hurt resides in the gap created by asking Tamils to actively forget ethnic identity towards common developmental goals on the one hand, even as new military training schools, camps and cantonments are established which will inevitably place them under greater surveillance and suspicion of rebel activities on the other.1 The limits of thinking beyond the political, or beyond ethnicity and nation become evident here.

Post-War Futures

So what does this mean for Sri Lanka’s post-war future? Even though the ‘development for peace’ drive failed to secure the peace in Sri Lanka’s stalled peace process of 2002 – 2004 (Orjuela, 2011), neither global nor local policy makers have been willing to shift from the premise that civil and political rights re-framed as developmental rights work towards sustainable peace. This is despite the cautioning that to the idea that ‘where development succeeds, countries become progressively safer from violent conflict’ (Collier et al cited in Culbert, 2005: 43), there is evidence to suggest that ‘the causal links that connect aid to growth or institutional change are far from obvious’ (Zuercher and Böhneke, 2009). The shortfall in this approach is, in part, due to how development is often delivered. Sustainable developmental programs require popular support. Yet this is severely compromised when there is violent competition amongst service delivery providers – including a State which wants a monopoly
that exacerbates existing social fault-lines along those of political affiliation, ethnicity, class, gender, region, sexuality etc. To the arguments that foreign aid can shape domestic policy towards deeper democratization, human rights, and economic growth, there is a substantial body of evidence that shows that developmental aid deepens social divisions through inclusion and exclusion. It can also prolong repression because it strengthens States or rebel groups which, when willing and have the opportunity to do so, summon their coercive capacity to regulate and control citizens (Trisco, 2010:5–6). So, if the ‘State [or rebel group] is an aggregate concept composed of two main areas of institutional capacity: 1) its coercive capacity and 2) its capacity for service provision’ (Trisco, 2010:7), a post-conflict context requires that these two rationalities are precisely balanced. A government in such a situation is in a ‘hybrid state’ for it has to manage a conflict by balancing on the one hand its need to be a strong, centralised, securitised system to sustain its war victory/post-war stability; and on the other, a softer approach of governance aimed at winning the ‘hearts and minds’ of a hostile community (Sammadar, 2010). Development in such a post-war context thereby confers on people ‘a bifurcated sense of security, represented as both prosperity and risk’ (Hyndman, 2007: 363). In Sri Lanka it is in this hyphenated sensibility that the struggle over post-war citizenship most keenly resides.

References


Appendix A

GEXcel seminars, theme 7: Getting Rid of Violence, Autumn 2010

6 October, 1pm to 5pm in Parnassos,
1) Neloufer de Mel, professor, Colombo University, Sri Lanka
   “Re-Thinking Gender, Ethnicity and Development in Post-War Sri Lanka”
2) Rana Jaleel, PhD student, New York University, USA
   “Working Rape – Feminisms and the Rise of Rape in International Law”
   (research outline).

21 October, 1 pm to 5 pm in Lehte
3) Shirin Saeidi, PhD student, University of Cambridge, UK
   a) “Iran’s Silent Sexual Revolution during the Iran-Iraq War”
   b) “Movement and Security in Post-9/11: Queering Global Politics”
4) Sunil Kumar Joshi, Associate Professor, Kathmandu Medical College,
   Nepal and Katarina Swahnberg, PhD, Linköping University, Sweden:
   “Women and Girls Trafficking in Nepal – a Hidden Issue” (research project)

25 October, 1 pm to 5 pm in Faros
5) Halima de Shong, PhD student, University of the West Indies, Barbados
   “Policing Femininities, Affirming Masculinities: Relationship between
   Violence, Control, and Spatial Limitations”
6) Nicola Steffen, PhD, Johann Wolfgang Goethe-Universität, Germany
   “A Content Analysis of Internet Pornography: Are Violent Images
   Increasing and Are They Mirrored in the Phenomenon of ”Porn Chic”?
7) Sara di Palma, PhD, Siena University, Italy
   “Mass Rape, Silencing Women, and Women’s Answer in Bosnia and
   Rwanda.”

25 November, 9 am to 12 in Parnassos
8) Johanna Davidsson, PhD student, Linköping University, Sweden
   “Associations between Experiences of Abuse and Self-Reported Health: A
   Swedish Cross-Sectional Gender Study”
9) Sunil Kumar Joshi, Associate Professor, Kathmandu Medical College, Nepal and Katarina Swahnberg, PhD, Linköping University, Sweden

“Trafficking of Women and Girls from Nepal: A Hidden Issue”

9 December, 1 pm to 3 pm in Faros

10) Lotta Samelius, PhD, the National Swedish Police Academy, Sweden

“Abuse, Coping and Recovery: In Search of a Framework”
Conference program
Violenes and Silences: Shaming, Blaming,—and Intervening

Tuesday October 12

9:00–9:30  Registration and coffee  
  Venue: TEMCAS

9:30–9:45  Welcome and Introduction by Barbro Wijma and Nina Lykke

9:45–10:45  Barbro Wijma & Katarina Swahnberg  
  Violence – silence – shame in health care: mechanisms and options for intervention

10:45–11:15  Coffee

11:15–12:15  Dubravka Zarkov  
  Feminist analysis as transformative intervention: transnational feminist writing on sexual violence against men in the ’war on terror’

12:15–13:30  Lunch

13:30–17:30  Parallel workshop sessions
  Venue: Lethe  
  Violent and silent discourse and representation I  
  Jan Matonoha – Embodied dispositives of silences …  
  Angela Maria Toffanin – Narrations and discourse on violence  
  Elena Panican – “A bunch of rednecks living in straw houses…”  
  Venue: TEMCAS  
  Ways of intervening I  
  Justyna Jochym – Experiencing care as a sexual assault survivor  
  GullBritt Rahm – Out of solitude  
  Vânia Martins et al – Feminisms in intervention

15:30–16:00  Coffee, fruit
  Venue: Lethe  
  Violences and sexualities I  
  Chyng Sun – The price of pleasure (film screening, 58 mins)  
  Venue: TEMCAS  
  Problematic interventions and care as violence  
  Maria José Magalhães, et al – Love, fear and power/shame, blame and silence  
  Jennifer Musto – Anti-trafficking carceral protectionism

18:00  Conference Mingle
Wednesday October 13

Venue: TEMCAS
10:00–11:00 Susan Edwards
The aetiology of women’s silence in violence - lessons from the legal field

11:00–11:30 Coffee, fruit

11:30–12:30 Lotta Samelius, Christa Binswanger & Suruchi Thapar-Björkert
Turning points and the ’Everyday’: exploring agency and violence in intimate relationships

12:30–13:30 Lunch

13:30–18:00 Parallel workshops sessions

Venue: Lethe
Violences and sexualities II
Chyng Sun – Intensified violence: a content analysis of popular pornography
Mathabo Khau – Genital beauty: at what cost?
Nicola Steffen – “Porn chic” and underlying cause of gendered violence

Venue: TEMCAS
Ways of intervening II
Guiseppe Stanziano – Playing violence
Kimberly Twarog – My story is your story

15:30–16:00 Coffee, fruit

Venue: Lethe
Violent and silent discourse and representation II
Halimah DeShong – Talking violence, negotiating gender
Mihai Lucaciu – If I want to harass, I harass

Venue: TEMCAS
Ways of intervening III
Yvonne Mörck – Violence against women in ethnic minority families
Mari Bränvall – Shame and silence when women leave violence

19:00 Conference Dinner
Thursday October 14

Venue: TEMCAS
Åsa Wettergren
9:30–10:30 The humiliation and shaming of institutionalized helper interactions
10:30–11:00 Coffee, fruit
11:00–12:00 Ka Schmitz & Sandra Klauert
Getting in touch: comics and activism - communication, means of intervention and language of resistance – the great chance of comics
12:00–13:00 Lunch
13:00–15:00 Workshop session
Venue: TEMCAS
Gendered violence in war and conflict
Mary Anne Case – “… wrong to do to the prisoners what the Army does to its own soldiers?”
Sara Valentina Di Palma – “No one really cares about us”
15:00–15:30 Coffee, fruit
15:30–16:30 Concluding panel and goodbye
Appendix C

List of scholars theme 7 and their affiliations

Neulofer De Mel, professor, Department of English, University of Colombo, Sri Lanka

Halimah de Shong, PhD student, Institute for Gender and Development Studies, Nita Barrow Unit, University of the West Indies, Cave Hill Campus, Barbados

Sara Valentina Di Palma, PhD, Department of History, Siena University, Italy

Rana Jaleel, PhD student, American Studies, New York University, US

Sunil Kumar Joshi, Associate Professor of Community Medicine, Kathmandu Medical College, Nepal

Mathabo Khau, PhD, Post-Doctoral Fellow, Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University, Port Elizabeth, South Africa

Elena Panican, PhD student, Comparative Gender Studies, Central European University Budapest, Hungary

Shirin Saeidi, PhD student, University of Cambridge, UK

Lotta Samelius, PhD and teacher at the National Swedish Police Academy, Stockholm, Sweden

Nicola Steffen, PhD, Johann Wolfgang Goethe-Universität, Frankfurt am Main, Germany

Katarina Swahnberg, Associate Professor, Gender and Medicine, Linköping University, Sweden

Dubravka Zarkov, Associate Professor, Gender, Conflict and Development Studies, Institute of Social Studies, The Hague, The Netherlands