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Structural Violence Section Introduction

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Direct violence is horrific, but its brutality usually gets our attention: we notice it, and often respond to it. Structural violence, however, is almost always invisible, embedded in ubiquitous social structures, normalized by stable institutions and regular experience. Structural violence occurs whenever people are disadvantaged by political, legal, economic or cultural traditions. Because they are longstanding, structural inequities usually seem ordinary, the way things are and always have been. The chapters in this section teach us about some important but invisible forms of structural violence, and alert us to the powerful cultural mechanisms that create and maintain them over generations.

Structured inequities produce suffering and death as often as direct violence does, though the damage is slower, more subtle, more common, and more difficult to repair. Globally, poverty is correlated with infant mortality, infectious disease, and shortened lifespans. Whenever people are denied access to society's resources, physical and psychological violence exists.

Johan Galtung originally framed the term structural violence to refer to any constraint on human potential due to economic and political structures (1969). Unequal access to resources, to political power, to education, to health care, or to legal standing, are forms of structural violence. When inner city children have inadequate schools while others do not, when gays and lesbians are fired for their sexual orientation, when laborers toil in inhumane conditions, when people of color endure environmental toxins in their neighborhoods, structural violence exists. Unfortunately, even those who are victims of structural violence often do not see the systematic ways in which their plight is choreographed by unequal and unfair distribution of society's resources.

Structural violence is problematic in and of itself, but it is also dangerous because it frequently leads to direct violence. Those who are chronically oppressed are often, for logical reasons, those who resort to direct violence. For example, cross-national studies of murder have shown a positive correlation between economic inequality and homicide

rates across 40 nations (Hansmann & Quigley, 1982; Unnithan & Whitt, 1992). In the U.S., racial inequality in wealth is correlated with murder rates (Blau & Golden, 1986). Often elites must use direct violence to curb the unrest produced by structural violence. For example, during the 1980s, mean income disparity between whites and blacks in the same urban area predicted use of deadly force by police (Jacobs & O'Brien, 1998). Structural violence often requires police states to suppress resentments and social unrest. Huge income disparities in many Latin American countries are protected by correspondingly huge military operations, which in turn drain resources away from social programs and produce even more structural violence.

Organized armed conflict in various parts of the world is easily traced to structured inequalities. Northern Ireland, for example, has been marked by economic disparities between Northern Irish Catholics-- who have higher unemployment rates and less formal education--and Protestants (Cairns & Darby, 1998). In Sri Lanka, youth unemployment and underemployment exacerbates ethnic conflict (Rogers, Spencer & Uyangoda, 1998). In Rwanda, huge disparities between the Hutu and Tutsies eventually led to ethnic massacres.

While structural violence often leads to direct violence, the reverse is also true, as brutality often terrorizes bystanders, who then become unwilling or unable to confront social injustice. Increasingly, civilians pay enormous costs of war through death and devastation of neighborhoods and ecosystems. Ruling elites rarely suffer from armed conflict as much as civilian populations do, who endure decades of poverty and disease in war-torn societies.

When social inequities are noticed, attempts are made to rationalize and understand them. Unfortunately, one outcome of this process is to assume that victims must in some way deserve their plight. But certainly it is easy to see that young children do not deserve to be victims of structural violence. The chapters in this section help us see the often invisible effects of structural violence, and the two first chapters focus on its effects on children. In their chapter *The War Close to Home: Children and Violence in the United States*, Kathleen Kostelny and James Garbarino describe the chronic violence which children in Chicago and other urban areas of the United States endure, often paralleling that experienced by children who live in countries at war. The authors examine myriad environmental risk factors, including family violence, parental depression, media violence, and firearm accessibility, which produce violent environments for children. Children who endure these environments often become battle weary, numb, hopeless, and/or morally impaired. The authors describe how community and family support mechanisms must be built to mitigate these risks. For example, home visitation and early childhood education programs provide crucial community support.

While Kostelny and Garbarino focus on community intervention techniques, Milton Schwebel and Daniel Christie extend this discussion by examining the economic and psychological structures which impair at-risk children. In their article *Children and Structural Violence*, the authors explicate how children living in poverty experience diminished intellectual development because parents are too overwhelmed to be able to provide crucial linguistic experiences. In the United States in particular, but throughout the world, children who are deprived of close bonds with adults and intellectual mediation which caretakers provide, are disadvantaged for the rest of their lives. Schwebel and Christies discussion concludes that economic structures must provide parents with living wage employment, good prenatal medical care, and high quality child care, if we are to see the next generation develop into the intelligent and caring citizens needed to create a peaceful world.

If children are often the invisible and innocent victims of societys structural violence, so are their mothers. Diane Mazurana and Susan McKays *Women, Girls, and Structural Violence* discusses the many ways in which global sexism systematically denies girls and women access to resources. From health care and food, to legal standing and political power, females get less than males in every country on the planet. Yet we often do not notice sex-based injustice because we are so accustomed to seeing males with more power, prestige, and status than women. Mazurana and McKay argue that patriarchy-based structural violence will not be redressed until women are able to play more active roles making decisions about how resources are distributed.

Patriarchal values also drive excessive militarism, as Deborah Winter, Marc Pilisuk, Sara Houck and Matthew Lee argue in their chapter, *Understanding Militarism: Money, Masculinity, and the Search for the Mystical*. The authors illuminate how socieites make soldiering a male rite of passage and proof of manhood, thereby showing the close link between militarism and masculinity. Militarization is also deeply rooted in spiritual motives, as men attempt to experience mystical sacrifice through war. Both masculinism and mysticism drive military expenditures beyond rational ends, and produce great structural violence to those (usually women and children) whose human needs for adequate food, health care, and education go unmet because arms are bought instead. In addition, market forces fuel arms production and distribution throughout the world; half the worlds countries spend more on arms than health and education combined.

The global economy that drives weapons production and excessive militarization produces structural violence on a planetary scale, especially in developing countries, as Marc Pilisuk argues in his chapter *Globalism and Structural Violence*. As global markets grow, income disparity increases around the world. Relaxed trade regulations and increased communication networks are creating powerful multinational conglomerates that derive huge profits off under-paid laborers in developing countries. The result is

horrific structural violence to workers who toil under brutal conditions. Globalism also produces a mono-culture, in which people throughout the world learn that the good life consists of convenience products, western dress, and western values of individuality and consumerism. The seduction of western norms is disintegrating traditional societies which in the past provided meaning and care for its members. Pilisuk argues that non-governmental organizations at the local level must work to reclaim workers dignity and neighborhoods.

The invisibility of injustice to laborers in the global market economy parallels the invisibility of injustice to indigenous people, the focus of Brinton Lykes chapter, Human Rights Violations as Structural Violence. Here Lykes argues for the expansion of human rights beyond the traditionally conceived civic and political realms, to include social, cultural and indigenous rights, which guarantee people their traditional culture and relationship with their land. She explicates two case studies, in Guatemala and Argentina, in which indigenous people are healing and reclaiming their cultural identities. Lykes discussion helps us see the limitations of psychology as it is traditionally conceived, that is, the study of individuals and their responses to their environments. For Lykes, as well as an increasing number of post-modern psychologists, the collective meanings of human experience-- human meaning that is embedded in particular cultures, neighborhoods, and places can no longer be ignored. The individual cannot be our only focus. Lykes call to examine and work with the collective meanings parallels the focus of this section on structural violence, in that both concepts force us to examine the political and economic institutions which psychologists typically ignore. In this respect, the thinking in both sections 2 (Structural Violence) and 4 (Peace Building) of this book go beyond traditional psychology, and force us to examine the sociological, economic, political, and spiritual dimensions of violence and peace.

Finally, to recognize the operation of structural violence forces us to ask questions about how and why we tolerate it, questions which often have painful answers for the privileged elite who unconsciously support it. A final question of this section is how and why we allow ourselves to be so oblivious to structural violence. Susan Opatow offers an intriguing set of answers, in her article Social Injustice. She argues that our normal perceptual/cognitive processes divide people into in-groups and out-groups. Those outside our group lie outside our scope of justice. Injustice that would be instantaneously confronted if it occurred to someone we love or know is barely noticed if it occurs to strangers or those who are invisible or irrelevant. We do not seem to be able to open our minds and our hearts to everyone, so we draw conceptual lines between those who are in and out of our moral circle. Those who fall outside are morally excluded, and become either invisible, or demeaned in some way so that we do not have to acknowledge the injustice they suffer. Moral exclusion is a human failing, but Opatow argues convincingly that it is an outcome of everyday social cognition. To reduce its nefarious ef-

fects, we must be vigilant in noticing and listening to oppressed, invisible, outsiders. Inclusionary thinking can be fostered by relationships, communication, and appreciation of diversity.

Like Opatow, all the authors in this section point out that structural violence is not inevitable if we become aware of its operation, and build systematic ways to mitigate its effects. Learning about structural violence may be discouraging, overwhelming, or maddening, but these papers encourage us to step beyond guilt and anger, and begin to think about how to reduce structural violence. All the authors in this section note that the same structures (such as global communication and normal social cognition) which feed structural violence, can also be used to empower citizens to reduce it. In the long run, reducing structural violence by reclaiming neighborhoods, demanding social justice and living wages, providing prenatal care, alleviating sexism, and celebrating local cultures, will be our most surefooted path to building lasting peace.

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