

# Postructuralism and Feminism: The Interplay between Gender, Language and Power

Written by Michael Wooldridge

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## Postructuralism and Feminism: The Interplay between Gender, Language and Power

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### **Language, Gender and Violence: To What Extent Can a Post-Structural Understanding of Discourse and Language Be Used in Conjunction with Feminist IR Theory to Better Understand and Overcome Structures of Violence?**

#### **I: Introduction**

According to FBI statistics, there were 14,827 murders perpetrated in the US in 2012[1], in the same year UNICEF estimates that throughout developing regions roughly 7 million children died before reaching the age of five[2], and, furthermore, there is an estimated 875 million illiterate people in the world, two thirds of which are women; a proportion practically unchanged since 1990.[3] It's statistics like these that has led the World Health Organisation to 'label violence a global pandemic, with a multitude of causes and manifestations'[4]; from the arms race, to the international corporate commodification of almost every human activity, to the unyielding, grinding poverty and concomitant ill-health which blights the lives of millions. Violence is an endemic and virulent current aspect of global society, one that simultaneously constitutes and is constituted by inequality; it is a trait of modern cultural-political society that oppresses, damages, and is, arguable, wholly ethically pernicious to the global tradition and agenda of progress towards a 'more utopian' version of reality.

Indeed violence is inherently antithetical to the practical attainment of equality and peace, as such it is worrying that it is apparently under-theorized especially within the dominant International Relations theory on security; 'where violence is...a functional mechanism within an anarchic international system'.[5] For utilising Galtung's theory of violence[6] as a point of departure, we can see that existing in cultural and structural forms, as well as direct, that violence happens in areas and ways that people don't recognize. It is not academically rigorous enough to simply theorize violence as the physical or mental harm that one human can inflict on another, what needs to be explored and thus exposed is the cultural norms and societal structures that legitimate and normalize this violence. It is for this reason that violence is the subject of this research. For the first steps to effecting meaningful and lasting change is producing a thorough understanding of the issue. Thus there is an urgent need to 'expose the myths that surround violence, [and] challenge how such myths have become so embedded in popular thought that they appear normalised'.[7]

To do this, this paper shall concomitantly utilise Post-structuralism and Feminist IR theory to elucidate how and why violence exists, and then normatively imagine a process that would enable the overcoming of it. Importantly these theories have been chosen, not just because on their own each theory offers critical insights regarding our existing 'social reality', but because together they provide the most comprehensive understanding of violence through a merged analysis of discourses and gender. Yet these theories have not historically sat comfortably together, and indeed some feminists take issue with poststructuralism; reacting to poststructuralism's 'inattention to patriarchy and structural exclusion of women'.[8] They see it as a challenge to gains made by feminists in developing solidarity, mobilizing against a common oppressor, and valorizing the sovereignty of experience.

What, then, is a secondary aim of this paper, is to comprehensively demonstrate the extent to which these theories

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can be utilised in conjunction. Indeed Feminist Poststructuralism is especially appealing as it offers an analysis beyond liberal feminists' attention to individual women's rights, and radical feminism's collective action for social justice and the end of patriarchy. Feminist poststructuralism helps us move beyond binaries of male and female and 'essentializing practices', [9] and while admittedly poststructuralism's nonunitary subjectivity makes the identification of the 'enemy' [10] much more difficult, [11] rather than disempowering the feminist project, poststructuralism must be viewed as critically important in unmasking layers of power previously unrecognized 'in order to reconstitute the world in less oppressive ways'. [12]

Indeed, in their methodological approaches there are important similarities between the theories: similarities that mean they can effectively be employed together. For, fundamentally, poststructuralists, such as Derrida and Foucault, have challenged traditional epistemological assumptions about knowledge and truth; in terms of how knowledge can be apprehended and whose knowledge is valorized. [13] Moreover, 'poststructuralism's discursive ontology is...deeply entwined with its understanding of language as constitutive for [reality]'. [14] To poststructuralism language is ontologically significant: it is only through construction in language that 'things' - objects, subjects, states, living beings, and material structures - are given meaning and endowed with an identity. Language is not a tool for the cataloguing of data as (implicitly) assumed by positivist approaches, but a field of social and political practice, and hence there is no objective or 'true meaning' beyond the linguistic representation to which one can refer. [15]

Many third-wave feminists share this commitment to postpositivism, and it can be seen to underpin much of feminist IR theory. Indeed, postpositivism is especially relevant for feminism when one considers that the IR field has been historically marked by extreme male dominance. [16] The implication has been that 'one can study [IR] without reference to questions of gender. Moreover, by neglecting...gender, [IR] implicitly supports the thesis that international processes themselves are gender neutral'. [17] Thus, currently, the 'representation of the world... is the work of men; they describe it from their... point of view, which they confuse with absolute truth'. [18] But from the 1980's onwards, and the works of Enloe [19], Elshtain [20] and Tickner [21], Feminism has shown that 'women and gender exist, and have practical, ontological, [and] epistemological...implications' [22] to the study of security. By asking 'where are the women?' [23] one can perceive the world through an alternative gendered focus [24] that facilitates the ability to 'see' depictions [25] of international politics different to those conventionally offered. [26] What, then, feminist perspectives do, is insert gender as a framework for analytical study that deconstructs the masculinity that dominates the intrinsic assumptions of our intelligible reality, offering an understanding based on the experiences of all, instead of a few.

Crucially then, to draw these theories together, if language constructs reality, and reality is constructed through the experiences of men and masculinities, then violence does not necessarily exist as an objective reality [27], but is rather naturalized as a subjective societal process through its legitimization, normalization and even valorization as a characteristic of 'hegemonic masculinity' [28]. Indeed, it is through an analysis of gender and the discourses that construct it, that we can begin to unpick violence as both constitutive of and constituting hegemonic masculinity. For given that feminism is dedicated to bring about social changes, and ultimately to arresting the reproduction of systematic inequalities, their interest in language and gender resides in the complex part language plays [29] in reflecting, creating and sustaining gender divisions in society. [30] It is, importantly, these gender divisions, and the construction of gender generally, as based on difference and hierarchy, that work to legitimate, valorize and normalize violence within society.

What I shall seek to achieve can thus be broken down into two distinct aims. Firstly I will utilise Poststructuralism, specifically discourse theory, in conjunction with Feminist IR theory to show that violence, as defined by using Galtung's theory as a point of departure, is not an intrinsic part of an objective reality, but rather that violence exists because it is legitimated and normalized through the valorization of a hegemonic masculinity, of which violence is an intrinsic part; and that crucially this hegemonic masculinity is constructed through discourses related to gender. Thus by exposing the interplay between gender, language and power in relation to how such concepts (re)construct, (re)produce and maintain the current 'social reality', we can reveal violence to not be part of objective 'human nature' and society, but rather a socially facilitated construct; and in doing so we can normatively imagine a process to overcome it. Secondly, as part of this analysis, I shall demonstrate the large extent to which feminism and post-

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structuralism can be used in conjunction.

To argue this, this paper shall be split into three sections. The first section shall engage in a brief literature review of the theories, providing a working theoretical framework that this paper can thus be understood within. Lastly this section shall critically analyze Galtung's theory of violence; offering a definitive definition of 'violence'. The second section shall explore how language and power construct reality, and offer an exploration of the position and importance of gender within this process. To do this I shall firstly analyse how discourses operate, before engaging with a Foucauldian understanding of power. I will then draw this analysis together to demonstrate how discourses and power work to construct a gender biased 'social reality'. The last section will then utilise this theory to demonstrate how violence within 'reality' can be understood as socially enabled through the valorization of hegemonic masculinity. To do this I shall utilise Galtung's three forms of violence and engage with an analysis of the (re)construction and naturalization of violence in each form. Lastly this paper shall look to normatively imagine how we can overcome violence through a utilization of Neumann's 'as if' stories and a commitment to an 'optimistic poststructuralism'.

## II: Constructing an Operational Theoretical Framework

### *Poststructuralism and Discourse Theory*

Any research agenda utilising poststructuralism must first address what it is, and secondly attempt to answer the Realist and positivist critique of Postmodernism and poststructuralism that it's contributions are beyond the pale: 'a prolix and self-indulgent discourse...divorced from the real world'.<sup>[31]</sup> Thus this section shall explore what poststructuralism is, before providing an argument as to how it should be used, thus addressing the positivist critique. Finally I shall critically engage with 'discourse theory'.

Fundamentally we can trace poststructuralism to the postmodern movement, and the approach of individuals like Lyotard, Derrida and Foucault who reject modernity and the Enlightenment in favor of a perspective that refuses to adopt a normative position grounded in a modernist structure of privileged ethical assumptions and claims.<sup>[32]</sup> Moreover, while notoriously difficult to define given a widespread academic intransigence to self-categorization, an often used, and useful definition by Lyotard in relation to post-modernism is: 'simplifying...to the extreme, I define postmodernism as incredulity towards metanarratives'.<sup>[33]</sup> Where the term 'metanarrative' refers to a general theory that asserts clear foundations for claiming the validity of particular knowledge. They are supposedly universal, or absolute truths that are used to legitimate various political or scientific projects.

Poststructuralism operates with this 'incredulity'; by 'challenging universal ideas and opposing grand theory based on the assumptions of underlying...truths'.<sup>[34]</sup> While there are different forms of poststructuralism, they all share fundamental assumptions regarding language, meaning and subjectivity.<sup>[35]</sup> It is, essentially, the critical theorizing of discourse, knowledge, power, truth, reality, and the subject. Specifically, it argues that identity and meaning are rooted in language, thus meaning is provisional and identity is unfixed.<sup>[36]</sup> What this means is that:

'There is no such thing as truth, only regimes of truth.... Statements about the social world are only 'true' within specific discourses. Society decides what is acceptable to believe and what is unacceptable, the latter of which is to suppressed or merely ridiculed'.<sup>[37]</sup>

Within this statement we can perceive two distinct themes of poststructuralism. As highlighted by Barrett, there is a difference between Foucault's theory of discourse, which describes discourse as central in the nexus of power relations, and between 'discourse' as it relates to textuality in the work of Derrida.<sup>[38]</sup> For Foucault, poststructuralism is concerned with how some discourses and therefore some truths come to dominate others. This is, thus, why power is critical to the process as power and knowledge depend on each other.<sup>[39]</sup> Indeed the key aspect of Foucault's concept of discourse is that it enables us to 'understand how [meaning] has its own social and historical context'<sup>[40]</sup> as based on power relations. The second theme concerns textual strategies; the central claim, following Derrida, is that how we construct the world is textual. For Derrida, the world is constituted like a text in the sense that our understanding of it reflects linguistic concepts and structures. By deconstructing 'universally' understood concepts

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what can be elucidated is that they are actually socially constructed contrivances arranged hierarchically so that certain terms are privileged – for example good/bad, powerful/powerless, right/wrong. Therefore, deconstruction shows how theories and discourses rely on artificial stabilities produced by the use of seemingly natural oppositions in language.[41]

It is this process of deconstruction and the belief in the ontological importance of language, however, that so many critics of postmodernism attack. Critics like Norris state that deconstruction ultimately leads to an intellectual dead end, because it produces the idea that 'reality [is] constructed entirely in and through language' and that 'essentially we inhabit a realm of unanchored free-flowing language games'.[42]

It is through critiquing such a viewpoint that we show how poststructuralism should be used, but also the importance of approaching theory with an optimistic manner. For Norris is wrong on two accounts. Firstly because the word 'games' entirely misses the point: language holds within it the entirety of suffering, struggles and successes of humanity. Language and communication is not a 'game', it is the medium through which social life operates. To call language a 'game' is to trivialize its importance. Secondly because the destination where Poststructuralism delivers us is entirely contingent on perspective; it is either a 'dead end', or, more positively, a doorway to an unimaginable number of alternatively socially constructed realities. This is why optimism is so crucial when utilising this theory; for poststructuralism to breach the gap between theory and practical problem-solving we must approach it with the mindset that practical change is possible. Fundamentally we should not be disheartened when utilising poststructuralism, but instead should embrace a feeling of liberation.

Having outlined what poststructuralism is and how it should be used, I will now briefly outline what Discourse analysis is, and how it will be deployed in this paper. Discourse theory has developed over time, drawing on cultural, literary, linguistic, social and political theory. Indeed a Realist understanding conceives of discourses as 'particular objects with their own properties and powers...and the task of discourse analysis is to unravel 'the conceptual elisions and confusions by which language enjoys its power''.[43] Thus the development of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) as a distinct school draws on this realist, integrating these foundational assumptions with an understanding of human agency such that there exists a dialectical relationship between 'discourses and the social systems in which they function'.[44]

It is this type of Discourse analysis from which I want to differentiate. For authors such as Fairclough, Wodak and van Dijk[45] posit a troubling distinction between the realm of the discursive and non-discursive. As Sunderland argues, 'CDA entails the extra-discursive...a real world where reality does not depend on what is known about'.[46] While Fairclough talks about 'discursive practices', he insists that 'these practices are constrained by tak[ing] place within a constituted, material reality'.[47] I do not conceive of this distinction between a discursive and non-discursive realm.

For like Foucault, this paper understands discursive practices as '*embodied* in technical processes, in institutions, in patterns for general behavior, in forms for transmission or diffusion, and in pedagogical forms, which, at once, impose and maintain them'.[48] Thus 'imbrication of the discursive and 'non-discursive' effectively collapses the non-discursive as a theoretical or analytical device, given the *embodiment* of such practices'.[49] As such, similar to Shepherd, I shall utilise the term Discourse Theoretical analysis as coined by Torfing in 1999[50], to classify the form of discourse theory I shall employ.

Under this model, as cogently expressed by Laclau and Mouffe:

'Our analysis rejects the distinction between discursive and non-discursive practices. It affirms: a) that every object is constituted as an object of discourse...and b) that any distinction between what are usually called the linguistic and behavioral aspects of a social practice, is either an incorrect distinction or ought to find its place within the social production of meaning, which is structured under the form of discursive totalities.'[51]

As such DTA can be utilised to explain how discursive practices maintain, construct, constitute, legitimize, resist and suspend meaning and it is these practices that I shall analyse in relation to violence.

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## *Feminism*

Having outlined poststructuralism, this section shall deal with a similar overview of feminism; but importantly I shall also analyze the extent to which poststructuralism can, and has, engaged with feminism. Finally this section shall explore Connell's concept of Hegemonic Masculinity.

Feminist approaches entered IR at the end of the 1980's, at about the same time as the beginning of the 'postpositivist' era. Indeed, 'most IR feminists situate themselves on the postpositivist side of the third debate', whereby they are self-reflexively conscious of how ideas and by extension discourses work to construct the world.[52] As such, feminism's intersection with poststructuralism has provided their theory with critical frameworks, including 'discourse', 'deconstruction' and 'difference', which have been used to challenge and refine traditional assumptions of identity, and gender.[53] As early as 1987 Weedon contended that the Poststructural concept of discourse should be considered centrally important for feminism. Maintaining that feminism must investigate the discursive 'sites' of male power as they are articulated and legitimized in institutional structures and forms of knowledge.[54] It is this methodological perspective that makes feminism unique, for it challenges the 'often unseen...masculine biases in the way that knowledge has been constructed'.[55]

Central to 'masculine biases' is thus the concept of gender; and it is through feminism's analysis of gender that we can elucidate the link between discourses and the normalization of violence within society. Firstly it is critical to define 'gender'. As one must distinguish between the biological sexes[56], and the social constructs of masculine and feminine. For gender is 'a constitutive element of social relationships based on perceived differences...a way of signifying relationships of power'.[57] These 'differences' manifest themselves through a set of culturally determined and socially constructed binary distinctions such as public/private, reason/emotion, and autonomy/relatedness, which serve to perpetuate gendered hierarchies to the detriment of '*feminine*'[58] characteristics. Gender is 'not static, but [a] contingent and changing social fact and process.[59] Crucially, feminists use gender to investigate power dynamics and social hierarchies. Indeed they have suggested that gender inequalities, along with other relations of domination and subordination, are 'among the...building blocks'[60] on which, to varying extents, the recognizable features of the socio-political world have been constructed. Notably these 'building blocks' are created through discourses that valorize masculinities and perpetuate gender differences and hierarchies.

It is given this that hegemony has become a key, if varied, concept in reference to theorizing masculinities. Connell[61] seminaly suggested that the concept of a 'hegemonic masculinity' should be perceived of. Existing as a type of culturally dominant masculinity distinguished from others as a socially constructed ideal. While it does not correspond to the actual personality of most; it sustains patriarchal authority and legitimizes a patriarchal political and social order. Thus hegemonic masculinity is maintained through maintaining pre-eminence over subordinated and devalued masculinities, such as homosexuality, along with its dominance in relation to femininities.[62]

Most importantly, for this paper, are the characteristics that are normalized and valorized as a culturally idealized form of masculinity. For drawing on the work of Donaldson, Edwards and Murphy[63] we can view hegemonic masculinity as a collective project that emphasizes aggression, dominance, heterosexual performance and homophobia as normal. Indeed, within the concept itself, the notion of 'hegemony' addresses relations of societal power, ideology and the domination of 'commonsense'; when in reality 'what is called commonsense is...knowledge derived from experiences of men'[64], but more importantly, not simply men, but those that adhere to this valorized ideal of hegemonic masculinity.

We can draw a direct link between the construction and sustaining of hegemonic masculinity and violence. For a key theme of research on masculinities purports to violence being a characteristic central to the performance of masculinity: 'both as an expression of male power and a way of maintaining the patriarchal privilege'.[65] Violence, then, is simultaneously gendered and gendering; that not only does violence exist as a performance of masculinity, but it also constitutes how masculinity is defined. For example, on issues of war, feminists have asked why men predominantly fight them, and how gendered hierarchies have legitimized militarism for both women and men. This thus has a central importance for our understanding of violence, for utilising feminist IR theory we can explore how the world is seen and constructed 'from the point of view' of men. But, moreover, how gendered hierarchies, as

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socially constructed, valorize, legitimize and normalize certain characteristics and actions that are misconstrued as objective truth. For in employing poststructuralism to understand the discourses that construct gender hierarchies, especially hegemonic masculinity, we can reveal violence to be not an intrinsic part of the human condition, but rather as an aspect that is legitimated by social processes.

## *Galtung and Violence*

Now this paper has a working theoretical framework, we can explore the concept of 'violence'. To do this, I will begin with Galtung's theory of violence, before showing how feminism and poststructuralism can enrich and contribute to his theory.

Violence is often understood as an act by an individual against another, in a physical 'fist-fight', or as gangsters using guns in turf wars, or as large-scale terrorism; or perhaps as international warfare, such as the trench fighting of the First World War.[66] Yet this view of violence is worryingly narrow. Thus Galtung formulated a theory based on the recognition that direct, personal violence is only one of three shapes which violence assumes. The other two categories, namely structural (or indirect) and cultural violence, are present in society in subtler, but no less damaging ways. Indeed, Galtung acknowledges that poverty (structural violence) or media glorification of violence (cultural violence) are no less forms of violence.[67]

Therefore, violence can also be construed as a 'force that unintentionally prevent[s] humans from realizing their actual potential'.[68] That structural violence acts 'as the social machinery of oppression'[69] and under this, cultural violence, acting through discourses, ideologies and religion, work to legitimate and normalize structural and direct forms of violence. For example, structural violence can refer to reduced life-expectancy as a consequence of oppressive political or economic structures; such as greater infant mortality among poor women who are denied access to healthcare.[70] Crucially, recognition of the presence of structural violence allows us to: 'better understand that social and government policies...engender a kind of structural violence that is normalized and accepted as part of the 'status quo', but that is experienced as injustice and brutality at the particular intersections of race, ethnicity, class, nationality, gender and age'.[71] Furthermore, we can add another layer that perceives cultural violence operating at a level under the structural; one that legitimates the discourses that allow for such policies and norms to exist.

Galtung's weakness, however, is that he fails to analyse gender in the social construction of violence, with the consequence that his prescriptions for nonviolent method are at best temporary piecemeal solutions to a deeply ingrained attitude towards violence as 'natural'. [72] They cannot effectively transform society's inclination to violence. What needs to be incorporated is an understanding of gender and discourses; relating to exactly how violence is constructed and legitimated in society.

For Feminist IR shows that gender as a social construct organizes social life in hierarchical, mutually exclusive categories, which are in a relationship of sub/super ordination to one another. This not only means that violence can at times be valued over nonviolence[73], as the current Iraq war demonstrates, but also that the justification of this superior status of violence owes much to gender relations. Fundamentally, while Galtung has succeeded in better theorizing forms of violence, without such an analysis he fails at properly understanding how and why these forms of violence exist.

As such, as Confortini shows, there are four interrelated contributions that feminism can add to Galtung's theory. Firstly that it benefits from an understanding of gender as a social construct that embodies power relations. Second, that this understanding allows us to see how social-cultural norms and traditions are deeply gendered, and involved in the (re)production of violence at all levels. Third, that many feminists see language as constitutive of social relations and they have successfully shown that language both reflects and reproduces existing gender relations. Furthermore, gendered language actualizes possibilities and impossibilities, so that certain social worlds only become imaginable (thus pursuable) through particular discourses; thus violence or peace can be constituted through language. Finally, recent feminist work on masculinities has presented evidence that violence is deeply implicated in the construction and reproduction of gender relations, and in particular, in hegemonic masculinity.[74]

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Therefore, in applying a Poststructural gendered lens onto Galtung's theory, we begin to elucidate more clearly the nature of violence.

Finally, it is critical to remove this paper from the constraints of conceptualizing violence as a structure or system; as such terms 'hint at violence working similar to a static or monolithic entity'.<sup>[75]</sup> Instead theorizing violence as a process allows us to understand the complexities and contestations behind violence as a socio-cultural and socio-political practice, and thus to envision the possibility of change.

## III: Language, Power and Reality

### *Language and Discourses*

Now that I have developed a working theoretical framework, this paper will move on to explore how our 'social reality' is constructed through discourses and power relations. For by revealing the socially constructed nature of 'reality' we can elucidate violence's contingent and subjective place within it. Thus firstly we must understand how language works, together with what discourses are, and how they operate.

Language, fundamentally, is ontologically significant. It is 'social and political, an inherently unstable system of signs that generate meaning through a simultaneous construction of identity and difference'.<sup>[76]</sup> Or, 'the place where actual and possible forms of social organisation...are defined and contested. Yet it is also the place where our sense of selves, our subjectivity is constructed'.<sup>[77]</sup> In other words, that it is only through linguistic constructs that 'things' are given meaning and endowed with a particular identity. As such, there is no 'true meaning' beyond something's linguistic representation. Indeed Spender's<sup>[78]</sup> *Man Made Language*, an important early work on language and gender, works from the starting point that the English Language embodies a certain world view and determines the consciousness of it's speakers:

'Language helps form the limits of our reality. It is our means of ordering, classifying and manipulating the world. It is through language that we become members of a human community, that the world becomes comprehensible and meaningful, that we bring into existence the world in which we live'.<sup>[79]</sup>

Importantly understanding language being used as part of a 'community' is to understand language as being inherently *social*. Language is not the private property of an individual but rather 'a series of collective codes and conventions that each individual needs to employ to make oneself comprehensible'.<sup>[80]</sup> To take this further then, language's social character implies that individuals are socialized into connecting specific words and sounds with particular objects, emotions and ideas. But more than this, that these can be perceived to be grouped together to form discourses; or, 'historically constituted bodies of knowledge and practice that *shape* people, giving position of power to some and not others'.<sup>[81]</sup>

Indeed, turning to Foucault, we can see that discourses are structures of possibility and constraint. They reflect and constitute social 'realities', practices, relationships, and identities; and there is 'a dialectic relationship between any text (spoken or written), its associated discursive practices, and the broader social and institutional context in which it exists'.<sup>[82]</sup> To evidence this, let us take medicine as a body of knowledge, practices and social identities. Medical discourse defines health and sickness; and if we conceptualize 'mental illness' we realize that it consists of everything that has ever been said or written about it. The term is meaningless by itself, and it has, moreover, shifted in it's meaning through centuries. Thus 'discourses are historically constituted social constructions in the organisation and distribution of knowledge'.<sup>[83]</sup>

Yet medical discourse also determines who has the *power* to do the defining. Knowledge doesn't simply arise out of things. Therefore the fact that discourses are historically and socially constituted means that what is included as truth, access to that truth, and who may determine it, all depend on relations of power. As Foucault thus notes, we can perceive that dominant members of institutions maintain control through controlling discourses and creating order; that is, by being the ones who define the boundaries and categories of knowledge.

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## *Power and Reality*

Discourses, then, constitute social 'realities', and discourses are constructed through language, which works by giving 'things' meanings. What this thus means is that 'there is no such thing as truth, only regimes of truth'.<sup>[84]</sup> Therefore statements about the social world are only 'true' within specific discourses. Dominant members of society decide what is acceptable to believe, and what is not; the latter is suppressed or ridiculed. Fundamental to this process is power. This section shall therefore utilise a Foucauldian conception of power to demonstrate how the interplay between discourses and power construct 'reality'. My conceptualization of power, however, shall possess a greater emphasis on the gender/power relation, 'which is given fairly low priority in his writing'.<sup>[85]</sup>

For Foucault, power is omnipresent. Yet the 'omnipresence of power: [is] not because it has the privilege of consolidating everything under its invincible unity, but because it is produced...in every relation from one point to another. Power is everywhere; not because it embraces everything, but because it comes from everywhere'.<sup>[86]</sup> Power exists universally, it is in our institutions and our relationships, in how we act and the language we use. Moreover, crucially, 'power is not something that is acquired, seized or shared, something that one holds onto or allows to slip away; power is exercised from innumerable points'.<sup>[87]</sup> Everything that we can see or conceive of is a product of power relations. Indeed, it exists as a 'pervasive regulatory system for social control, in which all individuals and social institutions take part'.<sup>[88]</sup>

Crucial, though, to understanding power is the fact that it is productive. Power acts 'as a productive network which runs through the whole social body, much more than...a negative instance whose function is repression'.<sup>[89]</sup> What this thus means is that power produces conditions, instances and webs of meaning, that are productive of the 'social body'. Thus, if power is productive, as Foucault argues, and discursive practices are also productive, specifically of meaning, as argued earlier, and involve 'relations of power', then it is reasonable to sustain the theoretical assumption that power is implicated in the production of meaning. That is to say, the 'ways in which discursive practices construct an intelligible reality that then itself acts as a referent for the construction of meaning are intrinsically related to power'.<sup>[90]</sup> Relations of power thus control the legitimization of discourses, and as such we can follow this logic to argue that power controls that which is normalized, valorized and legitimized as our 'intelligible reality'. Given this, by understanding and revealing those institutions that exercise this power, we can more comprehensively understand how violence is normalised and thus better imagine how to overcome it.

What a Foucauldian analysis thus reveals is the nature of the relationship between this control of knowledge and power. In revealing this, we can separate our understanding of reality from the pernicious rationalist belief that knowledge is immune from power. Instead understanding that 'all power requires knowledge and all knowledge relies on and reinforces existing power relations'.<sup>[91]</sup> Given this there is no such thing as 'truth' existing outside of power, as 'how can history have a truth, if truth has a history'.<sup>[92]</sup>

Crucially, though, it is fortunate that the exercise of power to define 'reality' is not uncontestable; counterdiscourses work to propose alternate versions of social reality, and this has important implications for movements committed to bringing about social change. For the value of Foucault's conception of discourse, and it's interplay with power, lies in its 'historical and social account of their of their definition, delimitation and control'.<sup>[93]</sup> Indeed, this Poststructural analysis, which reveals the logical correlation between power and the construction of our intelligible reality through knowledge, is incredibly important for feminist analysis. For if discourses are historically and socially contingent, and controlled by those institutions and individuals who 'control' the dissemination of knowledge at a particular moment in time, then what this means is that practical change can be normatively imagined through a modification of power relations and thus discourses.

If, then, we impose gender as an analytical category, to help elucidate 'the way that people think about the world',<sup>[94]</sup> while appreciating that 'reality' is a product of power relations, then gender relations and even the construction of gender are a product of power. Thus if we are to 'more adequately examine and remedy discrimination and oppression'<sup>[95]</sup>, both of which are symptomatic of violence, we must make these relations of power more visible. Or to put this candidly, we must reveal that the discourses that construct the world are inherently masculine.



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## *Language, Power, and the Gendered Construction of Reality*

What this section shall thus seek to achieve is to utilise Poststructural feminism to engage in a gender-sensitive analysis of 'reality'. Looking to reveal that society is constructed based upon a gendered hierarchy. For if discourses produce meaning, and power relations control discourse, then in revealing society to be built upon a gendered hierarchy[96] that valorizes masculinity, this means we can theoretically work to conceptualize violence as a process and performance of masculinity. To show this I shall firstly explore the notion of 'gender hierarchy'. Before engaging with an analysis and critique of Spender's work in *Man Made Language*, to demonstrate how discourses are composed of 'a linguistic system within which usages have acquired a masculine orientation'.[97] Lastly I shall demonstrate this 'masculine orientation' through looking at the Realist construction of states and through a deconstruction of everyday terminology.

As discussed, gender is composed of two interdependent components: it 'is a constitutive element of social relationships based on perceived differences' and 'a primary way of signifying relationships of power'.[98] Specifically these relationships are 'signified' through the hierarchical structuring of norms, characteristics, and practices that are socially imprinted upon the respective genders. Indeed, historically gender-based dichotomies and linguistic constructions, such as strong/weak, rational/emotional, and war/peace, have been socially normalized, especially within Politics, which given masculinity is 'assigned a higher value'[99], empowers masculinities and devalorizes femininities. Thus characteristics such as, 'sovereign individuality, objectivity, instrumental rationality and 'power over''[100] that are perceived to be implicit within the model of masculinity entrenched in the western tradition were historically attributed to the public sphere: the arena of politics, the 'men's world'. As the work of Tickner then establishes, the respective binary categories that were associated with femininity were then less valued.[101]

The nature of this hierarchical structure of gender means that the concept of masculinity is simultaneously embedded in the logics of contrast and contradiction. Indeed it is the logic of difference that gives masculinity its flexibility, and which enables changes in dominant 'types' of masculinity to make sense in terms of familiar contrasts between higher and lower, normal and deviant and hegemonic and counter-hegemonic.[102] Put simply, each temporally and spatially specific version of hegemonic masculinity can be defined by what it is not; which is feminine.

Understanding gendered hierarchies being constructed through 'difference' we can look specifically towards language as being not just symptomatic of these gender divisions, but that language 'actually creates them'.[103] That, for instance, things like differences in the use of politeness strategies, such as the asymmetry of the titles Miss and Mrs in relation to Mr, and furthermore the asymmetrical usage of these terms of address for women and men, are not just reflecting society, but rather are actively creating and sustaining inequality. This is, indeed, what Spender attempts to argue. Expressing a version of the Sapir-Whorf Hypothesis, her central claim is that 'the English language has been *literally* man made and that it is still primarily under male control'.[104] To Spender gendered hierarchies exist, and gendered inequalities are fundamentally entrenched social institutions, given that 'women have to use meanings that are not their own'.[105] Men have a monopoly over the production of meaning and therefore over the production of reality; language encodes male versions of events, it reflects male interests and words have a male bias.

There are, however, significant problems with Spender's analysis, and through engaging with a poststructural critique we can elucidate two key issues, that when resolved, present us with a more logically viable framework for perceiving 'reality' to be intrinsically gendered. Firstly we need to consider Spender's 'monolithic notion of language'.[106] This is definitely overstated, and ironically, if language were half as monolithic as she claimed, then she would not have been able to write her book in the first place. Her determinist stance allows for 'insufficient acknowledgment that meaning can never be fixed'.[107] Indeed, we can state that there is not, and has never been, one single, monolithic English language (except perhaps in a dictionary).

Secondly, equally troubling is her account of male power, which is similarly monolithic. It is assumed that all men are in a position to dominate women, and the connection that needs to be broken is between men and power.[108] Thus the way she attributes men with power over women comes dangerously close to resembling a biologically acquired characteristic, rather than a culturally and politically bestowed privilege. For as modern Poststructural and feminist

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analysis has revealed, rather than being between men and power, the correlation that needs to be explored, revealed and overcome is that between masculinity and power.

Incorporating these criticisms, we can re-imagine Spender's theory so that the English language[109] is not imagined to be a fundamentally gender bias system, but rather as 'a linguistic system...which... ha[s] acquired a masculine orientation'. [110] As Segal thus astutely comments: 'Rather than write, as Spender does, of men's transhistorical and universal control over meanings...we [should] study how particular groups of people are able to control the specific institutions which construct dominant frameworks of meaning'. [111] For the problem is not male language, but unchallenged masculine power and privilege in our social and cultural institutions. Thus what a poststructural feminist analysis of language can do is denaturalize that masculine power which upholds our current 'intelligible reality'.

Indeed, one of the best ways to demonstrate the intrinsic masculine power within 'dominant frameworks of meaning' is to engage in a critique of Realist IR theory; [112] a critique which while well established, has continued relevancy considering Realism's sustained dominance in IR. Under Realism, binary distinctions between domestic and foreign, inside and outside, and order and anarchy are crucial to the ontological assumptions that serve as organizing principles for their view of the world. [113] Yet what Feminist IR has revealed is that such distinctions possess intrinsic gendered hierarchies that are socially constructed. The 'public sphere' has historically been construed and normalised as the 'man's world', thus, knowledge about the behavior of states depends on assumptions that come from men's, or more specifically, masculine experiences. [114] Like men in the public sphere, states are seen to be rational actors. They are primarily driven by self-interest, seek to maximize their relative power, and secure their sovereignty in an anarchical international realm. [115] But more than this, concepts such as power, sovereignty, and autonomy, crucial to Realism's ontological assumptions, have been framed purely in terms associated with masculinity. Thus 'characteristics of hegemonic masculinity have been routinely projected onto the behavior of states'. [116]

Specifically if we engage in a deconstruction of the word 'power', we can see that the largely institutionalized discourse purporting to 'objectively' describe the behavior of states is actually an intrinsically masculine construct. For the traditional Waltzian analysis [117] puts explicit emphasis upon 'power over', yet this definition of power is a masculine construction based upon the valorization of characteristics such as strength, courage and independence. As Tickner points out, if one utilizes those characteristics defined as 'feminine', then power can just as easily be defined 'as mutual enablement rather than domination' [118]; the ability 'to envisage agency in terms of empowerment for oneself and others'. [119] The definition of power in relation to states thus depends upon a masculine control over the discourse. To expand this, the world is not structurally and objectively comprised of power seeking, self-help, aggressive egoist states; the world is constructed of such states because the dominance of valorized 'masculine' traits, both within IR theory and reality, construct the world in such a way.

This dominance of masculinity in relation to language can furthermore be elucidated through everyday terminology, especially within the workplace. This is given the 'occupational stereotyping and androcentric assumptions surrounding work generally'. [120] The use of the suffix *-man* in occupational names (businessman, postman) renders woman in such occupations invisible. Even apparently gender-neutral agent nouns like driver and doctor, have historically been assumed to refer to men, hence the need for the compound nouns *female*-doctor (but not gentleman doctor) and *woman*-driver. Indeed, another way in which we can engage with terminology to elucidate the masculine orientation of language, and thus the masculine construction of reality, is to perceive a pernicious asymmetry in vocabulary. A man who hates women is called a misogynist; yet there is no equally impressive sounding word for women who hate men. Just as equally what is the male equivalent of a nymphomaniac [121], or slut? The closest we might find would be 'man-whore', yet even this term is defined in relation to a predominantly and historically constituted female role. What we can thus note is that there are 'lexical gaps in English which, when exposed, betray widespread androcentrism'. [122]

What this section has therefore sought to achieve is to demonstrate the extent to which the world, as we know it, is artificially constructed upon the basis of a gender hierarchy that valorizes, normalizes and legitimizes a masculine orientation of language. Furthermore, given, as discussed earlier, the interplay between discourse and power in constructing our 'intelligible reality', we can necessarily state that the historical and socio-political dominance of

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masculinity has indeed defined and constituted our current 'reality'. Or, more specifically, that the current reality is governed by the discourses controlled by our temporally and spatially specific version of 'hegemonic masculinity'. What is most crucial for this paper, though, is the implications which revealing the gendered orientation of language and thus reality has for our understanding of violence. For if an analysis of hegemonic masculinity in relation to cultural, structural and direct forms of violence can show that violence is normalized and legitimized as a performance of gender, then crucially we can understand violence as not an endemic aspect of social reality, but rather as a socio-culturally and politically legitimated, and even in some cases valorized, practice. Perceiving and revealing violence to exist in such a subjective and socially-enabled form would thus enable us to normatively, and even practically, imagine overcoming violence within society. Indeed, this would occur through either a reconstitution of hegemonic masculinity, or better yet, through the expulsion of gender hierarchies and the illegitimizing of violence through counterdiscourses that remove violence from gender as a constitutive attribute.

## IV: Violence

### *Understanding Violence*

Having theorized the gendered construction of reality[123], this paper can turn to analyzing how we can understand violence within this intelligible reality. To do this, this section shall firstly return to the concept of 'violence', looking better understand Galtungian violence through a gendered analysis. After this I will come on to interrogate cultural violence, specifically looking at the violent (re)production of gender as part of 'hegemonic masculinity'. Secondly I shall explore structural violence, or rather, demonstrate how violence is legitimated within societal structures and institutions; to do this I shall utilise firstly the military and secondly poverty. Lastly I shall briefly reference direct violence, and by exploring domestic abuse in the military reinforce the argument that violence should be understood through it's valorization and legitimatization as part of hegemonic masculinity.

Primarily, it makes sense to more clearly elucidate the interplay between the three forms of violence. Generally we can perceive direct violence to be an 'event', structural as an institutional process and cultural as socially, culturally and politically 'permanent' norms, which 'remain essentially the same for long periods given the slow transformation of basic culture'.[124] We can thus imagine a three-strata image of the phenomenology of violence; at the bottom cultural violence, which makes direct and structural violence look and feel 'right', or at least not wrong. It thus legitimizes acts of structural and direct violence, rendering them acceptable in society. In the next stratum exists structural violence; constituted of 'patterns of exploitation'[125] and institutionalized structures and processes. Lastly, and most visible, is direct violence, composed of events of cruelty and harm perpetrated by humans.

Importantly, as previously mentioned, we must remember that violence should be theorized as a process; and indeed when we consider this in relation to the gendered construction of reality, violence is revealed to be dependent upon and constituted by gender hierarchies. Arguing in line with Confortini, this paper thus conceptualizes violence as a process that involves 'different, at times contradictory, practices, at different but coexisting and interdependent levels'.[126] Violence is not a static entity. It is constantly adapting to society's evolving requirements. Specifically violence is aided, sustained, and reproduced through institutions, practices, and discourses, but, moreover, it is in a relationship of mutual constitution to institutions, practices, and discourses. Violence as a process is embedded in language and in all social institutions. Yet crucially, given the masculine orientation of society, it is therefore constituted by and constitutive of gender relations of power; in effect, it depends on gendered dichotomies for existence.

Indeed, if we now turn to analyzing cultural violence we can explicitly elucidate this link between gender and violence, or specifically the valorization and normalization of violence within hegemonic masculinity. Indeed, as Edwards establishes, we can perceive three aspects of gender related violence in Connell's work: firstly violence in male domination, primarily as a social and historical structural phenomenon related to patterns of inequality; secondly the role of the state in perpetuating men's violence, for example, in wars; and finally violence to other men in relation to hegemony, specifically the (re)production of hegemonic masculinity.[127] As such, it is most 'persuasive to [understand gender violence as] both gendered and gendering':[128] that instances of violence are one of the sites in which gender identities are produced. For historically violence has been a key practice in the enactment of

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masculinity, and we can easily evidence this statement by referring to historically male institutions and practices that have served to legitimate violence as a necessary characteristic of hegemonic masculinity. From 'school sports to the state institutions of the military and civil force. The army and police are licensed to use violence...[and are] perceived as 'masculine''.[129]

This becomes crucial when considering Butler's highly influential conceptualization of the performativity of gender. In showing that identity categories are fictional products of regimes of power/discourse we can view gender as 'an identity tenuously constituted in time, instituted in an exterior space through a *stylized repetition of acts*'.[130] Rather than a set of attributes or simply a social category, gender is conceptualized as a process: something we do, produce, accomplish, and perform.[131] Thus more than constituting the cultural environment that makes violence acceptable and legitimate, as Galtung claims, gender relations are implicated in the very creation of violence.[132] Violence is both made *possible* by the existence of power/gender relations, and power/gender relations *rely on* violence for their (re)production: violence and gender are involved in a relationship of mutual constitution. Thus when we consider how society is constructed with a masculine orientation, and given that we can view violence to be a constitutive aspect of masculinity, we can necessarily extend this argument to logically state that violence can thus be understood within our intelligible reality as a constitutive process and performance of hegemonic masculinity. Violence exists, not as an endemic aspect of human nature, but rather as a process that is enabled through its legitimization, valorization and normalization.

Given, then, that cultural violence legitimates structural violence; we can more clearly elucidate this link between violence and hegemonic masculinity through an analysis of the military and poverty as forms of structural violence. Indeed, the fact that the military is an integral part of the institutions of the state necessarily means that violence should not be seen as an unusual and limited act, but as an inevitable reflection of the way in which society is organized, and the masculine orientated institutions that underpin it.[133] For institutions such as the military must be viewed as imperative in the (re)production of hegemonic masculinity. As Connell outlines in *Of Arms and Men*, soldiering, and the capacity for violence, has historically been constitutive of a specific type of hegemonic masculinity.[134] We can even draw a link between the military and sport, for as Messner shows, 'sports violence [is also] a practice which helps to construct hegemonic masculinity'.[135] They were created expressly as a training ground for the battlefield and for the shaping of the body into a 'manliness' ideal.[136] Correspondingly, then, war: 'was widely believed to develop those martial qualities...that were seen to be needed in the struggle for life'.[137] The military, then, as a historically male institution, is one that fundamentally legitimates, valorizes and normalizes violence within society through constructing a hegemonic masculinity that is dependent upon violence as a core characteristic.

We must remember, however, that violence is not just physical harm, but also conceived off as a 'force that unintentionally prevent[s] humans from realizing their actual potential'.[138] As such we must also understand how gendered hierarchies can produce and exacerbate systems/structures of inequality.[139] Indeed, poverty is just such a structure. Now, while this paper is not attempting to argue that poverty is produced and maintained in society through the masculine orientation of our intelligible reality, what this paper will argue is that gendered hierarchies, in being fundamentally comprised through the logic of difference and contrast, can both exacerbate issues of poverty and prove a barrier to their overcoming.

To better clarify this statement, let us examine the words 'powerful' and 'successful' in relation to a hegemonic masculinity constructed in capitalist society. 'Power' and 'success' are more often than not conceptualized economically; someone is often deemed to have 'made it', not through their character, but by the size of their paycheck. This lauding of economic resources, as constructed by a masculine ideal, can be perceived to impact poverty in two interdependent ways. Firstly this ideal institutionalizes and normalizes actions that are inherently self-help orientated in regards to acquiring as much money as possible, potentially, and often, at the expense of others; thus exacerbating existing issues of poverty. Secondly, given that one can be judged in terms of 'power' regarding the fiscal resources they have acquired, this creates a vested interest against utilising one's wealth to overcome the global political issue of poverty.[140] This point is indeed evidenced by the study carried out in 2013 by Credit Suisse. The report found that 1% of the world's population own 41% of the wealth and 10% owns 86%.[141] The existence of such a huge disparity within the distribution of global wealth can indeed be seen to be representative of,

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and exacerbated by, the structures of inequality that gender hierarchies institutionalize. Therefore, an analysis of structural violence thus reveals that violence within institutions such as the military, and within structures of inequality, such as poverty, is often valorized, normalized and legitimated by hegemonic masculinity.

Direct violence is thus the most easy to understand and explain. For given that direct violence is legitimated by cultural forms of violence, specifically the gendered (re)production of violence, we can perceive[142] direct violence to be a gendered and gendering aspect of hegemonic masculinity; and indeed that we can understand direct violence through its valorization, normalization and legitimization within societal institutions and practices.

A nice and succinct way to evidence this statement is to return again to an analysis of the military. For, although incomplete, comparative studies consistently show a higher incidence of partner abuse in the military than among the civilian population.[143] Indeed in April 2000, the Department of Defense created a Task Force devoted to the study and prevention of the battering of partners, which has been recognized as a “pervasive problem” among military ranks.[144] Thus the higher levels of direct violence carried out by members of an institution that specifically valorize violence as a core aspect of hegemonic masculinity, is direct evidence for direct violence to be understood not as an intrinsic part of human nature, but instead as a normalised and legitimized process under hegemonic masculinity’s particular construction of reality.

Where this analysis of violence thus leads us is to an understanding that can be concisely summarised: that violence within our intelligible reality should be understood as a process legitimized, normalized and in some cases valorized, through a construction of ‘reality’ as based on hegemonic masculinity.

## *Overcoming Violence*

Now that we understand firstly, what violence is, and secondly the nature of its existence, we can turn to attempting to theorize how violence can be overcome. To do this, this paper shall utilise Iver Nuemann’s conceptualization of ‘as if’ stories[145] concurrently with what shall be termed ‘optimistic poststructuralism’. For when utilising poststructural theory one must actively engage with imagining practical strategies for effecting change. Indeed, one poststructuralism’s main criticisms is that it will only ever exist in the realm of theory, being unable to breach the gap to involve itself with practical problem solving; and it is surely true that ‘without a take on how to forge politically implementable stories of self, poststructuralists may bar themselves from constructive intervention into the political field’.[146] What this section shall seek to achieve, acknowledging an academic debt to Neumann, is to imagine how to construct such an ‘implementable’ story in relation to violence.

To begin with we must understand what an ‘as if’ story is; this starts with appreciating that in order to be politically effective, ‘one cannot simply put the self under erasure but must have...an ‘as if’ story to tell about’.[147] To explain this statement Neumann utilizes the example of Bosnia-Herzegovina in the 1990’s. For:

‘Once nationalist essentialist stories of self began to dominate, the only partially effective political counterstrategy was to be found in the representation of an alternative story of self that, being inevitably an ‘as if’ story, stressed that different ethnic groups have ‘always’ lived together peacefully’.[148]

The most important part of this political narrative, however, was that ‘those who...held back from participating in any representation of these stories of self altogether were quickly left with no political space whatsoever’.[149] Fundamentally without possessing an ‘as if’ story to explain the ‘self’ of the human collective whose identity they desired to signify, ‘they were left politically inefficient’.[150] To look at the other side of this statement then, we can necessarily argue that any political practice concerning identities that wants to have some form of immediate effect needs an ‘as if’ story.

Applying this to our conceptualization of violence, then, we can state that violence can be perceived off as a process legitimized and normalised through masculine constructions of identity. Yet it is not good enough for our poststructural feminist analysis to simply expose and normatively ‘erase’ violence as constitutive of hegemonic masculinity. Simply revealing that violence is contingent upon its societal legitimization does not go far enough to

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practically attempting to overcome it. Indeed, this is where a commitment to 'optimistic poststructuralism' must come in, and be utilised in conjunction with 'as if' stories. For as referenced earlier, when utilising poststructuralism it must be approached with a spirit of liberation, not pessimism. The fact that 'objective truth' does not exist is not disheartening but rather emancipatory, as our 'intelligible reality' can thus be (re)imagined, and more over (re)constructed in countless ways through the use of 'as if' stories.

Importantly, I am not attempting to argue that violence as an *event* can be wholly eradicated from society. It would be foolish to suggest that we could ever stop someone from physically hitting another person. But rather, what is conceptually possible is to imagine the construction of 'as if' stories relating not just to hegemonic masculinity, but furthermore towards gendered hierarchies in general, which would remove violence as a legitimate and normalised performance of gender. 'As if' stories can fundamentally help us to create counterdiscourses that remove violence from gender as a constitutive attribute, and in doing so would go a long way to overcoming instances of violence within society. As to the particular narrative of these 'as if' stories, that could, and should be the research agenda of a whole new paper. This paper, however[151], shall satisfy itself with laying out the theory of how to actively engage in a political project of change. For with a working conception of how to move poststructuralism from the realm of theory towards practical political problem solving, what this section has thus done is to fundamentally demonstrate how we can overcome violence.

## V: Conclusion

Ultimately this paper has been two fold in its aim. Firstly, in utilising a poststructural and feminist analysis it has looked to both understand how our current intelligible reality is constructed and then situate violence within this reality. Secondly, and relatedly, it has sought to demonstrate the great extent to which feminism and poststructuralism can be utilised concomitantly to develop the most comprehensive understanding of violence, conceived in the Galtungian sense, as possible.

Indeed, when used in conjunction these theories reveal the gendered nature of our current intelligible reality. For under a poststructural understanding of language as ontologically significant, and a Foucauldian conception of power as omnipresent and productive, we can develop a working theory of socially and historically contingent discourses as constitutive of reality. What this thus means is that reality is in effect (re)produced, (re)constructed and (re)constituted by institutions and individuals who 'control' the dissemination of knowledge at a particular moment in time.

This poststructural concept of the interplay between power/knowledge/discourses and ultimately reality becomes critically important when we utilise feminist IR theory to explore gender relations. For what a gendered analysis reveals is that the world, as we know it, is artificially constructed through gender hierarchies that valorizes, normalizes and legitimizes a masculine orientation of language. But that, more importantly, given the interplay between language, discourse and power in constructing our 'intelligible reality', we can necessarily state that the historical and socio-political dominance of masculinity has indeed defined and constituted our current 'reality'. Or, more specifically, that the current reality is governed by the discourses controlled by our temporally and spatially specific version of 'hegemonic masculinity'.

Crucially, violence must be understood within this framework. For just as gendered language shapes our view of the world to limit what is made imaginable, so to does gendered language naturalize an intelligible reality in which violence exists as a process which is legitimized, normalized and valorized as part of a 'hegemonic masculinity'. More than this though, we can view violence as working in a mutually constitutive fashion; that it is both gendered and gendering. For as Butler shows, gender is a performance, and thus violence can be construed as a performance of gender; or specifically as a valorized trait of hegemonic masculinity as evidenced through an analysis of the military. Comprehending this interplay between gender and violence thus allows us to reach an understanding of violence in which it is not a structural, objective truth, endemic to human nature. Violence can be perceived of as a process legitimated and normalized within society through its core connection with hegemonic masculinity.

It is through conceiving and revealing violence to exist as inherently socially legitimated that we can normatively, and

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theoretically, open up space to imagine 'overcoming' it. For if violence is legitimized and normalized through gender hierarchies, and through its association with hegemonic masculinity, then a reformulation of masculinity to delegitimise and denaturalize violence, along with an eradication of gender hierarchies, which also propagate inequality, would ultimately go a long way to overcoming violence.

Importantly, though, and lastly, it is vitally important for us to understand the way in which this 'overcoming' would occur. As it is not simply good enough to theorize violence in such a fashion, indeed, it does not go far enough to simply seek to theoretically 'erase' violence from masculinities and gender hierarchies. What needs to be utilised are Neumann's 'as if' stories, along with a commitment to optimistic poststructuralism, to actual present to political world with a (re)formulation of identity, a new understanding of 'self' that removes violence as a legitimate, normalized and valorized process and instead moves it outside the imaginable realm of acceptable actions, institutions, and societal processes.

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## Notes

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[1] <http://www.fbi.gov/news/stories/2013/september/latest-crime-stats-released/latest-crime-stats-released> Last Accessed 30.4.2014 at 14:22.

[2] [http://www.unicef.org/videoaudio/PDFs/UNICEF\\_2012\\_child\\_mortality\\_for\\_web\\_0904.pdf](http://www.unicef.org/videoaudio/PDFs/UNICEF_2012_child_mortality_for_web_0904.pdf) Last Accessed 30.4.2012 at 14:32.

[3] J. Parpart and M. Zalewski, 'Introduction: Rethinking the Man Question'; J. Parpart and M. Zalewski, Eds., *Rethinking the Man Question: Sex, Gender and Violence in International Relations*, (Zed Books, London, 2008), p.4.

[4] *Ibid.*, p.3.

[5] L. Shepherd, *Gender, Violence and Security: Discourse as Practice*, (Zed books, London, 2008), p.2.

[6] This concept will be fully explored in a later section.

[7] 'Questioning Violence: Meanings, Myths and Realities', *Bulletin of Latin American Research*, 28, (2009), p.42.

[8] L. English and C. Irving, 'Reflexive texts: Issues of Knowledge, Power and Discourse in Researching Gender and Learning', *Adult Education Quarterly*, No. 58, (2008), p. 271.

[9] B. Davies, J. Browne, S. Gannon, L. Hopkins, H. McCann, and M. Wihlborg, 'Constituting the feminist subject in poststructuralist discourse', *Feminism & Psychology*, 16(1), (2006), p. 88.

[10] For example organizational structures, race and class barriers, and gender inequities.

[11] English and Irving, 'Reflexive texts', p. 271.

[12] Davies et al., 'Constituting the feminist subject', p. 89.

[13] A. Brooks, *Postfeminisms: Feminism, Cultural Theory and Cultural Forms*, (Routledge, London, 1997), p.47.

[14] L. Hansen, *Security as Practice: Discourse Analysis and the Bosnian War*, (Routledge, 2006), p.15.

[15] M. Shapiro, *Language and Political Understanding: The Politics of Discursive Practices*, (Yale University Press, New Haven, 1981), p.218.

[16] This is in terms of both the actors in international politics and the academics that study it. M. Sheehan, *International Security: An Analytical Survey*, (Lynne Rienner, Boulder, 2005), p.115.

[17] Halliday, (1994), p.149; quoted in Sheehan, *International Security*, p.115.

[18] Simone de Beauvoir, epigraph from *The Second Sex*, (Knopf, New York, 1952), p.161.

[19] See C. Enloe, *Bananas, Beaches and Bases: Making Feminist Sense of International Politics*, (University of California Press, Berkely, 1990).

[20] See J. Elshtain, *Women and War*, (Basic Books, New York, 1987).

[21] J. Tickner, *Gender in International Relations*, (Columbia University Press, New York, 1992).

[22] L. Sjoberg, 'Feminist Security Studies: Conversations and Introductions'; Cited at [http://www.academia.edu/292413/Feminist\\_Security\\_Studies\\_Conversations\\_and\\_Introductions](http://www.academia.edu/292413/Feminist_Security_Studies_Conversations_and_Introductions) last accessed

# Postructuralism and Feminism: The Interplay between Gender, Language and Power

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3.5.14.

[23] C. Enloe, *Bananas, Beaches and Bases*, p.190.

[24] Otherwise referred to as a 'Gendered Lens'.

[25] Or, thus as feminist's would argue 'realities'; that using a gendered focus enables the studier to perceive what is in fact the actual socio-political reality.

[26] V. Peterson and A. Runyan, *Global Gender Issues*, (Westview Press, Boulder, 1993), p.20.

[27] Or, indeed, it should be stated that there is no objective reality.

[28] This concept shall be explored in more detail later. R. Connell, *Gender and Power Society, the Person and Sexual Politics*, (Stanford University Press, Stanford, 1987), see Chapter 8.

[29] This is obviously alongside and underpinning other social practices and institutions.

[30] M. Talbot, *Language and Gender*, 2<sup>nd</sup> Ed., (Polity Press, 2010), p.16.

[31] S. Walt, 'The Renaissance of Security Studies', *International Studies Quarterly*, XXXV, 1991, p.223.

[32] Sheehan, *International Security*, p.135.

[33] Lyotard, (1984), p.xxiv; quoted in Sheehan, *International Security*, p.135.

[34] S. Wendt and J. Boylan, 'Feminist social work research engaging with poststructural ideas', *International Social Work*, No. 51, (2008), p. 509.

[35] Brooks, *Postfeminisms*, p.47.

[36] Wendt and Boylan, 'Feminist social work', p. 601.

[37] Sheehan, *International Security*, p.141.

[38] M. Barrett, *The Politics of Truth: From Marx to Foucault*, (Stanford University Press, California, 1991), p.126.

[39] Sheehan, *International Security*, p.142.

[40] Brooks, *Postfeminisms*, p.49.

[41] Sheehan, *International Security*, p.143.

[42] Norris, 1992, p.19; quoted in Sheehan, *International Security*, p.147.

[43] Parker cited in D. Howarth, *Discourse*, (Open University Press, Buckingham, 2000), p.3.

[44] Ibid., p.4.

[45] See N. Fairclough, *Discourse an Social Change*, (Polity Press, Cambridge, 1992); N. Fairclough and R. Wodak, 'Critical Discourse Analysis', in T. van Dijk, eds., *Discourse as Social Interaction*, (Sage, London, 1997), pp. 258 – 84; T. van Dijk, 'Discourse as Interaction in Society', in T. van Dijk, eds., *Discourse as Social Interaction*, (Sage, London, 1997), pp. 1 – 37. All referenced in Shepherd, *Gender, Violence and Security*, p.18.

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- [46] J. Sunderland, (2004), p.11 cited in Shepherd, *Gender, Violence and Security*, p.18.
- [47] Fairclough, (1992), p.60 cited in Shepherd, *Gender, Violence and Security*, p.18.
- [48] My emphasis: M. Foucault, (1977), p.100 cited in Shepherd, *Gender, Violence and Security*, p.19.
- [49] My emphasis: Shepherd, *Gender, Violence and Security*, p.19
- [50] See J. Torfing, *New Theories of Discourse: Laclau, Mouffe and Zizek*, (Wiley, 1999), p.12.
- [51] E. Laclau and C. Mouffe, *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy; Radical Democratic Politics*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., (Verso, London, 2001), 107.
- [52] J. Tickner, 'Feminism meets International Relations: Some Methodological Issues'; B. Ackerly, M. Stern, and J. True, eds., *Feminist Methodologies for International Relations*, (Cambridge University Press, New York, 2006), p. 19.
- [53] Brooks, *Postfeminisms*, p.21.
- [54] See C. Weedon, *Feminist Practice and Poststructural Theory*, (Wiley, 1997).
- [55] Tickner, 'Feminism meets International Relations', p. 20.
- [56] These obviously being man and woman.
- [57] J. Scott, *Gender and the Politics of History*, (Columbia University Press, New York, 1988), p.42; Tickner, 'Gender in International Relations', p.7.
- [58] Note the emphasis on feminine: this is to show that characteristics such as love, emotion, subjectivity, and co-operation are not intrinsic and biological female traits, but those traits that have been assigned to women through the process of socialization and the aggrandizement and valorization of 'manly' traits.
- [59] L. Sjoberg, 'Feminist Security Studies: Conversations and Introductions'; Cited at < <http://sitemason.vanderbilt.edu/files/ieKk5G/Laura%20Sjoberg%20Jillian%20Martin%20Compendium%20Contribution.pdf>> last accessed 3.5.14.
- [60] Tickner, 'Feminism meets International Relations', p.24.
- [61] R. Connell, *Gender and Power Society, the Person and Sexual Politics*, (Stanford University Press, Stanford, 1987), see Chapter 8.
- [62] K. Hutchings, 'Cognitive Shortcuts'; J. Parpart and M. Zalewski, Eds., *Rethinking the Man Question: Sex, Gender and Violence in International Relations*, (Zed Books, London, 2008), p. 27.
- [63] See J. Hearn, 'A multi-faceted power analysis of men's violence to known women: from hegemonic masculinity to the hegemony of men', *The Sociological Review*, Vol. 60, pp. 591 – 3.
- [64] Tickner, 'Feminism meets International Relations', p. 25.
- [65] 'Questioning Violence: Meanings, Myths and Realities', *Bulletin of Latin American Research*, 28, (2009), p.48. See, for example, Connell 1987; Hanmer 1990; Bowker 1998; Hearn 1998.
- [66] D. Roberts, *Human Insecurity*, (Zed Books, London, 2008), p.18.

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- [67] C. Confortini, 'Galtung, Violence, and Gender: The Case for a Peace Studies/Feminism Alliance', *Peace and Change*, Vol. 31, No. 3, (July 2006), p. 335.
- [68] D. Roberts, *Human Insecurity*, (Zed Books, London, 2008), p.19.
- [69] Farmer, (2002), p.1 quoted in Roberts, *Human Insecurity*, p.20.
- [70] Sheehan, *International Security*, pp.123 – 4.
- [71] M. Anglin, 'Feminist Perspectives on Structural Violence', *Identities*, 5(2), (1998), p.145 – 6.
- [72] Confortini, 'Galtung, Violence, and Gender', p. 335.
- [73] Specifically as a way of ending conflicts.
- [74] Ibid., pp.335 – 6.
- [75] Ibid., p.341.
- [76] Hansen, *Security as Practice*, p.15.
- [77] C. Weedon, *Feminist Practice and Poststructural Theory*, 2<sup>nd</sup> Ed., (Wiley, 1997), p. 21.
- [78] I will engage more critically with Spender in a later section.
- [79] D. Spender, *Man Made Language*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., (Routledge & Keegan Paul, London, 1985), p.3.
- [80] Hansen, *Security as Practice*, p.16.
- [81] Talbot, *Language and Gender*, p.121.
- [82] L. Litosseliti, *Gender and Language: Theory and Practice*, (Hodder Education, London, 2006), p.63.
- [83] Talbot, *Language and Gender*, p.119.
- [84] It should be noted that this is specifically under a Poststructural analysis. Sheehan, *International Security*, p.141.
- [85] P. Markula and R. Pringle, *Foucault, Sport and Exercise: Power, Knowledge and Transforming the Self*, (Routledge, 2006), p.55.
- [86] M. Foucault, *The History of Sexuality*, (Pantheon Books, 1978), p.93.
- [87] Ibid., p.94.
- [88] Confortini, 'Galtung, Violence, and Gender', p. 342.
- [89] M. Foucault, (1977), p.119 quoted in Shepherd, *Gender, Violence and Security*, p.23.
- [90] Shepherd, *Gender, Violence and Security*, p.23.
- [91] Sheehan, *International Security*, p.141.
- [92] M. Foucault quoted in Sheehan, *International Security*, p.141.

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[93] Talbot, *Language and Gender*, p.121.

[94] Confortini, 'Galtung, Violence, and Gender', p. 341.

[95] K. Dunn, 'Interrogating white male privilege'; J. Parpart and M. Zalewski, Eds., *Rethinking the Man Question: Sex, Gender and Violence in International Relations*, (Zed Books, London, 2008), p.49.

[96] Importantly this is a hierarchy in which masculinity, or specifically a hegemonic masculinity, is legitimated and valorized.

[97] J. Sunderland, *Language and Gender*, (Routledge, Oxon, 2006), p.16.

[98] J. Scott, *Gender and the Politics of History* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1988), 42.

[99] Confortini, 'Galtung, Violence, and Gender', p. 345.

[100] Hutchings, 'Cognitive Shortcuts' in Parpart and Zalewski, *Rethinking the Man Question*, p. 26.

[101] J. Tickner, *Gendering World Politics: Issues and Approaches in the Post-Cold War Era*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 2001), 15.

[102] Hutchings, 'Cognitive Shortcuts' in Parpart and Zalewski, *Rethinking the Man Question*, p. 30.

[103] Talbot, *Language and Gender*, p.16.

[104] My Emphasis. Spender, *Man Made Language*, p.3.

[105] Talbot, *Language and Gender*, p.42.

[106] Ibid., p.44.

[107] Sunderland, *Language and Gender*, p.16

[108] Talbot, *Language and Gender*, pp.45 – 6.

[109] It should be noted that this dissertation understand that English is just one of many languages, but that the was not enough space to actively engage in an analysis of other languages.

[110] Sunderland, *Language and Gender*, p.16

[111] Segal, (1994), p.29 quoted in Talbot, *Language and Gender*, p.46.

[112] While there is not space within this paper to adequately define what Realism is, we can state that Realism rests upon five main assumptions: Firstly, that the international system is anarchic; secondly, that States claiming sovereignty will develop military capabilities to defend themselves and extend their power, and are as such dangerous; thirdly, that uncertainty, therefore a lack of trust, is inherent in the international system and thus states must always be on their guard; fourthly, states will want to maintain their sovereignty, and, therefore, survival will be the most basic driving force influencing their behavior. Finally, that although states are rational, there will always be room for miscalculation, as potential antagonists will always have an incentive to misrepresent their capabilities. See R. G. Gilpin, 'The Richness of the tradition of Political Realism'; R. Keohane, ed., *Realism and its Critics*, (New York, Columbia University Press, 1986), p.304; J. Donnelly, 'Beyond Realism and its Critics: The Decline of Structural Neo-Realism and Opportunities for Constructive Engagement'; S. Lawson, eds., *The New Agenda For International Relations*, (Blackwell Publishers, Malden, 2002), p.257.

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[113] Tickner, '*Gender in International Relations*', p.19.

[114] *Ibid.*, p.18.

[115] Basu, S., 'Security as emancipation: A Feminist Perspective'; J. A. Tickner and L. Sjoberg, *Feminism and International Relations: Conversations about the Past, Present and Future*, (Routledge, New York, 2011), p.104.

[116] Tickner, '*Gender in International Relations*', p.6.

[117] This is of man and thus states as selfish and power-hungry. See K. Waltz, *Man, the State, and War*, (Columbia University Press, New York, 1959).

[118] C. Sylvester, *Feminist International Relations: An Unfinished Journey*, (Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2002), p.43.

[119] S. Basu, 'Security as emancipation'; Tickner and Sjoberg, *Feminism and International Relations*, p.114.

[120] Talbot, *Language and Gender*, p.225.

[121] Defined by the Oxford Dictionary as: Uncontrollable or excessive sexual desire in a woman.  
<http://www.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/english/nymphomania> last accessed 2.5.2014.

[122] Talbot, *Language and Gender*, p.226.

[123] This is given that the paper has firstly theorized how discourses and power construct reality, and secondly how our current intelligible reality is constructed through gender hierarchies that valorize, legitimate and normalize masculinities, and specifically a 'hegemonic masculinity'; as demonstrated and constituted through the masculine orientation of language.

[124] D. Fischer, *Johan Galtung: Pioneer of Peace Research*, (Springerbriefs, New York, 2013), p.39.

[125] *Ibid.*, p.46.

[126] Confortini, 'Galtung, Violence, and Gender', p. 357.

[127] Edwards (2006), summarised in Hearn, 'A multi-faceted power analysis', p.592.

[128] Shepherd, *Gender, Violence and Security*, p.51.

[129] Talbot, *Language and Gender*, p. 161.

[130] J. Butler, *Gender Trouble*, rev. edn, (Routledge, London, 1999), p.179. Emphasis in original.

[131] Litosseliti, *Gender and Language*, p.63.

[132] Confortini, 'Galtung, Violence, and Gender', p. 355.

[133] Sheehan, *International Security*, p.127.

[134] Confortini, 'Galtung, Violence, and Gender', p. 354.

[135] Michael A. Messner, "When Bodies are Weapons: Masculinity and Violence in Sports," *International Review for the Sociology of Sport* 25, 3 (1990), p. 203.

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[136] Ibid., pp.204 -5.

[137] Alan Petersen, *Unmasking the Masculine: "Men" and "Identity" in a Skeptical Age* (London, Thousand Oaks, and New Delhi: Sage Publications, 1998), p.52; quoted in Confortini, 'Galtung, Violence, and Gender', p. 354.

[138] Roberts, *Human Insecurity*, p.19.

[139] This is given that under my Galtungian conception of violence systems of inequality can be conceived as structural instances of violence.

[140] Crucially I am not attempting to say that 'charity' does not exist. As there are clearly many people that do utilise the resources they have to attempt to help others, however, as referenced earlier, 'hegemonic masculinity' does not directly correlate to the personalities of all men and women. What it does is produce an 'ideal' that exerts considerable pressure for men and women to 'perform' in a certain way.

[141] Figures cited from <http://www.international-adviser.com/ia/media/Media/Credit-Suisse-Global-Wealth-Databook-2013.pdf> last accessed 3.5.14.

[142] As has already been established above.

[143] Christopher Cronin, "Adolescent Reports of Parental Spousal Violence in Military and Civilian Families," *Journal of Interpersonal Violence* 10, 1 (1995): 117–122.

[144] Defense Task Force on Domestic Violence, "Initial Report," February 28, 2001, available online at [www.dtic.mil](http://www.dtic.mil) last accessed at 3.5.14.

[145] I. Neumann, *Uses of the Other: 'the East' in European Identity Formation*, (Manchester University Press, Manchester, 1999).

[146] Ibid., p.209.

[147] Ibid., p.214.

[148] Ibid., p.214.

[149] Ibid., p.214.

[150] Ibid., p.214.

[151] This is given the restrictive nature of the word count.

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