

Lund University
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FKVK01
Spring 2012
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(Re)producing conflict-related sexual violence

A discourse analysis of the UN's understandings of conflict-related sexual violence

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Abstract

Despite several attempts, the UN have not been successful in ending conflict-related gender/ed sexual violence, not even within the organisation. To explain the discrepancy between intentions and actions within the UN, gender and feminist theory on power and sexuality are used to map the mechanisms behind sexual violence, leading to postulations of both gender and power as performative and mutable. These are then used in a discourse analysis of UN resolutions and reports, to answer the questions: *How do the UN understand conflict-related gender/ed sexual violence?* and *How are the UN's understandings of conflict-related gender/ed sexual violence (re)produced in the texts, and to what effects?* The analysis show that the UN documents contain several contradicting meanings. In addition to the manifest demands for cessation of sexual violence, the documents use categorisations that create separations and valorisation of men over women, thus (re)producing the power structures that enable sexual violence to occur.

Keywords: Conflict-related sexual violence, gender, femininity, masculinity, sex, power, discourse, UN, United Nations, feminism

Number of characters: 69 961

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1. Introduction

“We can't do it simplistically. We have to put the pieces together – not because we know what the answer will be, but because it matters.” - Cynthia Enloe (2012)

Since its inception, the United Nations primary function has been to ensure international peace and security, and among other things “*reaffirm faith in fundamental human rights, [...] in the equal rights of men and women*” (UN Charter 1945:Preamble). More than half a century later, the Security Council resolution 1325 (2000) brought some attention to women, who were previously notably invisible in the realms of international peace and security. The resolution inter alia emphasises the importance of women's full participation in peace processes. A decade after its introduction the effects and implementation of it have yet to present themselves.

Subsequent resolutions emphasise one specific effect that the *de facto* absences of peace, security and equality of rights can have, namely conflict-related gender/ed sexual violence. Resolutions 1820 (UNSC 2008a §2), 1888 (UNSC 2008b §2), 1889 (UNSC 2009b §3) and 1960 (UNSC 2010 §2) all condemn conflict-related gender/ed sexual violence and demand its immediate and total cessation. The resolutions also highlight that the same rules apply for UN actors and all personnel deployed by the UN (UNSC 2008a §7-10). Repeated occurrences of sexual abuse by UN peacekeepers have been documented, contradicting the UN's clear position against any such offences (Whitworth 2004:13). Women and girls are disproportionately affected. In their latest report on the subject, the UN acknowledge a multitude of conflict-related gender/ed sexual violence (UNSC 2012), implying that in the twelve years after the passing of 1325 (UNSC 2000) not nearly enough of its explicit aims have been achieved. There have been severe implications for the implementation of 1325 (UNSC 2000). It has received criticism for its construction, and is reported by the UN to have weak effects even by its own standards (Shepherd 2008:80f).

The discrepancy between what the UN wishes and envisions, and what actions the UN and other actors engage (or fail to engage) in, is alarmingly large. It is highly problematic that the organisation with overarching responsibility for peace and security, has shown such incapacity to put an end to a conflict where there are no opponents. Unlike in international politics and between parties in conflict, there are no voices defending the causes of perpetrators of sexual violence, other than by the ill-received and commonly invalid utterance that “boys will be boys” (Whitworth 2004:13).

Various theoretical viewpoints can try to explain this discrepancy. The *Copenhagen School* explains through the act of *securitization*; how the framing of an

issue can transform it and thereby encourage measures unfit for the issue. A common example is the treatment of environmental issues with military responses which are inherently harmful to the environment (Buzan *et al* 1991:21-26, Peterson & Runyan 2010:151). The theory has received a lot of criticism for being gender blind (see *inter alia* Hansen 2000) which hampers its explanatory possibilities here. The issue of sexual violence is too widespread to be limited to an explanation based solely in the realms of security.

An explanation for the discrepancies could also be articulated through ownership of the issue, a *systemic dilemma* (cf Jarstad & Sisk 2008:24). The UN are an elite organisation consisting of powerful people, whilst victims of conflict-related gender/ed sexual violence are among the most vulnerable and powerless in the world. Their comprehension of causes and solutions, interests and priorities, could vary enough to be incompatible. Now, the UN have made this issue a priority and thus have lessened the gap between interests. The issue of ownership cannot explain the incapacity within the UN system to comply with their own rules and values.

The difficulty of reconciling intents with actions, suggests that perhaps it is not in between texts and actions one ought to search for an explanation, but rather within these factors themselves. This would mean researching what causes sexual violence to occur, and also finding reasons why it is so prevalent. A deeper understanding of the texts is required to see whether they can be found to mean anything more than what a first glance implies. A case study of dependent or independent variables is unfit, because the texts are made from the UN's perception of sexual violence, while their purpose is to effect sexual violence through the texts. Analysis based on variables is mindful mainly of the space between them (cf George & Bennett 2005:206f). Instead, focus will be aimed at texts in an attempt to within them find causes for the discrepancies. The question that this thesis intends to answer then becomes: *How do the UN understand conflict-related gender/ed sexual violence?* It is clear what the UN think of sexual violence, but what do they address as the reasons for its occurrence? What implications could their understandings have?

The texts of interest are Security Council resolutions and reports of the Secretary-General pertinent to sexual violence. To answer the questions, the analysis of the texts needs to be conducted in a manner that examines more than is explicitly expressed in them, and that will allow to search for imbedded meanings. Paraphrasing Laura Shepherd (2010:144), it is not enough to understand what a text means, we must also understand *how* a text means; how is the text constructed and given the meanings that can be read from it? Discourse analysis is beneficial for such a study since it provides both theoretical and methodological tools for understanding and deconstructing texts to find *how* they mean.

Thorough studies have been made on the way that the UN understand (gender) violence and (international) security, presenting worrying results of the incoherence between explicit goals and their understanding of underlying problems and solutions (see Shepherd 2008). Gender and violence are crucial concepts for studying and

understanding sexual violence, making such studies useful for analyses of sexual violence. The issue of sexual violence is to be understood as an effect caused by the way gender and violence are constructed; as a symptom rather than the underlying problem, and needs to be studied on its own accord. The separation of the analysis on sexual violence from the main issues of gender and violence is especially timely since the release of the report to the Security Council by the Secretary-General (UNSC 2012) titled *Conflict-related sexual violence*, thereby departing from the previous subordination of such issues to the title “Women and peace and security”. This could indicate many things, among them that the UN no longer perceives sexual violence as a women's issue, or that it is to be understood separately from other issues concerning gender. From the discursive understanding of meaning as transformable and incoherence as a venue for change, this pertains to the possibility of finding ways for a cessation of sexual violence (cf Shepherd 2011).

The theoretical involvements with sexual violence are mainly found within gender and feminist research. That is where this thesis will collect theories on what enables such violence to occur, and how it takes its gendered form; why most, but not all, perpetrators are men and victims are women. The use of discourse analysis and pre-existing theories on sexual violence allows one more question to be asked: *How are the UN's understandings of conflict-related gender/ed sexual violence (re)produced in the texts, and to what effects?* In their documents, do the UN (re)produce structures which enable sexual violence to occur, or do they challenge such structures?

Following this introduction will be a presentation of gender and feminist theory pertaining to sexual violence. Chapter 3 will then link theory with discourse analysis and present some of the postulations concerning language and the constitution of meaning and power. The two succeeding chapters will contain analyses of the documents, both divided into three parts. The first accounts for the explicit intent of the texts, the second pertains to the first question: *How do the UN understand conflict-related gender/ed sexual violence?* The last part of the analysis relates to the final question: *How are the UN's understandings of conflict-related gender/ed sexual violence (re)produced in the texts, and to what effects?* Theory and discourse will be linked to find out both *what* the UN mean and *how* the UN mean. The final part assembles the findings of the analyses and discusses some implications of the findings, and presents suggestions for further research.

2. (Re)producing gender/ed sexual violence

2.1. Gender/ing and conflict-related sexual violence

An important premise for this thesis is that the gender relationships which produce conflict-related sexual violence exist outside of conflicts too (Leatherman 2011:3). It means that the studies of conflict-related sexual violence cannot be limited to conflict and to occurrences of sexual violence, but need to extend themselves into other parts of society and of the world. It is also important to separate sex and gender and not limit femininity to women or masculinity to men. The genders of man and woman, or of masculinity and femininity, are constructed as dichotomous. Where one is valorised above the other, the attributes of the other simultaneously become devalorised. Feminisation and devalorisation are interlinked and one can be used to invoke the other. Privileging masculinised values inevitably feminises and devalorises the opposite (Peterson 2010:18f). The recognition of categorisations and its independence from sexes is the first step toward an understanding of gender/ed conflict-related sexual violence¹ since both victims as well as perpetrators are both women and men.

Theories on why sexual violence occur vary. The essentialist notion is that the mere availability of women induces men to rape. That is why conflicts, with lessened government control and security, provide larger opportunities and thereby larger numbers of sexual violence. This does not explain variations over conflicts nor why certain groups, like ethnicities, are sometimes targeted (Wood 2010:131). This illustrates a biologicistic view of men, as irrational, without self-control or any desire to protect, which clashes with common narratives of the masculine role.

A psychoanalytical view of perpetrators as deviant and the problem as pathologic fails to account for the sheer magnitude of cases, since it would mean that militaries consist of disturbed people (Skjelsbaek 2001:212f). While an individual focus can explain men and women as perpetrators, it still lacks gender perspectives. It both excuses actions and defies notions of responsibility for oneself. Skjelsbaek (2001) provides a comprehensive account of the positions of writers on sexual violence, and excludes essentialist and structuralist theories as explanations for sexual violence since they fail to account for all types of victims. The conceptualisation which is found to best explain sexual violence is social constructionism, which relates to the initial postulation of constructed genders as objects of analysis. Gender is not given but constructed by

¹ Henceforth for the readability of the text, *gender/ed conflict-related sexual violence* will be referred to only as *sexual violence*. When discussing other forms of sexual violence, that will be explicit.

attributing certain behaviour as appropriate for only one gender; something we are doing, not being. The sexual violence is an act of feminising and devalorising the victim in relation to the perpetrator who thereby reinforces notions of relative power. Power is a vital component in understanding the desire to valorise the self and devalorise the other. This draws also from the strong norm of heterosexuality and its dichotomous perception of masculine and feminine, in which the heterosexual masculinity is related to power. Heterosexuality is understood as a hegemonic norm to which all sexuality must relate; the sexuality or asexuality of the individual is not significant. The inclusion of an understanding of heterosexual norms enhances the connection between gender and sexual violence since the institution of heterosexuality provides well-established frames for the separation of feminine and masculine in sexual activity (Skjelsbaek 2001:224f).

Similarly, Shepherd uses three categories for the understanding of violence and gender which are named “*violence against women*”, “*gender violence*” and the “*violent reproduction of gender*” (2008:34-78). Though their methods differ, these categories can be loosely but suitably matched against Skjelsbaek's (2001:215), where “*violence against women*” presents a more essentialist view, “*gender violence*” responds to structuralism where certain entities are constructed as more vulnerable, and the “*violent reproduction of gender*” like social constructionism emphasises the performative notions of gender. Shepherd also presents the notion of “*violent reproductions of gender*” as most suitable for understandings of gender and violence since its performative notions can be used to analyse the determination of meaning in discourse and thereby the (re)production of gender/ed structures and violence (2008:51f).

Common descriptions of feminine qualities as weak and passive in themselves demand the opposite in masculine power and agency, which reinforces separation. The image of masculinity is not constructed from the capacities of the male sex but from ideal images, and is often more than one can achieve. This creates a constant need to prove one's masculinity and avoid the risk of being feminised and devalorised for not trying hard enough to comply with the image of masculinity (Peterson 2010:27). The masculine is superior only in its comparison with the feminine and is a constant positioning against it; it is built on exclusion, and a complete inclusion and masculinisation of a population is not possible. The dominant masculine requires a deviant other in the form of femininity or non-heterosexuality. This legitimises unequal power relationships and masculine authority (Via 2010:43). Violence and physical dominance, used to feminise and devalorise, is one way to try and reach or re-establish the aspired hegemonic masculinity, and power (Leatherman 2011:20).

Aspirations of masculinity cannot be contained to armed conflict. Coercive sex in both conflict and non-conflict situations can be placed on the same continuum, from consensual sex to different forms of unwanted sexual activities. Arguments to separate conflict-related and non-conflict sexual violence include differing victimisations, unequal chances to speak up, that conflicts remove mechanisms of prosecution, and that victims cannot receive treatment. These traits are not specific for conflict but widespread problems and the separation is often arbitrary (Kelly 2010:118).

Genders and the roles, expectations and behaviours that come attached to them, are constituted in a multitude of ways. While the making of gender is “*performed [...] without one's knowing and without one's willing, it is not for that reason automatic or mechanical*” (Butler 2004:1). Language provides frames for understanding and changing of subjectivities. Acts of speech and dialogue are constitutive for the creation of subjectivities (Butler 2004:173). Gender is not to be seen as something static and underlying that can be 'correctly' described in certain terms. The very descriptions constitute gender, thereby making gender something performative and constantly regenerated through purposeful actions, though not by intentional actors (Butler 2007:79f, Foucault 2002:105). This understanding of gender refuses the positivist and metaphysical attempts to define it. In order to understand how gender is made and what gender does, speech and actions, rather than persons and groups, need to be scrutinised.

2.2. The particularity of sexuality and power

The notion of *sexuality* can be fitted into a web of power relations. Power, according to Foucault, cannot be understood through sovereignty, rules or laws. To be able to understand power relations it is not oppression or rules that are of interest, but rather the ubiquitous constitutions of power. Power is constituted in all interactions and hence is always present. Power relations appear in all confrontations, and while power might form into seemingly stable institutions it is never absolutely determined. That power is produced everywhere means that it is inherent in every other phenomenon, relationship or structure. It also means that there can be no favourable analysis of power that puts opposition and resistance on the outside; every relationship is within. The use of power immediately constitutes resistance within the same relationship; power is always relational. The systematic effects of power that can be empirically detected are hegemonic expressions of these power relations (Foucault 2002:102-105).

To place rights within sovereignty and law means placing them in Thanatopolitics², or in Foucauldian terms, politics of blood, where the ultimate threat of the powerful is their ability to decide over life and death; where the demonstration of power over life takes the form of death penalties. This exercise of power has been challenged by the current *bio-politics*, politics of life, a positive power, rather than a destructive one. It augments life by seizing it and controlling its every mechanism to enhance its productivity, e.g. through demographics and schools, to induce normative power over life, instead of oppressive power over death (Foucault 2002:138-148).

An analysis based on the rule of law as the centre for power would place sexuality under binary regimes; everything could pass as allowed or forbidden and be interpreted through its relation to the written law. This idea of power as law would place people as the opposite, as ruled citizens, and is incompatible with an understanding of

2 Thanatos is a Greek mythology death god, cf Negri 2008:37

power as productive. Law is based on force, but bio-politics cannot threaten life and relies instead on norms and normalisations. It encapsulates other parts of society besides legislative or governing institutions. The historic will to talk and create knowledge about sexes and sex, for instance through churchly confessions, has placed sexuality within historical patterns of power, and created sexuality as a main venue for knowledge and power. Talk has placed sexuality within the discipline of bio-politics. To talk about sexes makes them desirable. It constructs sexes as something necessary for identity. At the same time, the 'naturalisation' of sexes through its discursive subordination to positivist biology, obscures its relation to omnipresent power, and instead returns to a conceptualisation of power within rule of law. The naturalisation enhances ideas that link sexuality with the reproduction of life, making it essential to bio-politics, control and power (Foucault 2002:96f, 101, 108, 142-144, 154f).

While rule and law define actions by categorizations based on determined texts, the controlling and disciplining mechanisms instead demarcates normal from abnormal. They exclude and form conformity. Differentiations and hierarchical divisions reinforces the role of norms, and norms thrive together with formal equality, which promotes homogeneity. Norms, unlike rules, contain the possibility of rewards which creates a strife to voluntarily alter behaviour (Foucault 2003:181-185). The norm of heterosexuality works through bio-politics by requesting and rewarding conformity, while it draws a clear line between the norm and any other interpretation of sexuality. It is enhanced by sexuality's constructed importance for identity, which works to create continuing endeavours to define one's own sexuality. The ways that sexuality through history has been constructed as particular for exercising control and discipline, make sexuality a subject differentiated from many others, through its construction as vital, and its intricate connections with power.

Sexuality is thus a venue for exercises of power. It is discursively constructed as desirable in the norm of heterosexuality, and the corollary abnormalisation of non-heterosexuality. The power in sexuality can not be understood as external to sexual acts and talk about sexes and sex, nor like a breach of a prohibition or law. Power is constituted in all sexual acts, and strengthens norms or challenges them.

Foucault states that the history of sexuality's role in society ought to be a history of discourse (2002:85). The previously discussed performative notion of gender also corresponds with the discursive notion of language as an arena for actions, power and as constitutive. Discourse analysis, like feminism, is situated within a post-structuralist understanding, which postulates language as the frame for our understanding of 'reality'. Whatever might be a positivist 'truth', we can only make sense of it and understand it through our linguistics and discourses (Winther Jørgensen & Phillips 2000:15, Butler 2007:23). Thereby language is essential in a discourse analysis for creating insight into the objects of interest. The way that gender is made and remade through reiteration and constant confirmation of discourses in language, makes discourse analysis suitable for an attempt to try and deconstruct notions of sexual violence in UN documents (Winther Jørgensen & Phillips 2000:10).

3. Discourse as analytical framework

3.1. A normative notion of research

A subject such as sexual violence is not unproblematic to study even from a distance. Where it is often presumed that the best research is conducted in the most impartial and objective way (cf Hollis 1994:3, Teorell & Svensson 2007:54f) it is not wise to ignore or circumvent the positioning that comes with subjects such as sexual violence, where it is obvious – even appropriate – that the writer has a normative standpoint against such occurrences. To ask questions about sexual violence and to study it means participating in the attempts to counteract and abolish it, to bring the hegemonic masculinity into question, and to ask such questions is part of a feminist project (Tickner 2006:22f).

The normative standing and the immanent desire to induce change that fuels feminist research opens up for questions on biases and irreproducibility. While such points may be valid, feminist research can include fields that have formerly often been excluded from research, such as 'private' spheres, where established methodologies based on the 'public' are not applicable. The subjectivity does not necessarily suggest weakness; the explicit standpoint encourages heightened awareness of the own position, resulting in greater transparency and possibilities to account for the own predisposed understanding of the issue (Ackerly *et al* 2006:6f). The normative intent provides an instant relation to widely perceived problems and reduces the risk of scholarly introversion (cf Teorell & Svensson 2007:18).

It is apparent from the very beginning that throughout this essay sexual violence and mechanisms promoting it are perceived as “bad” or “worse” whilst attempts to thwart it are accordingly “good” or “better”, and these presumptions can be accounted for in the analysis and contribute through their critical position.

3.2. Selection of material

The texts which will be analysed are resolutions 1325 (2000), 1820 (2008), 1888 (2008), 1889 (2009) and 1960 (2010), *Report by the Secretary-General pursuant to Security Council resolution 1820* (2009) and *Conflict-related sexual violence – Report by the Secretary-General* (2012).

The material is selected from a variety of other options for studying the discursive position within the UN regarding sexual violence. It is however interesting to

study the centre regarded as the most powerful, the Security Council. It is the organ within the UN that is responsible for decisions on the use of violence and thereby a crucial actor in conflicts, thus relevant for conflict-related sexual violence. That the Security Council is on the highest level in the UN also means that the texts produced here are not meant for immediate use. National implementations are expected, which allows resolutions to be more declaratory and visionary than publications from more practical and specific levels in the UN. They thereby provide the most suitable official source for the visions, wishes and ideals of the UN as an organisation. They allow for studies on the discourse around sexual violence when not referring to specific conflicts, specific target groups, or to specific regions or states, and it is this overarching image of sexual violence, including genders, sexes, valorisations and devalorisations, that are the objects of analysis.

To create a more complete image of the UN's discourse, reports from the Secretary-General to the Security Council are of relevance. These provide a ground for decisions made by the Security Council and complement the resolutions. Reports are often more empirical, longer and can be more specific regarding contexts. Together with the resolutions they can create an image that includes backgrounds and the initial representations of sexual violence in the texts.

That these specific resolutions are included in the study is because these are all the resolutions that specifically address sexual violence in its own context rather than a conflictual one. The reports are both produced by requests in these resolutions, in 1820 (2008) and 1960 (2010). They thereby have particularly strong intertextual links to the resolutions, which makes them suitable for an analysis treating the texts as equal sources for information, instead of for comparison.

3.3. Analytical strategy

Knowledge and power can both be found in language and speech, and so too can the way that knowledge and power are interrelated. Language is mutable, which causes it to mean different things; depending on its context, sender and receiver, what iterations are used and to what purpose, speech can challenge and (re)produce power. Language holds power, and to speak of something can both enhance its hegemonic expressions and open up for pronounced resistance. Use of language can be studied to find the ways that language is used to construct mutual outcomes of knowledge and power, to see how the various operations of language are used for strategic purposes and see how language corresponds with changing patterns of power structures (Foucault 2002:110f). Playing along and fulfilling the cadence reinforces norms, while a deceptive cadence draws attention to its construction and its expectations.

A critical analysis requires reflection not only on the texts but also on silences and what is left out of the texts; what is universal and taken for granted and what

interpretations the texts exclude. When already acquainted with the texts it can be difficult to alienate oneself enough to reevaluate them; therefore the usage of a specific perspective can be useful to provide distance, and reduce the risk for arbitrary interpretations (Kronsell 2006:115f, Winther Jørgensen & Phillips 2000:44). The gender and sexuality theories presented above will provide tools for analysis and perspectives from which to deconstruct the texts. To enhance transparency and structure and further lessen the risk of interpreting the texts differently, open-ended questions based on the theories will be used for the analysis of all texts (Esaiasson *et al* 2007:238-246).

For the first step of the analysis, the manifest messages will illustrate what the intentions of the texts are, how it might be intended for them to be interpreted. This will mainly work as a brief contrasting background for the following steps. A second reading will search to find an image of the ways that the UN perceive sexual violence, following the question: *How do the UN understand conflict-related gender/ed sexual violence?* It will not search to discover underlying intents or agendas, but rather to fit the perceptions of sexual violence present in the texts into theoretical frameworks around sexual violence and see how they correspond. Who and what are responsible for the use of sexual violence in conflict? Who are perpetrators and who are victims, how are they described, and what are their relationships? What solutions and possible ways to end the use of sexual violence are envisioned?

The third stage follows the second question: *How are the UN's understandings of conflict-related gender/ed sexual violence (re)produced in the texts, and to what effect?* Because the understandings of the UN will also be drawn from the texts, this question might appear redundant. It will however allow for scrutinisation of parts not explicitly referring to sexual violence, and, by adherence to theory, see if the UN's understandings are present there too, and enable deeper analysis of the possible effects of the UN's understandings. It will look deeper into the language and subjects of the texts in search for latent messages, constructions of dichotomies, expressions of ab/normality and logics of equivalence that may attribute to binary separations and conformity to categories. How are the feminine and the masculine described in relation to sexual violence? Are the genders of men and women represented as homogenous groups or are there variations? How are actions, people, groups and institutions represented? What is described in valorising or devalorising terms? (Winther Jørgensen & Phillips 2000:51-57, Neumann 2003:158) Following the theories, dichotomies, separations and categorisations are very important for enabling sexual violence to occur, and such elements will receive particular attention.

4. Security Council resolutions

4.1. The manifest meanings

The intent of resolution 1325 (UNSC 2000) is widely known to be the promotion of peace through inclusion of women in peace processes and in positions pertaining to peace processes. There are many similarities between the five resolutions discussed here, on the subject of participation and on other matters. 1325 (UNSC 2000:Preamble) and 1889 (UNSC 2009c:Preamble) refer to the principles of the UN Charter and place the subject for the resolutions under the responsibility of the Security Council, and state and iterate the need for full inclusion of women. They both recognise special needs of women and girls in conflict and post-conflict settings and a need to respond to these. 1889 (UNSC 2009c) is subsequent to 1325 (UNSC 2000) where the latter calls for gender perspectives, gender mainstreaming, inclusion of women, and requests further inquires on the impact of conflict on women, the former states that the same goals must be achieved, expands the studies requested, expresses concern over the inability to so far fulfil the purposes of 1325 while making very similar statements and reiterations of its purposes.

The other three are specifically targeted at conflict-related sexual violence. Referring to *inter alia* international law, they emphasise the importance of immediate cessation of all forms of sexual violence (UNSC 2008a §2, 2009b §2, 2010 §2). They note that sexual violence is not arbitrary and can severely affect possibilities for peace and security, calls for specific studies, and inclusion of it in the Secretary-General's reports. They stress the inclusion of women in peace processes and the importance of protecting vulnerable women and girls while stating that many acts of sexual violence are criminal (UNSC 2008 §1, 3, 4, 8, 15, 2009b §1, 3, 6, 8, 12, 16, 19, 24, 26, 27, 2010 §1, 3, 8, 15, 18). The preambles express concern over civilian's vulnerability to sexual violence, especially women's, and notes impunity as an important factor for the difficulties of ending sexual violence.

Together they state changes, mainly institutional, necessary for ending sexual violence and women's high vulnerability in conflict, and connect a possible decrease in sexual violence with increased gender equality.

4.2. The understandings of the UN

In these resolutions there are recurring themes of actors, responsibilities and suggestions for countermeasures against sexual violence. The most overarching responsibility is with the Security Council, that through the UN Charter express their responsibility for peace and security. The responsibilities of the states are then iterated in many places. States have the ultimate responsibility of guaranteeing the rights of all their inhabitants, through ratified agreements and international law, and work to counter any breaches to such rights. The role of the parties to conflicts is to ensure that the rules are followed within that conflict, especially for protection of civilians *and* protection of women against sexual violence. Other UN organisations and civil society are given some more complementary responsibility, as they are encouraged to include aspects of sexual violence in other work to ensure attention to those issues (UNSC 2000, 2008, 2009b, 2009c, 2010:*passim*). The actual perpetrators are presented as external from the organisations of the UN, the states, the civil society and the parties to conflict, save for discussions on command responsibilities. The perpetrators are not given any particular responsibilities for the cessation of sexual violence.

Descriptions of the victims of sexual violence are quite coherent; they are women and girls, or women and children: “[A]ll parties to armed conflict to take special measures to protect women and girls from gender-based violence, particularly rape and other forms of sexual abuse” (UNSC 2000 §10). Sexual violence is understood to be part of gender-based violence, which is presented as targeting only one gender. Women and girls are “targeted by the use of sexual violence, including as a tactic of war” (UNSC 2008:Preamble), implying reasons beyond tactics for sexual violence. Women and girls/children are the victims of sexual violence, and they are part of the group civilians, which is also targeted. The victims of sexual violence are described as in need of constant protection from it, mainly by the previously discussed organisations. Women are described as discriminated, and through previous neglect of the special needs that are attributed to women, vulnerability is expanded to fields other than sexual violence. The perpetrators are not given any specific attributes or roles.

Several domains are included in suggested and requested work on sexual violence. One of the most frequently mentioned is knowledge. The Secretary-General is requested to include information on sexual violence in reports, carry out research on women and gender in conflicts and peace processes (UNSC 2000§16), and develop training programmes for awareness of issues of sexual violence. Continuous reports on the matter are requested, with information based in sources internal to the UN (UNSC 2008§8, 15), knowledge is to be shared within the UN (UNSC 2009b§5), information on special needs and protection of women and children is to be provided (UNSC 2009c§5, 6), as is information on perpetrators and parties to conflicts suspected for acts of sexual violence (UNSC 2009c§27c, 2010§3). Knowledge in the forms of information and training should lead to better responses and are repeatedly mentioned to be of

importance for work against sexual violence.

Another factor aimed at impeding sexual violence is protection, a recurring term throughout all five texts. The aforementioned responsibilities of the organisations mostly pertain to the protection of victims, here to be understood as women and girls/children. Whether 'women' here refers to a sex or a gender is not evident. The role of women and girls/children is static and it is not the form of their vulnerability and possibilities to change it that are discussed, but rather the need to protect women in these specific roles. 1325 (UNSC 2000) and 1889 (UNSC 2009c) with their specific focus on inclusion, propose inclusion of women in many roles that have traditionally belonged to men. Taking aside the ways it expresses that only women should change, this directs the UN somewhat away from essentialism and toward a structuralist notion of gender.

Both responsibility and protection frequently refer back to a variety of legal agreements. The UN Charter, international humanitarian law, human rights, the Rome Statute, conventions and protocols present an array of undertaken responsibilities toward civilians and combatants. The continuous reliance on legal mechanisms is assumed to mean that, if the resources and will existed to ensure compliance with these laws, the problem of sexual violence would be solved, or at least solvable. 1325 (UNSC 2000§8) wants “*all parties to armed conflict to respect fully international law applicable to the rights and protection for women and girls*” and 1960 “*Welcom[es] [...] assist[ance to] national authorities to strengthen the rule of law in accordance with resolution 1888*” (UNSC 2010:Preamble) and continues to state that “*ending impunity is essential*”.

This illustrates a view of sexual violence corresponding to power as prohibition; oppressive power in a fixed form rather than ubiquitous. Prohibition is enforced by minimising impunity, construction of laws, law enforcement and command responsibility. Together with the conceptual separation between victims and perpetrators, and perpetrators and the organisations they are part of, this is thought to solve the problem. That the UN understand sexual violence in such a confining way is problematic for their endeavour to gather accurate and useful information to stop it, when their efforts appear aimed at impeding rather than undoing it.

That the UN understands sexual violence as limited is visible in the resolutions. While expected, because the Security Council has responsibilities only in certain settings, that they only refer to conflict- or post-conflict-related sexual violence show a demarcation made for actions on the subjects, as well as limits on the possibilities for understanding the issue by not considering that it might have a wider scope. That its cessation is often linked with the initiation of peace, a state separate from conflict, further limits sexual violence to the context of conflicts and post-conflict settings. It is also largely separated from men to concern only women, since women are the ones who are specified. The way the UN understands sexual violence can therefore be said to be as a limited phenomenon that can and should be stopped by the force of law.

4.3. Problems of presence and absence

Many features are present in several places and contexts in all the texts that mirror the categorial perceptions that the UN have on sexual violence. Evident in the way the UN perceive victims, is the merging of women and children. This use is common enough for Enloe to have simply named it “womenandchildren” (cited in Shepherd 2008:41). The practise of equating women with children is a perspicuous devalorisation. Children are not fully mature, not capable or suitable for taking care of themselves but instead in need of care. Children are excluded from most forms of politics, like voting. When women and children are put together, these traits are attributed to women as well and deprive women of agency.

The use of specific categories which everything is referred to is common throughout the resolutions. Sexual violence was found to be understood by the UN as a restricted phenomenon, mostly limited to conflicts and with specific groups of victims. Categorisations are further used by naming women (and disabled people, children, and specific groups, but most often women) 'them' and women's attributes 'their'. This implies a separation between the writer of the texts and women, suggesting that the texts are written in a way that puts the man and the masculine as the norm(al) to which all others relate. 'Their' is often used to describe the 'special needs' or 'particular needs' of women and girls/children. This places women as deviant, because the needs of women are not normal, but special, and reinforces separations between women and men. To talk about 'special needs' is an act of devalorisation. To have needs means that something is missing, translating here into that women are missing something in comparison with others, thereby making them less complete. On some instances, the 'special' is presented as external. “[S]pecial *protection [to women and children] due to the fact that they can be placed particularly at risk.*” (UNSC 2009b:Preamble, emphasis added). In most places the 'special' or 'particular' is not given any explanation referring to external circumstances; “*the particular needs of women and girls in post-conflict situations, including, inter alia, physical security, health services including reproductive and mental health, ways to ensure their livelihoods*” (UNSC 2009c:Preamble). The list of 'particular needs of women' goes on to include e.g. property rights and employment, all needs which seem difficult to exclude men from, but which are still presented as special, and for women. That these are presented as needs of only women, suggest that it is not obvious that women should have these needs at all, once again making women deviant and devalorised.

Women in these texts lack power, expressed by the need for “*women's empowerment*”, and women also lack “*equal and full participation*” (UNSC 2009b:Preamble). While this could mean that power is unequal amongst women, other sequences like “*women's empowerment and gender equality*” (UNSC 2009b:Preamble) suggest that it is in comparison with men. To propose a need for women to achieve what men already are seen to have, especially when discussing equality rather than an

absolute value, is clearly placing men as standard for others to adjust to.

In what appears an attempt to emphasise the importance of the issue of sexual violence, it, and its victims, is instead made a specific and less important category. “[S]exual violence, when used or commissioned as a tactic of war [...], can significantly exacerbate and prolong situations of armed conflict and may impede the restoration of international peace and security” (UNSC 2010§1, emphasis added). Sexual violence is not made a crucial component. It has to fulfil a criteria to even be significant, and then it 'can', not 'will' be. This categorisation of sexual violence as external to other factors devalorises it in relation to others, allowing for arguments for its exclusion from e.g. peace processes. The devalorisation is reinforced by repeatedly adding “*where appropriate*” and “*where necessary*” (e.g. UNSC 2008§11, 2009b§1) when referring to proposed actions against sexual violence, thus fitting sexual violence into a structure of hierarchies among issues and occurrences where they are given unequal importance. An effect of this could be attempts to valorise the issue by attempting to devalorise other. These patterns of categorisation puts issues as opposing and separate from each other, instead of uniting them to create a more comprehensive approach, as is requested by the UN.

The absence of men in the texts appears deceptive. While they are not mentioned explicitly, there are few doubts that men constitute the always present norm to which women and children are compared. That men are absent in the texts does not make them the norm. This is done by the referral of other categories, such as women, to men. That women are referred to something else creates a need in the text to always define women, to explain what it is that make the category of women specific and deviant. This need reinforces the categorisations and separations that started it. Meanwhile, the category of men escapes definition and scrutinisation because of its absence. Because the categories of men and women are constructed as dichotomous, this does not mean that men are not defined, but means instead that men are defined by that which women lack. To lack is a negative attribute, and thus men are valorised while women are devalorised.

That men are described through women puts women as the category that is possible to problematise, since it is present, thus implying that women are problematic. That it is possible to discuss women and put women in different contexts and positions allows for changes of women, because gender is made through its descriptions. The absence of men preserve men as unproblematised, ergo not problematic. This means that the UN construct the group to which most victims of sexual violence belong as the problem, rather than the group to which most perpetrators aim to belong. That the UN reinforce separations and categorisations of men and women, continuously valorise one over the other and apply the same structures to issues of peace and security as well, indicate that they are part of the problem as well as of the solution.

5. Reports of the Secretary-General

5.1. The manifest meanings

The *Report of the Secretary-General pursuant to Security Council resolution 1820* (UNSC 2009a) is requested to report on the progress of the resolution and contains information on the use of sexual violence in conflict, trends and suggestions for actions to be taken by the UN. The report frames sexual violence as a criminal offence and breakdowns of states as enabling for its magnitude (§5, 6). It describes empirical knowledge, and states the responsibilities of parties to conflict to end sexual violence, through prevention and protection, human rights, combating impunity, providing adequate legal frameworks and eliminating discrimination (§18-29). It accounts for UN efforts, including intended increase in women participating in peace operations, zero tolerance for occurrences of sexual violence by UN staff and inclusion of aspects of sexual violence in other efforts (§32, 34, 35, 37-43). The recommendations made in the report are similar to those expressed in the resolutions (§56-57).

The Report of the Secretary-General titled *Conflict-related sexual violence* (UNSC 2012) is pursuant mainly to 1960 (UNSC 2010) but also to 1820 (UNSC 2008a) and 1888 (UNSC 2008b) and reports on the progress of some of the UN's actions against sexual violence and, in line with statements in 1960 (UNSC 2010), also lists actors in conflict or post-conflict settings suspected for involvement with sexual violence (§1). It points to “*men in uniform*” (§5) as the predominant perpetrators and highlights women's security (§6). Women's protection advisers are discussed as a way to enhance protection from sexual violence (§10-14), and the report thoroughly engages in actors in conflict, post-conflict and contexts of civil unrest (chapter IV). Here, men are, although rarely, included as victims of sexual violence, and boys, not only girls or children, are mentioned (§29). Suggestions and actions for working against sexual violence contain training programmes, early warning-systems, funding strategies and a comprehensive approach (chapter VIII).

5.2. The understandings of the UN

There are many similarities between the resolutions and the reports of the Secretary-General. Every aspect discussed on the resolutions can be noted here in terms of responsibilities, roles and victims. The same reliance on law is apparent, as is the demand for protection from sexual violence as an external threat, leading to a similar notion of power. The roles of victims as women persists, though not as exclusively as in the resolutions. The first report acknowledges once that men have also been reported as victims of sexual violence in conflict (UNSC 2009a§6). The second expands this view radically by when generally discussing victims of sexual violence consequently mentioning 'women, men and children' as victims. Thereby it takes a large step toward recognising all of the victims. In every specific setting, descriptions of victims and risks posed, this report falls back onto a merging of the roles of women and victims, despite many discussed empirical descriptions of men that have been victims of sexual violence in conflict (UNSC 2012 e.g. §29, 37, 80, 87). Men are presented as exceptions while women are the main victims (e.g. UNSC 2012§27, 29).

The perpetrators receive more attention in these reports, where they are described to be “*members of State armed forces and the police, along with militias and other non-State armed groups*” (UNSC 2009a§14), lessening the separation of perpetrators from all other entities and placing them in contexts. Information is mostly provided by courts and tribunals (UNSC 2009a§45) favouring a law-based understanding of sexual violence as breached prohibitions. In the other report, perpetrators are investigated further, “*predominantly men in uniform*” (UNSC 2012§5) narrowing the role of the perpetrator from armed, to armed men, thus including a role for men in the issue of sexual violence. It also breaks common conceptions of victims by including children ages 12-15 as reported perpetrators (UNSC 2012§23).

Placing perpetrators as armed and part of groups like militaries and states poses them as in possession of power. The reports do not link these power relations to their use of sexual violence, but do often place sexual violence among other forms of violence and as a method of punishment, especially in the latter one. This proposes that the UN could have widened their perception of sexual violence to view it as a means of exercising power and thereby stepping a little closer to a performative notion of power. This in turn could give a greater understanding of sexual violence. This impression is dampened by expressions in both reports of the reasons behind sexual violence being the mere access to women unprotected by men. For instance, “*male family members leave their families and homes [...] thereby increasing the vulnerability of women to sexual violence*” (UNSC 2009a§12), indicating that only men and not women can protect women, without any mention of arms or other factors. The absence of protecting institutions is also noted as a contributing factor, where lack of law and order and justice resulting in impunity allows for actions of sexual violence (UNSC 2012§15) and blame is not placed on perpetrators but on absent actors, reinforcing a notion of power

as external since power is here provided with the option of being absent.

The referral of sexual violence solely to conflict and post-conflict is frequent in both reports, limiting the possibilities for their own requested comprehensive approach. Some small ruptures in this demarcation are detectable in the reports. Firstly, it is the explicit acknowledgement in a cited UN report that sexual violence is part of the subordination of women and cultural ideas of women's bodies as the property of men (UNSC 2012§19), implying that perceptions are part of what produces sexual violence and linking it to a general subordination of women that cannot be said to be limited to conflict.

Another structure that is mentioned in both reports, is the family. Abducted women and girls are subjected to sexual violence, including forced marriage to the abusive men (UNSC 2012§29, 42, 2009a§13). To include an accepted and praised institution of heterosexuality in descriptions of problems of sexual violence, and recognise that to enter into that institution can be a mean of subjecting victims to sexual violence, is a large step toward a greater understanding of it and widens it beyond conflict-related settings. Despite the use of quotation marks around “*marry*” and “*wife*” (UNSC 2009a§13) in an attempt to separate these marriages from the so-called 'usual' forms of marriage, it is still notable. The latter report furthers this by explicitly mentioning domestic violence as a result of conflict, stating that “*Violence experienced during the war also seems to manifest itself in increased and more severe cases of domestic violence*” (UNSC 2012§67). This makes a pronounced link between violence within and without conflict, and between different forms of violence, thus blurring sexual violence's separation from other issues.

This latest report widens areas of interest by including “*context of elections, political strife and civil unrest*” (UNSC 2012:IV, B). This inclusion is motivated by the risk for conflict. Still, it monitors situations because sexual violence can be used as tools of repression in non-conflicts, thereby expanding understandings of it.

While, as initially stated, the problematic aspects found in the resolutions are present in the reports as well, the reports construct a less cohesive image of conceptions of sexual violence. The findings in the resolutions were present here in similar form and have not changed, but more have been added that alters the overall image. One of the major additions is that of men, whose presence were previously invisible in the texts. Specifically in the latest report (UNSC 2012), men are present both as victims and perpetrators. This creates opportunities for problematising not only women's roles but men's as well. It enables discussion on whether, as is requested in 1325 (UNSC 2000), women should always try to join the masculine structures, or if a mutual exchange is more beneficial. The reports also present differences on the scope of sexual violence, where the latest include more factors than the former, both in levels of conflict and institutionally. It is not evident why the name of the latest report is different from the others, but it is clear that its contents differ, enough perhaps for cautious optimism.

5.3. Problems of presence and absence

Like in the previous section, there are many similarities between the resolutions and the reports. 'Womenandchildren', the significantly higher presence of women, especially in the roles of victims, the need for 'empowerment' of women, the frequent descriptions of women as 'them', and so forth.

The reports describe women as particularly targeted mainly when doing things women do. Women are exposed to sexual violence when “*going about their chores such as collecting firewood or water*” (UNSC 2012§45). Attempted solutions for this have been through fuel-efficient stoves, so that women do not have to leave there area as much (UNSC 2009a§50). Women's safety has thus been improved not by eliminating the threat or asking why only women, apparently vulnerable, are still the ones collecting water, but instead by making arrangement for women to stay at home. It is evident that the roles attributed to women, as providers for example, pose certain risks, still these roles are not put into question or discussed, but instead accepted and reinforced, by presenting solutions that preserve the roles unchanged as positive for women's security.

On various occasions, attributes of cultures are described as problematic. Sometimes these are specific, like the possibility for a man to 'undo' sexual violence by marrying the female victim (UNSC 2009a§23). It is also named more generally, that “*violence against women committed in the name of culture and tradition persists*” (UNSC 2009a§19). Tradition and acts following certain, sometimes harmful, patterns of behaviour are not envisaged as problems in the sense that they are rigid and persist changes that would decrease harmful patterns of behaviour. The general behaviour in accordance with such patterns is not presented as the problem. Instead, certain specific cultural traits are problematic, like the one above. This follows the pattern of categorisations, by defining unlawful acts instead of underlying reasons. To place acts of certain cultures as worse than others categorises actions among cultures and searches for answers within fixed structures instead of in the ways these structures are maintained.

Men are to a larger extent present in the reports than in the resolutions, mostly in the latest one. The pattern of leaving men unproblematised is however continual, and men are still placed as norm, although now more openly, where “*discrimination [...] restricts the ability of women to exercise their rights on the basis of equality with men*” (UNSC 2009a§7). As mentioned above, the latest report states 'women, men and children' as victims of sexual violence. Men are sometimes present in the reports as victims by their own accord and not solely as exceptions from the female victims. The descriptions of men's roles here are not discussed in the same way that women's roles are. That men in detention are vulnerable to sexual violence does not encourage solutions for how to ensure that men do not have to frequent prisons (cf UNSC 2012§87).

What is mainly different from the resolutions is that men in the report get to

inhabit the role of perpetrator of sexual violence. Men in uniform, unidentifiable men, men belonging to parties in conflict, are referred to as perpetrators (e.g. UNSC 2012§5, 27, 31). However, reasons, incentives and structural causes for why men are perpetrators are not raised for discussion, nor expectations on men or the connection between men and uniforms. Despite that perpetrators are described as part of armed groups, militaries in their current form are not discussed as a problem, save for inability to comply with international law. That militaries are trained to use violence, consists mostly of men and have a pronounced interest in exercising power are some initial characteristics that could be of interest to analyses of sexual violence but are left unproblematised.

Men are presented as perpetrators, at the same time as absence of men is said to increase women's insecurity. That women head households or are widowed is cause for concerns about vulnerabilities to sexual violence (UNSC 2012§65) and that men leave, increases vulnerabilities for women (UNSC 2009a§12). Here, the texts actually present a problem with the category of men. They provide safety by being present, and they perpetrate sexual violence, which also requires presence, which leaves two diametrically different roles of men. Both place men rather than women as actors; women are presented as subjected to violence or protection by men. The third present role of men, as victims of sexual violence, is also a passive role. To place men as both victim and perpetrator creates another incompatible image within the category of men.

That men at all are present provides a venue for discussions on the roles of men. That the presence of men takes such contradictory roles, that the descriptions of men vary, means that the category of men is made mutable. The UN do not in the texts reflect over why the same category takes so many forms, but by presenting them bring the previous notion of men, as the attributes women lack, into question. The possibility to describe, and thereby create, both men and women, decreases the immediate separations between them and thereby lessens the constant valorisations and devalorisations that uphold hegemonic expressions of power.

6. Conclusion: Departing from simplicity

“Always ask the manliness-question” - Cynthia Enloe (2012)

This thesis took its onset in the curious discrepancy between what the UN said about sexual violence and what the UN did about sexual violence. Texts and actions were incompatible in ways that seemed difficult to explain by problems with implementation. Attention fell upon the very texts and actions to try and within them find explanations for this inconsistency. This in turn led to two questions that would help to search for explanations for the discrepancy within the texts, using discourse analysis:

How do the UN understand conflict-related gender/ed sexual violence? To find comprehensive patterns for the way the UN described sexual violence would enable theoretical evaluation and compare texts with action based on deeper understandings of the texts, possibly providing better prerequisites for explaining the discrepancy. The analysis here showed that the UN's understanding of sexual violence is profoundly based in laws and prohibitions. Laws allow for categorisations based on determined texts, and the pattern of categorisations is evident throughout the texts. Lines are drawn to separate roles and occurrences from each other, thus creating strict limits for the UN's own understandings.

How are the UN's understandings of conflict-related gender/ed sexual violence (re)produced in the texts, and to what effect? For a deeper understanding of the texts and their current inability to end sexual violence this question would help to find what the texts said about sexual violence, also when not talking explicitly about it. To look at what is (re)produced in the texts, could facilitate comprehension of their effects. The categorisations were present on many locations, resulting in exclusions and de/valorisations of categories. The way that categories were described depended on their absence of presence in the texts, and since the texts were written to address a problem, that of sexual violence, the categories present were placed as more problematic than those that were absent.

In the theories on sexuality and sexual violence, power was vital for understanding any such occurrences, and power was found to exist within sexual acts – and all other acts – thereby making sexual violence an expression of power. The UN does not include any such notion of power in their texts. The actors that are presented as capable, in possession of enough power, to stop sexual violence were found on the outside. This gives categorisations of the roles of victims and the roles or perpetrators, where the different descriptions of categories absent and present, lead to the description of victims as the more problematic category. The category to which most perpetrators

empirically belong, men, was absent and thereby less problematic, and valorised where the present category of women was devalorised.

Valorisation of men, and devalorisation of women, makes men the desirable category. Since power is always relational, this creates attempts to comply with the masculine by forms of further valorising the category of men, and devalorising the category of women. One way of achieving the aspired masculinity is by devalorising and feminising others, for example through the use of sexual violence, which is an act that produces highly unequal power relations. This means that the UN documents, written in ways that valorise and devalorise the categories of men and women, are acting in concert with the perpetrators of sexual violence. When the UN place the production of power outside of their own documents, outside of the acts they describe and outside of the categories they reinforce, they fail to account for what their descriptions have the possibilities to construct. Their descriptions (re)produce the same power structures that make sexual violence such a distinguished way to exercise power.

That the same texts that are meant to abolish sexual violence are simultaneously (re)producing structures that enable it to occur could account for the UN's incapacity to put an end to it. The contradictory messages of the texts imply that attempts to implement them could have very different outcomes, but always risk to (re)produce the same structures they would need to challenge and change.

To better understand the effects of contradictory messages like these, studies on implementation that take all possible meanings of the text into account would provide better insights into possibilities for improving both texts and implementations, as would further scrutinisation of documents pertinent to the issue, to create a more holistic image. It is hopeful that the separations and de/valorisations were less evident in the last text, where men were more present and even modestly described, and thereby possible to try and problematise alongside women. A simple way to challenge prevailing structures and norms could be awareness of the performative power in description. A starting point could be to problematise every category present and absent from the texts, to include and describe men alongside women – to depart from simplicity, to put all the pieces together and to always ask the manliness-question.

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