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Violence is a key factor in the production, maintenance and legitimisation of domination and subordination. People often experience multiple forms of violence that are interrelated, co-constitutive and mutually reinforcing, and that exist at state, institutional and individual levels. This is especially true in relation to violence against women (VAW). Everyday forms of violence and violence as a daily reality are observed in various contexts but occur via diverse methods, perpetrators and agendas. VAW is understood as a salient outcome of systemic gender inequality across the globe, and is an intentionally broad term. It encompasses any physical, sexual, psychological, emotional, financial or social harm caused to a woman by individuals (known or unknown to the woman), groups, institutions or states, based primarily or in part on the fact that she is a woman. Alongside the individual occurrence of violence, and potential state interventions to challenge or address it, the state also acts as a facilitator or perpetrator of gendered violence. Throughout this special issue, the term 'VAW' is used to acknowledge the specific, gendered nature of harm women encounter, often in private or domestic arrangements, while acknowledging that VAW, and domestic violence, is linked to other systems of inequality based on sexuality, race and class. While we conceptually favour 'VAW', the terms 'gendered violence' and 'gender-based violence' are also used by the contributors to this volume. While recognising that any attempt at a definition of these terms will be complex and contested, and that they cannot be universally applied without modification or qualification to all women—as revealed by the experience of black, minority ethnic, lesbian and refugee women—this special issue of *Feminist Review* focuses on the gendered nature of VAW (Thiara and Gill, 2010; Donovan and Hester, 2014).

This special issue of *Feminist Review* therefore highlights in particular (within the broader study of violence and VAW offered) analysis of domestic violence as a gendered crime usually perpetrated by men against women (Hester, 2013). Intimate partner violence, a term describing violence committed by current or former spouses, boyfriends or girlfriends, is often hidden to a greater extent than other forms of violence, but the gendered statistics are astounding. On a global level, roughly 50 per cent of all female homicide victims in 2012 were killed by intimate partners or family members, while this was the case in only 6 per cent of all male homicide victims (UN Office on Drugs and Crime [UNODC], 2014). When the countries with the lowest homicide rates (i.e., less than 1 per cent) are examined for gender differences, East Asian countries such as Japan and China (including Hong Kong) are revealed to have high female homicide rates: females accounted for roughly 50 per cent of all homicide victims in these countries in 2012 (*ibid.*). This stands in sharp contrast with more general global trends, in which the overall female homicide rate is less than a third of the male rate (*ibid.*). These statistics demonstrate that states with low rates of violent crime do not have diminished rates of VAW. The overwhelming global evidence highlighting trends in gender-related killing of women

has resulted in the coining of terms such as ‘femicide’ or ‘feminicide’ to describe this phenomenon (Matloff, 2015).

Such gender-related killing can take many forms. For example, direct forms of gender-related homicide that almost exclusively target women include ‘honour’ killings and dowry-related killings, as well as witchcraft or sorcery-related killings, whereas more indirect forms include other types of killings that may not be counted as homicides. Among these various forms, so-called honour killings are especially notable. The United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) estimates that between 5,000 and 12,000 women are murdered in the name of honour each year globally (Gill *et al.*, 2014). In honour cultures, aggression is an acceptable reaction to insults and threats to honour. The ethnographic and sociological research on diverse honour cultures details how members of these cultures consider retaliation a duty when a particular individual or family is insulted; indeed, a failure to retaliate implies an acceptance of the insult, as well as an admission of being unworthy of honour (Begikhani *et al.*, 2015). Intrafamilial honour killings represent an extreme form of such retaliation (Faqir, 2001). This theme is taken up by renowned poet Mona Arshi, who in her contribution to this special issue draws on the case of Shafilea Ahmed, a UK-born woman of Pakistani origin who was murdered by her parents. The evidence suggests that in the year before Shafilea’s death, there was a significant degree of tension between her and her parents, deriving primarily from a clash between their ‘traditional’ values and her ‘Western’ ones (Gill and Brah, 2014). Shafilea’s parents were found guilty of her murder in 2012, after a high profile court case that established greater awareness of intrafamilial honour killings.

Over the last four decades, there has been an increase in global awareness of violence against women and girls (VAWG), as well as measures to prevent it based on criminal justice and other interventions. In large part this is because of the activism of feminists, who have fought for the right of women to be free from violence in the home and beyond. In doing so, they have exposed the patriarchal gendering of the public/private binary and the limits of the concept of rights, particularly as it is deployed in legal and political life.

An examination of the discourses, practices and interventions aimed at addressing VAW shows that a large number of feminists have looked to the state to correct these injustices (e.g., by advocating stronger sentencing in domestic violence cases and by challenging social myths in cases of rape). The domestic violence movement of the 1970s is known to have shifted the dominant ideology regarding domestic violence, from its positioning as a private matter to its acceptance as a social problem that affects many and requires significant societal attention (Dobash and Dobash, 1979). Arguably the most substantive outcome of the domestic violence movement over the past four decades is precisely this ideological shift and the way that it has increased public awareness (Dobash and Dobash, 1979). Unfortunately, however, this has not necessarily led in practical terms to increased safety or empowerment of women. One of the reasons for this failure is a continued focus on criminal justice interventions, often at the expense of other forms of thinking and acting on the issue.

The problem posed by extreme forms of domestic and intrafamilial violence is further exacerbated by the challenge of racism. The struggle to prevent violence against black and minority ethnic women in Western liberal democracies, such as the United Kingdom, has now reached a crossroads at which the issues of race, religion and gender intersect. The gains of ‘mature multiculturalism’ are overshadowed by

'multi-faithism' and an assimilationist agenda of social cohesion in the aftermath of 9/11 (in the United States and globally) and 7/7 (in the United Kingdom), giving rise to a new confidence among fundamentalists and racists alike in limiting the freedom of women and minority communities (Patel and Siddiqui, 2010, p. 154).

This special issue explores the social forces of inequality, economic arrangements, institutional violence and individual complicity in violence. It provides a platform for innovative feminist approaches to the problem of violence, with a particular emphasis on intersectional and interdisciplinary frameworks that interrogate gendered violence and VAW in its different forms, and facilitates preventive efforts as well as new theoretical structures for understanding such violence. The special issue was inspired by the articulation of the notion of coercive control in recent scholarship on gender-based violence, in particular the work of Stark. In Stark's (2007) book *Coercive Control*, both practical and theoretical responses to violence are linked to some of the fundamental questions concerning what he calls 'liberty crimes', which we in Europe might refer to as human rights abuses. Building on the understanding of human rights, Stark locates abuse in both the personal and the political spheres; that is, in individual relationships as well as in the wider forms of structural oppression in which these relationships take place.

Stark has also demonstrated that practical assistance responses to victims of abuse can inadvertently compromise more fundamental challenges to patriarchy. For example, providing therapy to a survivor of abuse that addresses issues of trauma may inadvertently individualise the issue, closing off the political space in which the survivor could understand the violence as a gendered form of oppression and in which survivors could stand together and fight it (*ibid*). Moreover, the regulation of VAW demonstrates a history of structures that replay masculine understandings of violence, often minimising the role of gender. One example of this is the tendency of legal structures and social services to focus on act-based responses such as by referring to domestic violence 'incidents' and using other such language that tends to imply that this violence takes place in discrete, aberrant occurrences rather than in the context and as a result of patriarchy and hegemonic masculinity.

By considering these difficult issues, Stark engages in a process of reflection that also motivates some of the varied contributions to this edited volume. Each author addresses some of the fundamental questions and contradictions within feminist knowledge. In her paper 'Sexual assault as trauma', Suzanne Egan examines the possibility of reconciling the individualised, medicalised and trauma-focused 'truths' of sexual assault with the structural discourses of feminist knowledge. Rather than agree with the post-structuralist claim that feminist theory is in decline as a result of a surge in medicalised, trauma-focused interventions, Egan suggests that feminist truth continues to inform practice, and that structural concerns about patriarchy and gender remain at the heart of trauma-focused work.

Amanda Kidd similarly focuses on the contradictions inherent in individual and structural explanations of violence, offering an analysis of the intersections between 'structural, direct and symbolic' forms of violence. Beginning by questioning what we mean by 'violence', Kidd flags another contradiction that challenges feminism: that of 'victim complicity' and how it plays out, for example, with women having cosmetic surgery. Broadening ideas of what constitutes violence and how it is defined, Kidd employs Bourdieu's concept of symbolic violence to explain how the reproduction of structural inequality is embedded in the mundane and the everyday. Using empirical research to illustrate her arguments, she provides a unique insight into the connection between the structural and the symbolic.

Kidd's paper also addresses one of the principal criticisms made against feminism (and one that we return to below): that it often fails to connect with intersectional forms of oppression and that it marginalises the groups affected by this. Central to Kidd's analysis are the ways in which socio-economic status, expectations and hegemonic forms of sexualised gender identities all impact on the ability of the young women in her study to achieve what Stark refers to as 'personhood'. By highlighting the contradictions within forms of structural and symbolic violence, this paper not only explains how violence works on both levels, but also how feminist theory can similarly function on various levels simultaneously.

Approaching gender-based violence in a slightly different way, Vittorio Buffachi and Jools Gilson, in 'The ripples of violence', examine the 'self' following sexual violation. Using literary accounts, first-person memoirs and novels, the authors examine the representation of violence as both an 'act' and an 'experience'. This paper is important for a number of reasons, not least as it problematises the tendency to focus on violence as an act rather than as an experience, which leads the authors to question how, as a society, we respond, and the temporal effects of the experience. Buffachi and Gilson conclude their paper by making the very powerful point that the effects of the experience of violence continue to send out ripples long after the initial act(s), and that these ongoing after-effects are a central part of the experience. As such, the authors argue that we need to incorporate a temporal understanding into our analysis of violence. Echoes of these conclusions can also be found in the central theme of Stark's book: the need to perceive violence (against women) as an ongoing pattern of control rather than as (merely) incident- or act-based.

Returning to symbolic violence, Suruchi Thapar-Bjorkert, Lotta Samlius and Gurchathen Sanghera's paper focuses on the experiences of the victims of domestic violence and the claim, often made by survivors, that at least when violence is physical it is visible and embodied. This is juxtaposed with the symbolic, insidious violence that operates around physical violence and that contributes to its meaning. Again, parallels can be drawn with Stark's work regarding the notions of coercion and control that are manifest in traditionally gendered roles, which are both everyday occurrences and taken for granted. Thapar-Bjorkert, Samlius and Sanghera draw on feminist theory and empirical research from Sweden, and use Bourdieu's work on symbolic domination and violence to explain violence through different forms of (intersectional) power. In using Sweden as a case study, the authors compare, on the one hand, a state in which significant gender reforms have been achieved to, on the other, the continuation of the *status quo* with respect to gendered responses to violence, something their research has exposed.

Set in a very different part of the world, 'Sunday lunch', the short story in this collection, is inspired by Radhika Kapur's experience of living in Delhi, a city rife with sexual violence (Baxi, 2014). The story explores the experience of living in a city in which one constantly feels unsafe. It does so by personifying the city as an abusive person with whom the protagonist is in a relationship. The author plays with the concepts of the individual and the collective, suggesting that women experience violence collectively rather than individually: a threat of violence against one is a threat against all.

Along with other contributions in *Open Space* from Kim Zinngrebe and Çağla Aykaç, uncomfortable questions are raised about the role of 'victims' and whether women can be 'complicit' in their own victimisation. This is closely tied to post-structuralist notions of power and agency, and is important when critiquing symbolic violence and its function in mediating social inequalities through the mundane and the everyday.

It is also linked to Stark's analysis of the notion of the 'deserving' or 'good enough' victim. Using the contentious example of refuge workers' reactions to victims, Stark is critical of how the domestic violence movement, in its mainstream tendencies in the United Kingdom at least, has moved towards a more policy-driven response, which provides guidance in addressing individual cases but steps away from the challenge of urging structural change (Stark, 2007).

The theme of how power operates and impacts on the lives of those affected by violence is continued in the paper by Melanie McCarry and Nancy Lombard, which focuses on young people's normalisation and naturalisation of gendered roles and on the types of violence that can result from this, which again are both structural and symbolic in nature. As in the empirical research described by Kidd, this contribution demonstrates how constructs of violence and acceptance form part of the wider discourse that young people have to face. Gender ideology is the backdrop against which educational programmes intending to initiate change take place. Unlike Rousseau's (1969) child, these children are not blank slates to be inscribed upon through education.

In the work of Nicole Westmarland and Liz Kelly, the voices of men who are perpetrators of violence are incorporated and given specific attention in the special issue. One of the key points of this contribution is to bring the perpetrators of abuse and violence into the centre, in terms of both challenging misconceptions about these men and beginning to deconstruct the ways in which their behaviour reproduces the everyday and the mundane, perpetuating both symbolic and structural discourses of violence. The authors recognise the disconnect between legal (and other) definitions of abuse, on the one hand, and the experience itself, on the other. Like Buffachi and Gilson, they illustrate the damage caused by putting all of the focus on the act of violence, rather than attempting to understand the temporal nature of the experience of violence that extends both before and after the act. To focus on patterns and motivations, the authors provide empirical evidence of how perpetrators describe their own behaviour, in particular examining how perpetrators use language to minimise their own violence. By naming and analysing these strategies and techniques, this paper contributes to an understanding of how perpetrators recreate and naturalise their narratives of violence, articulating them as incidents rather than patterns of behaviour.

'From pillar to post' examines domestic violence in the context of economic 'austerity' in the United Kingdom. Erin Sanders-McDonagh, Lucy Neville and Sevasti-Melissa Nolas's main tenet is that spending cuts and the consequent policies are both visible and of concern. By locating VAW within the discourses of economic structuralism, the authors also raise intersectional questions about how state actions have a disproportionate impact on abused women at various levels. Research from the United Kingdom indicates that the VAWG sector lost 31 per cent of its funding between 2010/2011 and 2011/2012 (Jones, 2015). This was a substantial reduction (of £2.4 million) in a relatively short space of time, which drastically affected the provision of gender-specific specialist services. While budget cuts have negatively affected a range of services at the local level, specialist VAWG services play a key role in protecting women's rights to life and to be free from cruel, inhuman and degrading treatment. The protection of and investment in such services should be a high priority. Even in the context of economic austerity, the funding cuts imposed on specialist VAWG services are disproportionate, and it is well within the financial capabilities of the state to ensure that these specialist services that work for the rights of women are maintained (Jones, 2015).

Feminist theories often contain contradictions across a range of distinctions, between power and identity (whether structural or symbolic), individual and social, active and passive, victim and perpetrator, personal and political. The papers in this volume are united by a desire to engage with these underlying contradictions in so far as they relate to the study of gender-based violence. Each addresses a different aspect of this topic, but what they have in common is that they attempt to draw these contradictions together. Whether it involves understanding how feminist and medicalised trauma therapies work together in practice, or how violence produces a ripple of effects, one of the lessons we can draw from the contributions is that we need to be vigilant in ensuring that the theoretical understandings and pragmatic interventions that the feminist movement advocates address the actual needs of survivors, perpetrators and the wider society.

While some recent critics of feminism have characterised the concept of ‘intersectionality’¹ as a theoretical privilege reserved for those (feminists) with power, feminism has always recognised the role of power in different forms and, importantly, the interplay between these forms. Discourses on gender often have inherent within them notions of heteronormativity. Socio-economic status is seen both as a source of oppression for women and a privilege reserved for some women at the expense of others. Equally important are race and nationality and how they affect experiences of oppression and inequality, both within and between different groups. Issues that disproportionately affect black, minority ethnic and refugee women and girls are often treated as separate from VAW in general. Furthermore, there are particular groups of women and girls who are often overlooked in terms of policymaking, and about whom there is insufficient information and data. This applies particularly to black and minority ethnic women, women with mental health needs, women with insecure immigration status, older women, women with disabilities including learning disabilities, and girls in or looked after by institutions (Jones, 2015). An in-depth UK study of female asylum seekers found that of those refused asylum, 67 per cent had been made destitute and 16 per cent of these had experienced sexual violence while destitute (Jones, 2015). International human rights law allows states to differentiate between citizens and non-citizens in certain policy areas, including those related to immigration control. Differentiations between citizens and non-citizens should not, however, apply to the enjoyment of rights as a whole or to inalienable rights such as the rights to life and to be free from torture or cruel, inhuman and degrading treatment. Crucially, the right of immigrant women to equal assistance in cases of violence has received increased recognition (Anitha, 2011).

Walby, Armstrong and Strid (2012) draw attention to how systems of social relations are altered at points of intersection, without becoming something totally different. Experiences of violence and victimisation are configured differently at various intersections of race, class, gender, age and sexuality (Crenshaw, 1992). The impact of domestic violence and abuse on heterosexual men, for instance, may be less severe than on heterosexual women (Walby and Allen, 2004). The experiences of lesbians living in abusive relationships, on the other hand, may be more heterogeneous than those of heterosexual women (Donavan and Hester, 2014). Further examples of the importance of intersectionality and the positionality of

¹The term ‘intersectionality’, coined by Crenshaw (1992), parallels other scholars’ observations of the multifaceted nature of oppression such as ‘double/triple jeopardy’, ‘multiple jeopardies’, ‘multiple oppressions’, ‘multiple consciousnesses’ and ‘racialised gender’ (King, 1988). Collins (2000) also highlights the importance of considering interconnecting social structures and the influence of institutional power, particularly ‘race’, class, gender and sexuality, which shape people’s social locations as well as their experienced and enacted identities.

victims/survivors of gender-based violence can be found in religiously defined communities; for example, some lesbian and gay Sikhs and Muslims are forced to marry regardless of their sexuality (Hester *et al.*, 2012).

Discourses of race, class, sexuality and age intersect with discourses of gender to inform the social construction of violence and the types of subject that occupy viable victim and perpetrator positions (Walby *et al.*, 2012). Arguments against feminist perspectives on gender-based violence often centre on identity categorisations that they supposedly ignore, for example, trans women's experiences of abuse and their exclusion from (biologically defined) 'women-only' services, or the perpetuation of abuse by women against female or male partners. Many feminists have been slow to address these concerns and they have rightly come under scrutiny, yet the fundamental premise of feminism—that power and control are exercised in structured relations of gender—remains as valid today as it was during the first and second waves. Evidence suggests that gender, sexuality and power still operate in cases where women use violence and in the violence experienced by trans women (Hester *et al.*, 2012). Such experiences provide unique opportunities to further our understandings of intersectionality.

Feminist scholarship has drawn attention to the relationship between individual violations of women's human rights and patterns of human rights abuses. In her contribution to this volume, Rashida Manjoo, the former UN Special Rapporteur on Violence against Women, its Causes and Consequences, argues for this understanding through the language of citizenship rights. Beyond a focus on women's rights as human rights, this demonstrates a need to situate responses to gendered violence as connected with all rights, starting with citizenship. This becomes increasingly important as we witness a period in which issues of gendered violence are mobilised by international actors outside—and sometimes against—feminist agendas, requiring a return to and development of profound, diverse feminist engagements in order to push for further structural change.

This collection shows that legal perceptions of violence are drawn from social and cultural perceptions of violence, and vice versa. Our authors demonstrate the need, consequently, to transform current policies and enact social change in order to prevent rather than regulate gendered violence. The suggestions our authors propose focus not only on policies that change definitions or seek to prosecute violence, but also on understanding how language, perceptions and cultural expectations can legitimise or delegitimise violence. Understanding better how to achieve state and international responses that might transform legal mechanisms necessitates the continuing exploration of lived gendered experiences, which have the potential to reposition our starting points and redirect our attention when considering the relationships between gender, violence, law and discourse, as well as our sites of action.

Throughout this special issue, attention is paid to the continuum of violence that begins in the everyday. The collected papers work from the premise that 'the personal is political': everyday violence is linked to governmental decisions, and thus challenges to gendered violence must take place at every level, from the local to the international. Building on the personal, the Open Space contributions in this issue of *Feminist Review* include poetry and narratives reminding us—as does the article by Buffachi and Gilson—of the importance of the mediums of communication and collectivity. Just as ideas of intersectionality inform our theoretical positioning, so too do our multiple standpoints as victims, survivors, academics, poets, authors and researchers, and as individuals with specific ethnicities, class backgrounds, nationalities, sexualities and genders.

Building a feminist path forward requires attention to preventive measures, the influence of language, social and cultural expectations, lived experiences and the intersectional effects of violence within communities: a tall order. The insights of the contributors in this collection clearly demonstrate that there is a need for international, regional, national and local strategies to challenge gendered expectations around violence and its effects, and for transnational feminist projects that share knowledge across the discursive boundaries of, for example, law, health, therapy and education.

Traversing international, regional, national and local understandings of violence risks accusations of universalising gendered violence and thus articulating a response to or interpretation of gendered violence that transcends local conditions and is thereby ineffectual for the specific needs of individual women. Throughout the collection, authors have been encouraged to contextualise their texts and claims within the specific communities from which their research emerges, to enable comparative responses that are able to consider both differences and similarities in gendered perceptions of violence across place, space and time. Transnational legal processes then become possible—feminist responses that are sensitive to local constructions of gendered violence but also draw on cross-jurisdictional knowledge to challenge the persistence of the gendering of violence through law and policy. As such, while Westmarland and Kelly undertake their research on male perpetrators in the United Kingdom by focusing on predominantly white actors from a shared social demographic, the resonance of their claim—that the way men speak about violence is linked to the manner in which states formulate policing responses—will not lead to a ‘one-size-fits-all’ legal answer. Their work, however, does highlight a need to consider the limitations of feminist interventions into intimate partner violence if the defensive narratives produced by perpetrators are subtly reinforced rather than challenged by the state. Similarly, McCarry and Lombard, in their study of children’s perceptions of violence in Glasgow, on the one hand speak to the specific series of interventions in that city, and on the other raise new questions for programmes that seek to render gendered violence visible within a community without challenging deeply embedded, harmful cultural and social norms with respect to gender and other forms of inequality.

This collection underscores the need to consider place, space and time in our responses to and research on gendered violence. The papers presented here contain signposts to the specific political climate in the states in which the authors are situated; in particular, the current climate of austerity in liberal democracies and the impact of this on the funding and survival of feminist organisations that have shaped and defined research on violence and its gendered manifestations. The relationship between inequality and violence, and the associated politics that emerge from resource battles, relates to the political tenets of the specific time in which the research has been undertaken. Again, understanding the specific conditions of place, space and time is important to inform feminist responses beyond universals. This challenges us to see how the snapshot created by our authors might have the capacity to ‘travel’ in our understanding and help bring about political transformation, and to appreciate when these particulars do not ‘travel’, that is, the different temporalities and places to which they do not apply.

Policymakers need to recognise and address the underlying causes of gendered violence as well as dealing with the symptoms of it. Internationally, addressing gender inequality is the fundamental response required in programmes to combat gender-based violence and abuse. Such programmes are often financially supported by governments from the Global North through international development funds—yet these governments are not explicit about addressing similar abuses in their own countries. If we are to

move towards a strategy aimed at eradicating VAW, then the structural inequalities that perpetuate it must be addressed. Moreover, wider solutions are necessary—including greater access to safe crisis accommodation and support services, safe long-term housing, specialist counselling and therapy, education, training and employment opportunities, as well as fairer immigration and welfare systems. It is the editors' hope that our readers write themselves into the future of feminist responses to gendered violence; writing their views into policy, law and social transformation spurred on by the detailed, complicated and diverse approaches of the authors of the collection.

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