

Institutional violence is certainly more than just violence against women; however, violence against women is a huge part of institutionalized violence. In general we can define institutional violence as violence that comes out of the very institutions that underlie our modern society (can it be modern at all with institutional violence?) and will be most evident in interactions between the rich and poor. Harriet Hyman Alonso identifies "... the connection made between institutionalized violence and violence against women..." (Alonso 8) as a central theme of feminist peace movements. Let's explore some ways in which violence against women is a key element of how institutional violence operates.

One element of institutional violence is gendered language, or in reality language even independent of gender. Carol Cohn's article on the language used by nuclear weapons experts isn't exactly gendered language, but feels like language used as a tool of institutionalized violence to me. Sexual imagery is frequently used in nuclear discourse. The term "virginity" was used to describe any country that had not yet used nuclear weapons (Cohn 696). When India exploded a nuclear bomb, for example, it was described as India "losing her virginity" (Cohn 696).

The other primary use of sexual language in nuclear discourse that Cohn described is that of "patting" the missiles (Cohn 695). Patting a missile does not just evoke imagery of sexual intimacy (Cohn 695). The other thing patting a missile does is let the missile's lethality disintegrate away (Cohn 696). This is because we are accustomed to patting babies, small children, and pets; all of which are small and harmless (Cohn 696). Both of these examples of sexual language are forms of language playing a role in institutionalized violence.

According to George Lakey and Bruce Kokopeli masculine sexuality involves the oppression of women, competition among men, and homophobia. So masculine sexuality, by its very nature, is institutional violence against women? That doesn't seem quite right to me. Patriarchy, the systematic domination of women by men through unequal rights, opportunities, rewards, etc., and the unequal expectations through sex role differentiation, is the institution that organizes such behaviors. This is an institution whose only real goal is violence against women. Patriarchy attaches specific traits to gender. Women should be nurturing, gentle, emotional, and caring while men should be competitive, productive, etc. Professions are tagged by these traits so that teachers, nursing, and housework are of lower status than judge, CEO, etc. Here you have an institution that is created with one goal being the oppression of women.

Men raping women is the most visible illustration of individual men committing violent acts on individual women. The article by John Stoltenberg includes a transcription of a meeting of college men discussing ways to change how women view them (Stoltenberg 92). Though only a relatively small group of men commit any direct violence against women the fact that some women will tense up when a man is walking behind them is a clear sign of how deeply this form of institutionalized violence has fractured our society. The few men that commit violent acts against women are damaging the reputation of all men, even those of us who would never even consider such a thing.

Our culture is tilted against women. We all have heard that women are not as smart as men, they don't know anything, and are simply there for the pleasure of

men (Stoltenberg 94). This is about as far from reality as you can get, because women are in general just as smart as men, and some women are smarter than most men. Women have all along fought to change these views, that is where the feminist peace movements came from. But women can't change all of this alone. Men need to get involved. A change of this sort – to remove this institutionalized violence against women – has to involve all of those who are part of our culture, both men and women.

As a final question to examine lets determine if women should ever be given special consideration in peace processes and safety from violence. Seeing that lots of institutional violence is against women it may at first seem like women do indeed deserve special consideration. However, giving women too much special consideration and security may lead to some men becoming violent against them simply because of special advantages given purely to their gender. Giving women these advantages makes sense, but those with the power to dispense these advantages need to be careful that they don't inadvertently create a more hostile situation for women than they'd be in without these advantages.

In conclusion we see that a decent bulk of institutional violence is focused against women. This violence against women is more than physical violence like rape, but rather extends to the very structure of our society that places the careers women tend to go into at a lower status than those men go into. Though institutional violence is more than just violence against women, violence against women is deeply disturbing and problematic simply because of the gender component embedded within it.