

# Sexualized Violence, Moral Disintegration and Ethical Advocacy

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SEXUALIZED VIOLENCE,  
MORAL DISINTEGRATION AND  
ETHICAL ADVOCACY

by

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ABSTRACT  
SEXUALIZED VIOLENCE,  
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This dissertation develops and defends a conception of sexualized violence that is rooted in philosophical theories of violence, and at the same time helps us understand the way that violence is connected to various kinds of oppression, namely, the oppression of women. It argues that sexualized violence, which is typically theorized through related notions of physical violation and psychological trauma, is best understood in terms of its moral quality. Sexualized violence against women is fundamentally a moral problem insofar as it disrupts victims' ability to grow and develop in relationships with others, to conceive and meet responsibilities to and emerging from those relationships, and well as the ability to challenge unjust social norms, practices and institutions that in part constitute who we are. This moral quality of violence is investigated through an engagement with the concept of moral integrity, arguing that integrity is grounded in *authenticity*, understood through the existential-phenomenological tradition. Integrity-as-authenticity paves the way for understanding sexualized violence as a form of moral *disintegration*, where the dynamism and flexibility required of authentic selfhood is frustrated. Understanding violence and victimization in this way, I argue for a robust notion of *advocacy* as part of our response to victims. Advocacy—giving voice—will require the development of new concepts and language adequate to the experiences of victims, it will also require the cultivation of spaces and relationships where victims can speak, and it may require that we lend our voices to and for victims.

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For JoAnn Barlow and Connie Mosko

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## INTRODUCTION

One of the reasons I am drawn to feminism as an approach to philosophy is that at its best, feminism is a self-critical philosophical enterprise. That is, the fore-mothers of feminist philosophy instilled in us a sense that our starting points were never fixed, our work never complete and our methodologies never infallible. Academic feminism taught us to be skeptical of universal statements about sex and gender, generalizations and essentialisms, for the sake of the social and political battles being waged to wrest women from the grips of oppressive systems of patriarchy and domination. This carved out a specific and important role for academic feminists within the larger feminist project: we are uniquely situated to address, analyze, deconstruct, reconstruct, validate, and invalidate the theoretical and ideological underpinnings of the broader political movement. It is with this in mind that this current project, *Sexualized Violence, Moral Disintegration and Ethical Advocacy* took shape. My preliminary visions were of a philosophical intervention into one of the core issues of political feminism, that of the prevalence, nature and consequences of violence against women. But what I came to realize is that academic (and specifically philosophical) feminism requires an intervention in the way that we categorize and analyze this issue. There is little agreement on what counts as violence, and as little agreement on who counts as a woman, and at the intersection of these, there is ambiguity about who is and is not a victim and under what conditions one becomes a victim no longer. Academic feminists are haunted by the charge that we are creating victims, that is, that our thorough and relentless search for oppression and violence in various areas of women's lives has encouraged women to see

themselves as victims, rather than as politically active and empowered subjects.<sup>1</sup> This is haunting because the charge is that we've defined women as essentially victims, a problem that our fore-mothers warned us against.

I do not believe that we ought to give up on the project of understanding victimization, but I do believe that to do justice to feminism *and* victims, we must be especially conscious of the tools we use, the concepts we employ and the resonance of our conclusions with the actual lives of women. This is not impossible, but it is difficult (remarkably so in insular academic discourses). So, I embarked on this project with the vigor of the feminist political movement behind me all the while understanding the dangerous philosophical territory I was entering. The following methodological commitments have helped me to be conscious of this danger, and I believe, abate it.

First, this project is committed to academic pluralism. I do not believe that any philosophical project can address the lives of actual persons without engaging with the academic discourses that do the same thing. To this end, I engage with the work of sociologists, social psychologists and clinical psychologists, political scientists and critical theorists. The fruits of this engagement are problems, concepts and insights that are non-traditional in philosophy. These new sets of tools, and the perspectives they inform, are occasions for critical reflection on philosophy's own tools and concepts, a reflection that I hope pushes the discourse on violence against women towards a better understanding of the problems (and persons) it addresses.

Second, and in light of this first commitment, this project strives for philosophical pluralism. It is impossible to address all of the work done on the problem of violence

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<sup>1</sup> See Elizabeth Badinter (2006) *Dead End Feminism*.

against women, let alone the work done that intersects the philosophical ideas and legacies discussed in this dissertation. My aim has been to judiciously address important currents in thinking about violence, integrity, social ontology, trauma and advocacy within philosophy. This has led me through work in feminist philosophy, of course, but also “so-called” analytic and continental philosophy, ethical theory, political philosophy and philosophical psychology. This commitment stems from a more general belief that philosophy, if and when it defines itself, has always over-defined what it is, what it can be and what it ought to be, closing itself off from new questions and methodologies. Limiting ourselves to specific niches is at the same time closing ourselves off from engaging with others and their insights.

Third, I am committed to theorizing from and within the world. This means that the philosophical problems I take up are important to me because they are problems that real individuals face as they navigate their lives with others and within social structures. It is impossible to deny the prevalence of violence against women. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) report that 10.6% of women surveyed report being forced to have sex at some point in their lives. A survey of college students reports that 20-25% of college-aged women report an attempted or completed rape while in school. The U.S. Department of Justice estimates that of the 20% of all college women experiencing an attempted or completed rape in their college years, less than 5% of these attempted or completed rapes will be reported. A survey of high school students reports that 10.8% of girls in grades 9-12 were forced to have sexual intercourse at some time in their lives. In their first rape experience, women report that 30.4% of the assailants were intimate partners, that 23.7% were family members and 20% were acquaintances, leaving

25.9% to be strangers, coworkers or friends. The CDC reports that 9.1% of adolescents is a victim of physical dating violence (both male and female). And a study of high school girls reported that 20% had been physically or sexually abused by a dating partner. Young women, low-income women and some minorities have disproportionately high rates of domestic violence and rape. Women ages 20-24 are at greatest risk of nonfatal domestic abuse, while women 24 and under are at the highest risk for rape. Low income women are six times more likely to experience domestic violence. African American women face higher rates of domestic violence than white women, and American-Indian women are victimized at a rate twice that of women of other races.<sup>2</sup>

To be sure, these numbers are humbling for any researcher. But I am most interested in the *effects* of violence on victims, as well as the effect of a culture of violence on women who are deeply conditioned by the threat of violence. To do this kind of moral theorizing, but to remain, as I say, theorizing from and within the world, I take as my cue the experiences of women as they report them. Such a commitment means that philosophical theorizing must, at times, give way to and be interrupted by experience. So, throughout this dissertation, I invoke narratives of particular women's experiences that put our cultural assumptions about violence and women in view. These narratives will also pave the way for the positive contributions this dissertation makes, by way of informing the concepts of *sexualized violence*, *moral disintegration* and *ethical advocacy*.

Fourth, my own philosophical background—the lens through which these questions become questions for me, and conclusions informative for this project—is

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<sup>2</sup> Statistics in this paragraph compiled from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, [www.cdc.gov/injury](http://www.cdc.gov/injury), the United States Department of Justice, [www.usdoj.gov](http://www.usdoj.gov), and the National Organization for Women, [www.now.org](http://www.now.org). Accessed 9/25/10.

existential phenomenology. This becomes most clear beginning in Chapter 2, as I take up explicitly phenomenological conceptions of selfhood, ‘constitutive’ theories of group identity, and existentialist ethics. I am committed to a phenomenological account because it engages lived experience and is attuned to the way that we are both conditioned by the social world and constitute it. This is important in discussing sexualized violence, because being vulnerable to violence is part of what constitutes women *qua* women, and victimization is a way that those stereotypes of vulnerability are reinforced. My commitment to existentialism originates in similar concerns, specifically in locating subjectivity in the ways that we are in the world and with others.

Existentialism evades questions of determinism and radical freedom by accounting for subjectivity *within* our relationships with others, others who give us or show us the possibilities for who we may become. The self—the subject—is thus not merely a product of social or external forces, but is because of what she does and continues to do through the projects made possible by being situated in a social world.

These commitments lead me to connect violence, integrity and advocacy in this dissertation. While we typically think of violence as physical, and oftentimes allow that violence can be psychological, it becomes clear that violence goes beyond the physical and the psychological, and we must account for the *moral harm* that violence does.

Chapter 1 discusses common ways of thinking about violence. I conclude in that chapter that in order to understand the *meaning* of violence for individuals and communities, we must account for the *social* meaning of violence. The discussions of violence in moral theory, the American legal system and psychology reviewed in this chapter all fail to address this sociality in important ways. Addressing this sociality, which is the goal of

Chapter 3, leads me to a concern for the ways that our moral lives, and indeed our moral selves, are also socially constituted.

I choose to explore the moral harm of violence through the idea of moral integrity. I choose integrity because it is often discussed as the most fundamental level of moral character, or a commitment that structures the rest of one's moral beliefs.

Integrity, as I argue in Chapter 2, is a response to the tension that we find in human life between our vulnerability to others and social forces, and the freedom that makes us human beings, which allows us to be and become more than what those forces prescribe for us. In that chapter, I examine 'personal' models of integrity, which define integrity either in terms of the relationship (coherence) between beliefs, or the function of key beliefs in identity-formation. I examine challenges to these models from feminists who offer 'relational' models of integrity, which locate integrity in how we relate to others as moral deliberators or within moral relationships. I argue that we can put the tension between vulnerability and freedom into relief with existential ethics, and argue that *authenticity* is a better way to understand integrity. Drawing on the work of Simone de Beauvoir and Jean-Paul Sartre, I explain authenticity as 'being oneself,' but a 'being' that is always 'becoming,' that is, which is never fixed or static in its beliefs, self-conception or relationships with others. The authentic self takes up projects made possible by her social situation, but those projects are exercises of her freedom, her transcendence. As I argue there, we are always free to question, rethink and abandon our projects, and we are always free to take different attitudes towards our situation, others and even ourselves.

Chapter 3 continues the discussion of violence begun in Chapter 1, and fleshes out the social meaning of violence by considering the relationship between violence against

women and women's oppression. There, I argue that we must understand violence as a both a *face* of oppression, that is, a way in which oppression as a structural concept manifests in women's lives, and as a *force* of oppression, that is, as a way in which oppressive social norms that make women vulnerable to violence are created and reinforced. A concert of stereotypes, social practices and institutions form women as a social group, and women then act out the meanings of that group membership in their lives and relationships. And as I argue here, one of the important ways that women become women is through the socialization of their bodies and the physical vulnerabilities ascribed to them. This chapter marks an important turning point in theorizing about both violence and integrity, because I show how these social practices are taken up by women and lived out, *becoming* part of who women take themselves to be and what they become for others in society. That is, these social practices are part of women's selfhood.

Chapter 4 follows this line of thinking about violence and integrity as a social practice, and invoking the work of Margaret Walker (2007), I argue that violence against women, what I now call *sexualized violence*, is a social and moral practice that 1) limits the physical, social or economic mobility of women *qua* women, 2) produces or reproduces stereotypes of female vulnerability and weakness in relation to male empowerment and aggression, and 3) objectifies women by identifying them as sexual objects for others, and diminishing their subjectivity. In this chapter, I explain this definition with reference to a number of first-person accounts of violence. I draw on philosopher Susan Brison's (2002) account of her sexual assault and attempted murder, a national news-making case of sexual assault and harassment at the University of

Colorado-Boulder, and the narrative of a victim of intimate partner violence told by sociologist Ann Goetting (1999). To highlight the social *and* moral dimensions of sexualized violence, I explore how these forms of violence interact with victim blaming as a moral practice that delineates our responsibilities to and for others.

As a moral practice, sexualized violence works to frustrate women's subjectivity by threatening the capacities necessary for authentic selfhood, for integrity. Chapter 5 positions this understanding of the moral harm of sexualized violence against the more common understanding of psychological trauma as the "shattered self." Here, I argue that the 'logic of shattering,' as I name it, rests on a false assumption about what a self is in the first place, namely, that the self is a static, identifiable thing that can be shattered. Drawing on the existential-phenomenological model of selfhood developed in Chapters 2 and 3, I propose that the moral harm of violence is better understood as the frustration of subjectivity, and in particular, the creative and expressive capacities necessary for a living, dynamic relationship to the world and to others. This, I argue, is moral *disintegration*.

Finally, Chapter 6 proposes a way forward from victimization. If we replace the 'logic of shattering' with the frustration of subjectivity, sexualized violence can be understood as a loss of voice, in the thoroughly intersubjective and political sense of having a say in one's life and relationships with others. Understanding violence as a loss of voice, advocacy—giving voice—becomes the cornerstone of our responsibility to victims of sexualized violence. To understand *ethical* advocacy as a community's responsibility to victims, I draw insights from three models of advocacy: Sally Scholz's (2008) theory of ethical advocacy emerging from care ethics, Hilde Lindemann Nelson's

(2001) theory of narrative repair, and Kelly Oliver's (2001) theory of bearing witness to subjectivity. The insight gained from these three theories is that it is only through relationships with others that subjectivity is revitalized after violence threatens it. And insofar as we have a responsibility to be these others that *reintegrate* victims struggling with disintegration, we must always be aware of our own voices, what we "say" and what we fail to say.

As I mentioned above, a project like this is haunted by the concern that the more we talk about violence and victims, the more we create and recreate stereotypes of women as strictly victims. I believe that the path forward cannot circumvent the victim, that is, we cannot ignore, diminish or blind ourselves to the lived experiences of victims of oppression, domination and violence. Feminism must take account of what it means to be a victim, not just in defining what counts and does not count as oppression and violence against women, but to give an account of the effects of these phenomena on the moral lives of women. I believe that it is not *that* feminism focuses on the victimization of women that is the problem, but rather in *how* we go about it. Part of the "how" here will be an active engagement with what we ought to do, not just in terms of our scholarship, but as responsible others living with and for victims.

## CHAPTER 1: THEORIES OF VIOLENCE

This chapter analyzes four currents in contemporary thinking about violence in general, and sexual violence against women in particular. As I will show with each way of thinking about violence, there is a failure to address the concern that an account of violence must also account for the social structures, political institutions moral norms at work in the way that we think about actions, intentions and our relationships with others. The first two ways of thinking about violence are philosophical approaches with different explanatory impulses. One is a definition of violence that seeks to capture the minimal conditions necessary to consider a particular act or event ‘violence.’ Within this attempt, we will see philosophers ground violence in *force* and *aggression* in order to clarify what counts and does not count as violence. As I will show, concepts of force and aggression will fail to capture the moral weight of the term ‘violence,’ as we invoke it. The second philosophical definition of violence seeks to appreciate the complexity of violence and the range of violent acts and events by laying out a comprehensive set of conditions in accordance with which violence can be identified. While the comprehensive conception will include psychological forms and effects of violence and highlights the social meaning of violence and vulnerability, it will ultimately fail to explain why some members of society are more vulnerable to violence and its effects. The last two ways of thinking about violence are gathered from common discourses about violence against women. The third way I analyze violence is presented through legal definitions of sexual violence, which link violence to a lack of consent in sexual acts. Legal definitions of sexual violence are reviewed here for two reasons: one, to show that the legal categories of sexual violence we inherit are not good enough for moral and political theorizing, and

two, that they fail to appreciate the ways that both consent and violence are socially conditioned. Finally, I examine the relationship between violence and trauma as it is understood in clinical and social psychology through an exploration of the historical development and clinical presentation of Post-traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD).

Psychologists and psychiatrists are often on the front lines of treatment for victims of violence, and have done much work cataloguing the immediate and long-term effects of violence. Thinking about violence through PTSD illuminates the important psychological and social aspects of violence, but suffers from a tendency towards medicalizing the victim as a patient, rather than seeing and addressing the social structures at work in making violence possible, and even the way that our psychological reactions to traumatic events such as violence are socially conditioned.

### 1. Minimal and Comprehensive Conceptions of Violence in Moral Theory<sup>3</sup>

Vittorio Bufacchi (2004) catalogues a series of definitions of violence, arguing that most available philosophical definitions of violence are grounded in related notions of physical force and physical injury. He catalogues these as the “minimal conception of violence,” because they set the minimum requirements (physical force and physical injury) necessary to judge an action as violent. The minimal conception of violence, as described by Bufacchi, is exemplified by John Keane’s (1996) description of the “core conception” of violence as:

The unwanted physical interference by groups and/or individuals with the bodies of others, which are consequently made to suffer a series of effects, ranging from shock, bruises, scratches, swelling or headaches to broken bones, heart attack, loss of limbs or even death (66-7).

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<sup>3</sup> These terms are borrowed from Vittorio Bufacchi (2004).

The search for a “core” conception of violence is undertaken by Keane here in order to rid our thinking about violence of metaphorical and legal uses that extend the physically-grounded conception of violence beyond the scope of its meaningfulness. The minimal conception of violence and the core conception of violence have traction for us, I think, because they get at what Robert Audi (1971) identifies as “paradigm cases of violence,” such as hitting someone with a fist or object or shooting someone with a firearm. Paradigm cases are paradigmatic for us because they are, on the whole, uncontroversial cases of violence, and they form the hermeneutic backdrop for assessing new or unfamiliar cases. Such cases are clearly *physical* interventions on the body of another with typically obvious physical effects.

Because our philosophical thinking on violence seems to be grounded in the physical interaction between individuals and the physical effects that are caused, Alan Bäck (2004) argues that to say that something is violence is to imply that it is forceful; and force is defined as “that which is capable of producing or does produce a change in motion, shape or quality, or in all of these aspects” (220). Because human bodies are rather resilient, force is often necessary to produce a change in the shape, structure or function of the body. The force used when hitting someone over the head with a lead pipe, for instance, may change the shape of the skull by fracturing it, and as a result, a change in the function of the organs protected by the skull. If an eye-socket is fractured, it is possible to lose sight, and if parts of the brain protected by the skull are subsequently injured, one may lose speech, auditory, cognitive or emotive functions. Recalling Keane’s definition above, in addition to “unwanted physical interference,” it is key to this conception of violence that our bodies are “made to suffer a series of effects.” Because

violence implies force, violence is thus typically identified by the range of effects incurred. This association leaves open the possibility that acts of violence be acts of omission. Bäck writes, “an action is forceful in terms of the effects it has—not in terms of its rapidity, effort, quantity of force exerted, etc. ... Acts of omission can be forceful, as they can cause radical change. For instance, failing to close the floodgates can drown many; not having safety inspections can cause many to fall ill (220). Violence implies force because force is necessary for an individual to make another suffer the physical harms identified in Keane’s “core conception” of violence and in Audi’s paradigm cases. Assuming that the kinds of physical changes noted in these definitions of violence are all *unwanted* (shock, bruises, scratches, swelling or headaches to broken bones, heart attack, loss of limbs or even death), it would require sufficient force directed upon another for these effects to be achieved.

Thus, the implication of force in violence has done two things for this conception of violence. One, it motivates a definition of violence whereby acts of violence are identifiable based on the range of *effects* incurred, coupled with two, a means of separating force and violence conceptually, in terms of whether or not physical intervention or force is *wanted*. Identifying that the forceful intervention is unwanted is important because although violence may imply force, violence is not synonymous with force. For instance, a surgeon uses force to press down on the skin or tissue with a scalpel in order to fix a malfunctioning organ, remove a cancerous tumor or repair a broken bone, assuming that an individual wants these interventions taken. It would be odd to say that the surgeon has done violence in these cases, though the intervention has definitely been forceful. So, to determine whether or not a particular action is violent, we

must be able to identify the effects of an action—and in the case of the minimal conception of violence, physical effects—which will identify that an action was forceful, and if the effects and intervention are not wanted by the patient, we have warrant to consider that a particular case is one of violence.

Conceptually linked to both force and violence is *aggression*, which Bäck argues is a kind of forcefulness, particularly, *intentional* forceful action. Including aggression in our thinking about violence can be helpful because it explains the moral force behind the term ‘violence’ where mere ‘forcefulness’ may fail. Any number of things can result in the kinds of undesirable effects integral to the minimal conception of violence, such as unintentional actions, natural disasters, and animal behavior. In fact, part of Keane’s project is to clear away these kinds of cases from our thinking about violence. When we describe a sneeze as violent, or allude to the destructive violence of an earthquake, or even describe the actions of a powerful animal as violent, we metaphorically extend the concept of violence beyond its use, relying on the connection between violence and force (via unwanted/undesirable effects) and leaving behind the notion that violence belongs to the category of intended actions. Aggression then, captures the normative force of violence. When we say that something was done violently or violence has been done, we imply that the agent is morally responsible for the negative effects of her actions. If responsibility is tied to intent, then aggression captures the normative force of violence better than forcefulness alone. Perhaps ironically, grounding our conception of violence in aggression clears away the sometimes confusing metaphorical extensions of the concept, but at the same time moves the concept from the merely descriptive to the uncertain terrain of the prescriptive and/or pejorative. This moralized conception of

violence in some sense muddies the conceptual waters because we must then not only make connections between an action and its effects (the descriptive work done by forcefulness), but also assess the desirability of those effects for the patient, the intentional state of the agent, and even the moral rightness or wrongness of the agent's choices.<sup>4</sup> I call this 'uncertain terrain' not because I think the term 'violence' cannot be used in prescriptive and pejorative ways, but because the goodness or badness of effects, the desirability of those, and the intentions of agents are difficult if not impossible to assess beyond the "paradigm cases" on which we seem to agree.

This conception is minimal, argues Bufacchi, because it explains the basic conditions that must be met in order to call something violence. As we have seen, these conditions are rooted in the undesirable physical effects of certain kinds of actions. Because physical effects stand at the heart of the minimal conception, these effects imply physical force as the cause. And as Bäck shows us, force points back to the agent, causing us to consider the intentions of an agent when considering whether something counts as violence. The minimal conception of violence, in its attempt to clarify the conditions under which the term violence is appropriate, finds itself faced with a different set of philosophical problems because the concept carries moral weight that forcefulness does not. These moral questions raised with the minimal conception of violence are not alone a reason to reject such a conception for another; rather, they show us that a conceptual analysis of violence is impossible without taking into account the already moral dimensions of our thinking about violence. In order to appreciate the moral

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<sup>4</sup> Within these waters we find most moral theorizing about violence, namely, in the attempt to discern whether or not violence is ever justified, assuming that it always or usually has undesirable consequences.

complexity of our thinking about violence, Bufacchi and Audi both opt for what the former calls the comprehensive conception of violence, in an attempt to rectify the conceptual shortcomings of the minimal conception.

Bufacchi argues that the kinds of definitions that fall under the minimal conception of violence obscure the fact that violence describes a social relationship, not just an event and its effects (176-7). He agrees here with Audi, who offers what Bufacchi calls the “comprehensive conception” of violence in contrast with the minimal one. Audi defines violence as:

The physical attack upon, or the vigorous physical abuse of, or the vigorous physical struggle against, a person or an animal; or the highly vigorous psychological abuse of, or the sharp, caustic psychological attack upon, a person or animal; or the highly vigorous, destruction or damaging of property or potential property. [...]Violence to animate beings tends to involve or cause their suffering or injury or death (59-60).

It is obvious why this definition is comprehensive relative to the minimal conception of violence. It broadens its application to include both persons and animals, it includes both physical and psychological forms of violence and it allows that destruction or damaging of property be considered violence. It is also notable that this comprehensive conception of violence does not rely on the fact that harm (in the form of suffering, injury or death) has occurred, but that violence *tends* to involve or cause these things. Thus, though we may not be able to draw a direct causal connection between an attack, abuse or struggle and identifiable psychological or physical effects, this does not mean that violence has not occurred. The insistence that violence can also be psychological seems correct, and an important way in which the minimal conceptions fail to adequately account for violence. In the case of some kinds of torture, for instance, physical injury need not result for psychological harm to be done, and in most of these cases, it is the

psychological effects that are intended, and physical interference, restriction or harm may be minimal, and is intended in service of this. In these ways, the comprehensive conception does what it is intended to do, namely, ameliorate the failings of the minimal conception of violence.

Where the minimal conception was silent on the psychological nature of violence, the comprehensive conception addresses that violence need not be physical at all, but identifies that psychological attack is a form of violence. Bufacchi argues that we must take account of psychological violence in order to appreciate the complexity of violence. His own definition reads that violence is “forceful physical and/or psychological injury or suffering inflicted upon a person or animal by another person who knows (or ought reasonably to have known) that his actions would result in the harm in question” (171). On his account, violence represents a social relationship between victims and perpetrators, victims being vulnerable vis-à-vis perpetrators. He writes, “vulnerability, like violence, is socially constructed, being one side of power relationship” (176). Violence highlights that certain kinds of people are vulnerable vis-à-vis the powerfulness of others, and this is part of what makes violence such an important social problem, because, as Bufacchi argues, it results in unequal power-relationships that are damaging to a person’s self-respect and sense of personal security (178).<sup>5</sup> Because violence can have both psychological and physical effects, and because it is socially constructed,

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<sup>5</sup>Bufacchi’s insight that the real moral problem with violence is the social meaning attached to violence and vulnerability is, I think, correct. However, his description of vulnerability relies too heavily on the psychology of the victim—her self-respect and sense of personal security—and is thus only nominally social. At the end of this chapter and in Chapters 3 and 4, I will argue for a more robustly social conception of violence that appreciates the complex social and political arrangements that make violence possible.

violence is much more complex, he argues, than defenders of the minimalist conception would allow.

In addition, where the minimal conception of violence is driven by the ability to identify that certain undesirable effects have occurred, the comprehensive conception rests on the ability to say that violent acts *tend* to involve the suffering, injury or death of animate beings, thereby allowing that certain kinds of acts themselves, regardless of their actual effects, can be acts of violence.<sup>6</sup> Audi makes the conceptual distinction between *doing violence* and *acting violently*. *Doing violence*, he argues, is the fundamental notion at work when we talk about violence, and the use of the term adverbially should be directed back to its more fundamental sense. He writes, “a frenzied lunatic might act violently by swinging his fists in the air and screaming inarticulately into the night; he would not, in this case, be doing violence” (50). The notion of *doing violence* highlights for Audi that we are talking about intentional human action, and particularly, actions done in a way that could result in negative consequences. What is at stake here is that even if the lunatic swinging his fists into the night air were to hit someone passing by, this person might be harmed, but we should not say that violence has been done because the lunatic did not intend it. Rather, the lunatic swung his arms violently, resulting in harm to an unfortunate passerby. Conceptually, what this gets us is ‘violence’ as an active verb, that is, certain actions actually being acts of violence, rather than ‘violent’ as a modifier to otherwise neutral actions.

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<sup>6</sup> It is also worth mention that this includes that violence can be done to inanimate things. The inclusion of property here is interesting. Destroying a person’s property is considered violence, but the question becomes whether or not it is violence because it is owned by a person or because there’s a manner of acting that is considered violent irrespective of the kind of thing being acted upon, be it animate or inanimate, owned or common.

I think these insights—that violence can be and often is psychological, and that we cannot rely on effects to tell us when violence has occurred and when it has not—are important and correct. While the minimal conception has clarity in its favor, that clarity comes at the price of explanation. There is a tension in the minimal conception at the level of normative assessment. Because violence implies force, and force is identified through the change in or on the patient, we must be able to identify certain unwanted or undesirable effects in order to say that violence has occurred. However, claims about force *via* effects are not sufficient to explain the normative force in our use of the term violence. This failing is remedied by claims about aggression, which highlight that *force* and *injury* are both *intended* by the violent actor. When we invoke the term ‘violence’ we do so to make a claim not only about pain and injury that a patient may have suffered, but also that someone caused that pain and injury, for the sake of *nothing but* this pain or injury. This spares the doctor from being identified as a violent actor, or the storm or sneeze from being assessed pejoratively. Grounding violence in force points our attention to effects, while grounding violence in aggression asks us to investigate the intentions of actors. However, aggression is a complex motivational state. We must be in a position to judge the intentions of an agent in order to identify something as violence. This in turn requires epistemic and emotional access to the agent, or full disclosure on the part of the agent.<sup>7</sup> Assuming that such access or disclosure are unlikely if not impossible, we may have to sacrifice the revelatory power of intention for the sake of something less illuminating, yet attainable. Should the intentions of actors be epistemically available to

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<sup>7</sup> It is worth noting that this kind of access to motivational states is not only difficult or impossible for others to gain, but is difficult for individuals to have for themselves. I would venture the position that such self-transparency is rare and is probably not a consistent feature of an individual’s deliberation and action.

us, we can still question whether identifying acts of violence through the intentions of an agent is the best method for moral assessment. For instance, a standard consequentialist objection could be registered that harm and injury occur despite intentions otherwise or to the contrary. A moral assessment of consequences of actions, rather than the intentions behind them, might be more appropriate.<sup>8</sup>

In trying to define and refine what violence is, we are trying to get at the *meaning* of violence and where that meaning comes from. Tying violence strongly to force ties the meaning of violence to the effects of actions. Alternatively, tying violence to the intentions of agents means that agents themselves control the meaning of their actions. For reasons that will be explored more fully later, neither of these seems adequate for the work that the term ‘violence’ does. Bufacchi’s argument that the moral problem with violence is that it creates unequal power-relationships gets to the problem, but does not in fact address it. He argues that the meaning of violence is social, and particularly, the meaning of violence is that some people are vulnerable vis-à-vis others. This is, for him, the real reason violence is wrong. Bufacchi does not address the problem because to do so would require that we recognize that and explain why some members of society are more violence-prone than others, that is, why some people are more vulnerable than others.<sup>9</sup> It is not hard to see *that* this is the case, but understanding *why* some people or

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<sup>8</sup> For clarity’s sake, I do not intend to defend a consequentialist definition of violence, nor do I defend consequentialism as a coherent moral theory. But the objections from consequentialism highlight certain standing problems with such a definition or theory of violence.

<sup>9</sup> It is worth noting that interpersonal and social power dynamics are incredibly complicated, and the susceptibility of some members of society to violence is only part of the analysis of the sources of social power and the ways it is manifested and manipulated. As will become clear, I focus my analysis on the role of violence in setting up, reinforcing and sanctioning gendered power dynamics.

groups of people are more vulnerable than others better gets at the meaning of violence. This will require, I believe, a socially situated account of violence. That is, we need an account of violence that understands agents as embedded in social worlds, worlds that inform the way agents think and act, and the way they make sense of their experiences. So, to address the meaning of violence we cannot talk about violence in the abstract, but can only do so from within the world where it occurs. Since the concern here is common forms of violence against women, I now turn to two common methods for thinking about such violence. One comes from the way the American legal system categorizes sexual violence via *consent*, and the other from the way that clinical and social psychologists diagnose and treat *trauma*.

## 2. Violence, the Legal System and Consent

Our everyday thinking about sexual violence is shaped by many forces, not the least of which is how the legal system categorizes, prosecutes and punishes these kinds of crimes. It is of note here that whereas there might have been room for an *amoral* definition of violence, i.e., a purely descriptive definition that carries no *de facto* normative assessment, laws are by definition prescriptive or prohibitive based on some conception of what is good or right. So, legal conceptions of violence are necessarily normative. What may be different, and informative, here is that different kinds of violence, carrying different motivations and having different effects, warrant variation in normative assessment.

The category of violence against women is usually occupied by rape and domestic violence (or intimate partner violence), which fall under the category of sexual violence.

These would fulfill the requirements for an ‘Audi-esque’ category of paradigm cases of sexual violence, because they, for the most part, are non-controversial as cases of violence against women. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) explain sexual violence as “any sexual act that is forced against someone’s will. These acts can be physical, verbal, or psychological ...all types involve victims who do not consent, or who are unable to consent or refuse to allow the act.”<sup>10</sup> The four types of sexual violence they describe are 1) a completed non-consensual sex act, defined as “contact between the penis and the vulva or the penis and the anus involving penetration, however slight; contact between the mouth and the penis, vulva or anus, or penetration of the anal or genital opening of another person by a hand, finger or other object;” 2) attempted, not completed non-consensual sex act following the definition above; 3) abusive sexual contact defined as “intentional touching, either directly or through the clothing, of the genitalia, anus, groin, breast, inner thigh or buttocks of another person;” and 4) non-contact sexual abuse including voyeurism, intentional exposure of an individual to exhibitionism, pornography, verbal or behavioral sexual harassment; threats of sexual violence; and taking nude photographs of a sexual nature of another person. Regarding our paradigm cases of violence against women, rape and attempted rape fall into the first two categories as outlined by the CDC while intimate partner violence/domestic violence could describe a particular sub-category of all four, defined in terms of the relationship between a victim and perpetrator.

The CDC collects data on reported cases of sexual violence in order to “examine trends over time,” “measure risk and protective factors for victimization,” and “inform

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<sup>10</sup> <http://www.cdc.gov/ncipc/dvp/SV/svp-definitions.html>. Accessed 9/15/09.

prevention and intervention efforts.”<sup>11</sup> So, while they have no immediate control over how crimes are categorized and prosecuted legally, they indirectly control how we think about sexual violence and related crimes through comparative analyses and prevention efforts. Such analyses and efforts take place through federal legal screening.

The more obviously legal definitions of sexual violence come from the way the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) and the U.S. Department of Justice categorize, prosecute and punish sexually violent crimes. For instance, the FBI collects data on eight major crimes, divided into violent crimes and property crimes,<sup>12</sup> for their Uniform Crime Reporting (UCR) Program. The crimes reported are considered “serious crimes,” either in terms of the nature of the crime, or by the volume of reports. Of interest here is that forcible rape is one of the eight serious crimes reported and tracked by the FBI in the UCR. According to the UCR, forcible rape is “the carnal knowledge of a female forcibly and against her will. Assaults and attempts to commit rape by force or threat of force are also included,” while “statutory rape (without force) and other sex offenses are excluded.”<sup>13</sup> Statutory rape is defined by the FBI as “non-forcible sexual intercourse with a person who is younger than the statutory age of consent.”<sup>14</sup> So all cases of forced sexual intercourse would fall under the category of forcible rape, while statutory rape

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<sup>11</sup> Ibid.

<sup>12</sup> Recall from the comprehensive conception of violence that Audi included destruction of or threats to property as violence. The logic of the FBI seems to be here that violent crimes are identified as such because they are a violation of an individual’s basic civil rights.

<sup>13</sup> [http://www2.fbi.gov/ucr/cius2009/offenses/violent\\_crime/forcible\\_rape.html](http://www2.fbi.gov/ucr/cius2009/offenses/violent_crime/forcible_rape.html). Date accessed: 3/25/11. Of interest is the restriction that only females can be raped. The UCR categories the rape of a male as aggravated assault, that is, “unlawful attack by one person upon another for the purpose of inflicting severe or aggravated bodily injury. [...] Usually accompanied by the use of a weapon or by other means likely to produce death or great bodily harm” or sex offense (ibid).

<sup>14</sup> Ibid.

covers those cases of consensual sexual intercourse with individuals under the state's determined age of consent. The FBI further categorizes certain criminal acts as "sex offenses," defined as "criminal offenses ... whose elements involve: (i) any type or degree of genital, oral, or anal penetration, or (ii) any sexual touching of or contact with a person's body, either directly or through the clothing."<sup>15</sup> Most commonly, "sexual offense" denotes sexual activity involving minors or those under the age of consent.<sup>16</sup>

The definition of sexual violence provided by the CDC is reminiscent of Audi's comprehensive conception of violence because it extends over a broad range of actions. The FBI's definition of rape is also broad, but in a different way. It is broad because it includes assault with the intent to rape and attempted rape under the definition, as well as resting on a broad understanding of force such that the threat of force is included. However, this definition is also very narrow (not to mention anachronistic—it was adopted in 1930) because the act it describes is sexual intercourse involving sexual organs. Forcible sexual interaction that is not sexual intercourse falls under sexual offense, or if severe injury results, aggravated sexual assault.

The legal definitions of sexual violence explored here, especially the definition of forcible rape used by the FBI's UCR, straddle the distinction Audi found between *acting violently* and *doing violence* that helped us understand the moral dimension of violence. The inclusion of force, which can only be measured by change in the subject, fits conceptually with *acting violently*. Acting violently presumes the moral neutrality of the action in question, but identifies that harm or injury has occurred because of the circumstances surrounding the action that may or may not be integral to defining the

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<sup>15</sup> [http://www.ojp.usdoj.gov/smart/pdfs/faq\\_sorna\\_guidelines.pdf](http://www.ojp.usdoj.gov/smart/pdfs/faq_sorna_guidelines.pdf) Accessed: 3/25/11.

<sup>16</sup> In some state jurisdictions, the age of consent is different from legal majority.

action itself; e.g., the lunatic waving his arms in the night is violent insofar as someone is potentially harmed or injured. Acting violently, however, does not mean violence has been done, which presumes the moral disapprobation of the action from the start. But because legal definitions like these hone in on a person's (ability to) consent, there *is* a sense in which we can say that sexual violence is paradigmatically *doing violence*, not just acting violently. If consent is a moral right, and the identification of sexual violence rests on the lack of consent, then sexual violence carries the stronger moral disapprobation of *doing violence*, what Audi argued was the fundamental notion at work in thinking about violence.

These definitions of sexual violence highlight a problem faced by the minimal conception of violence. Recall that there are two, incongruous, definitional impulses. One impulse ties violence to force, and thereby requires physical harm be identified. The other tied violence to aggression, requiring the seemingly impossible epistemic and emotional access to the intentional processes of an individual. In addition, in the FBI's definition of rape and the first two categories of sexual violence for the CDC, sexual violence is tied to a third factor: consent. We need now to ascertain whether or not an individual has consented to the sexual interaction in question. These legal definitions presume the normative neutrality of sexual interaction, and criminalization consists in the violation of a person's ability to consent. This again brings us back to the distinction Audi made between acting violently and doing violence. Doing violence, he argues, involves not only the infliction of suffering or injury, but involves the violation of at least one [moral] right. While I do not want to hastily conflate the moral and the legal here, the insights present in Audi's conceptual preference for 'doing violence' over 'acting

violently' fall in line with the legal definitions in that they identify a fundamental right, the violation of which means that violence has been done. For instance, the category of sexual violence for the FBI consists solely in forcible (female) rape, while statutory rape, forcible sexual intercourse with males, and other forms of criminal sexual interaction fall into categories of assault and offense, depending on the "circumstances and nature of injuries."<sup>17</sup> Violence is done, then, when a person (female) is forced into sexual intercourse against her will. Thus, for sexual violence to have been done, according to this definition, one must be able to prove that sexual intercourse occurred, that it occurred forcibly and that these occurred against the will of the victim. However, the narrowness (and anachronism) of the FBI's definition of sexual violence is countered by the seeming broadness of the CDC's multiple categories, which are not restricted based on physical intercourse, the presence of consent or, for that matter, the sex/gender of the victim.

The way legal systems define, categorize, prosecute and punish crimes of sexual violence is not divorced from the way that we think about sexual violence. They inform our thinking through popular media, from popular legal dramas like *Law and Order: Special Victims Unit* to medical dramas that portray victims of sexual violence. In addition, we witness these things first and second hand through the way friends, colleagues and family members navigate the legal system, and more recently, through celebrity media's reporting of these sorts of cases.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> <http://www.fbi.gov/about-us/cjis/ucr/ucr>. Accessed 1/31/11.

<sup>18</sup> I have in mind the media frenzy surrounding pop singers Rhianna and Chris Brown in 2009. Photos of Rhianna's bruised and swollen face after Brown, her boyfriend, beat her were on almost every online and print magazine that covered social and cultural events. Feminist and feminist-friendly news sources, such as Feministing.com, Jezebel and Huffington Post, followed the story and relationship between Brown and Rhianna consistently.

Philosophical quarrels aside, feminist legal theorists have argued that these sorts of definitions fail to capture the way that women experience sexual violence. On this, Liz Kelly and Jill Radford (1996) write,

This is a consequence of attempting to locate feminist definitions based on women's experiences into man-made legal categories. Basically they just don't fit. Legal definitions are drawn from dichotomies: lawful against unlawful; crime and no crime; innocence and guilt; the good polarized against the bad. Women's experiences generally, and even more so in relation to violence, are much more complex (68).

In addition, Claudia Card (2002) argues that women live in what have been identified as “moral gray zones.”<sup>19</sup> Gray zones are marked by their epistemic and ontological ‘fuzziness’: when one is a victim of oppression, moral life is not as easy as right versus wrong or innocence versus guilt (226). Likewise, Linda Alcoff (2009) argues that consent, the precipice on which the status of sexual violence stands, is similarly complex and gray. She writes, “on the one hand, consent provides a powerful defense against coercive practices ... on the other hand, the concept can conceal structural processes that manufacture acquiescence and then name it consent, and thus it may not be a sufficient test for harm” (3). The point Alcoff makes here is that if our definitions of what count as violence hinge on consent, we risk assuming one, that everyone first has the ability to consent, whatever the litmus test for that may be, and two, if consent is given, harm does not result. As feminists have shown, and I will explore more fully in Chapters 3 and 4,

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<sup>19</sup> See also Primo Levi (1989) *The Drowned and the Saved*. Card, following Levi, uses this concept to explain how and why victims of evil often perpetrate immoral or evil acts themselves. This is an interesting tool for analyzing, for instance, why abused women further abuse their children, or why women turn to similar forms of violence used against them. I am not utilizing the concept for this purpose; rather, I think that the complexity of women's experiences of and responses to sexualized violence can be understood as a series of gray zones and less-gray zones which make moral and legal judgments about their experiences and responses difficult to dichotomize in the way described above.

our motivations and actions are not merely a product of radical free choice, but are in part conditioned by culture, norms and ways of life constituted by our social arrangements.

Relating sexual violence to consent in this way threatens our ability to understand the range of moral harms that can occur as a result of violence, or indeed, of what violence *is*.

### 3. Violence and Trauma

The final way of thinking about sexual violence I explore in this chapter comes from the vast amount of work done in clinical and social psychology on the nature of trauma. Trauma, itself, is not essentially restricted to explaining the aftermath of violence as opposed to other kinds of harmful or injurious actions, nor is it restricted in practice to women who have faced sexual violence. However, the development of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) and its adoption into the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual for Mental Disorders (DSM) has significant ties to various forms of violence against women.<sup>20</sup>

As Judith Herman (2002) describes it, our current understanding of psychological trauma and PTSD is rooted in late nineteenth century psychological typing of hysteria and early twentieth century studies of World War I combat survivors. The first scientific study of hysteria was conducted in the late nineteenth century by Jean-Martin Charcot, who documented what appeared to him as neurological symptoms: motor paralysis, sensory losses, convulsions and amnesia, (Herman 2002, 16).<sup>21</sup> Twenty years later, Pierre

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<sup>20</sup> The Diagnostic and Statistical Manual, now in its fourth edition, is a catalog of mental and psychological disorders used by clinicians to diagnose and treat patients. There is a lengthy process required for new disorders and illnesses to be admitted to the DSM.

<sup>21</sup> See also Mary Daly (1990) *Gyn/Ecology*, 227. As Daly tells it, hysteria in women was thought to be a product of sexual deviance or malfunction in women's sexual organs. In

Janet and Sigmund Freud (working separately) found that the neurological responses catalogued by Charcot were caused by underlying psychological trauma, which, when triggered, produced an altered state of consciousness—“dissociation” for Janet and “double consciousness” for Freud—which in turn resulted in the neurological symptoms catalogued by Charcot.

Herman makes note that the evolution of hysteria as a scientific/medical concept is not mere historical curiosity: “The solution of the mystery of hysteria was intended to demonstrate the triumph of secular enlightenment over reactionary superstition, as well as the moral superiority of the secular worldview” (16). Along with the medicalization of psychological trauma came political legitimization. Hysterics were no longer social pariahs, but subjects whose condition was documentable and treatable. And so, in the new age of science, hysterics became scientifically valuable as proof of the enlightenment’s success.

The study of psychological trauma re-emerged in the twentieth century following the First World War. Herman writes,

One of the many casualties of the war’s devastation was the illusion of manly honor and glory in battle ... Confined and rendered helpless, subjected to constant threat of annihilation, and forced to witness the mutilation and death of their comrades without any hope of reprieve, many soldiers began to act like hysterical women. They screamed and wept uncontrollably. They froze and could not move. They became mute and unresponsive. They lost their memory and their capacity to feel (20).

One response to combat veterans acting “like hysterical women” was the valorization of those who did not suffer psychological trauma after combat. It was thought that soldiers of strong moral character did not experience the aftermath of war in this way, and so,

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1873, Dr. Robert Battey began castrating women (oophorectomy) in the attempt to cure what he thought to be insanity.

those who did were diagnostically grouped with women hysterics, and thought to have weak moral character like that believed to be had by women. It was not until after the Second World War that veterans suffering psychological trauma related to combat exposure were dissociated from women hysterics. Military psychiatrists found that *any* man could suffer psychological trauma in proportion to the severity of exposure to combat. “Combat neurosis” became a legitimate and predictable effect of combat exposure in the years following World War II. However, it wasn’t until after the Vietnam War that systematic, large-scale investigations of combat neurosis and its long-term psychological effects began.

In the aftermath of the Vietnam War, and the political controversies surrounding the United States’ involvement in it, Vietnam veterans were at the forefront of the social movement that brought unprecedented scientific attention to the psychological trauma of combat. Groups of veterans organized “rap groups” that on the one hand offered solace to veterans suffering from psychological trauma, and on the other, raised awareness about the psychological effects of war. The social movement started by veterans was taken up by the Veteran’s Administration, which commissioned a comprehensive study on the long-term effects of combat exposure. According to Herman, it was a combination of these efforts, combined with the moral legitimacy of the anti-war movement in the United States, that further legitimized psychological trauma in the medical profession. And so, in 1980, PTSD entered the DSM-III as a mental disorder.

The third moment in the development of our understanding of psychological trauma emerged from the feminist movement of the 1970s, which prompted national awareness of violence against women. Much as it had been for Vietnam veterans, small,

informal groups of women with similar experiences of sexual violence, and what would come to be known as domestic violence, became places where individual women found comfort, but also served as sites for political engagement with the personal and political struggles facing women generally. Susan Brownmiller's (1975) famous argument that rape was not just another kind of sex act but a means of men maintaining power over women, set the stage for violence against women to become a topic of political concern. Psychologists and sociologists began to study the psychological effects of rape and domestic violence on women and children, and developed what they named "rape trauma syndrome," according to which victims of an attempted or completed rape typically suffered from insomnia, nausea, startle responses and nightmares, as well as dissociative and numbing symptoms.

The similarities between combat neurosis and rape trauma syndrome did not go unnoticed, but it wasn't until PTSD was solidified in diagnostic manuals after the veteran's movement that researchers and clinicians appreciated that both combat veterans and survivors of rape and domestic violence suffered the same kinds of trauma. Currently, PTSD is a standard way of classifying the symptoms of trauma survivors (Freedman 2006). As a classificatory schema, PTSD represents a range of experiences that can be physical and psychological. Because the sources and duration of trauma vary along with physical and psychological constitutions of individuals, the experiences of trauma survivors vary, and thus remain underdetermined by the diagnosis of PTSD.<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> Because PTSD is classificatory and the experiences of victims vary, what is most determinate of the kinds and degree of symptoms is the character of the traumatic event, not the psychological make-up of the individual. This is not a minor point. The nature of psychological trauma along with psychiatric illness is underappreciated in current medical discourse, and oftentimes, a trauma victim's suffering is attributed to some

Given that the range of experiences of trauma survivors varies according to the kind(s) of trauma suffered, there are three cardinal categories of symptoms of PTSD: hyperarousal, intrusion, and constriction (Herman 2002, 53). *Hyperarousal* occurs when the body's stress responses are on permanent alert. This means the 'fight or flight' responses that aid self-preservation in life-threatening circumstances and which normally lay dormant until activated are always on. In the normal course of a day, an individual's sympathetic nervous system, which responds to stress by changing heart rate, oxygen flow to essential organs, and chemicals necessary for physical exertion, would be activated by unfamiliar or out-of-place noises or movements that might require a physical response. For the trauma survivor, the number and kinds of circumstances that cause these responses can be heightened, because she is always alert; always, in some sense, waiting for harm. It has been shown that traumatic events, in this way, recondition the body's nervous system (40, n.14). In a constant state of expectation, trauma survivors often suffer from insomnia and often "overreact" to external stimuli. Although hyperarousal has a physiological explanation rooted in the reconditioning of the sympathetic nervous system, it is part of and helps constitute a broader range of symptoms that include cognitive and psychological changes in trauma survivors.

*Intrusion* is an abnormal form of memory pertaining to traumatic events.

According to Herman, Janet described normal memory as the action of telling a story, including verbal and narrative context. The narrative context of a normal memory gives us the ground for understanding the connections between an experience and a memory, or

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failing on her part. This might be an ideological holdover from PTSD's original association with the weakness of women's characters, and the attribution of psychological weakness to combat veterans who suffer from it.

between memories, which results in a relatively seamless life-story. Unlike normal memories, what have been called ‘traumatic memories’ lack narrative context and verbal character, and so, are recalled through images and bodily sensations. Like normal memories, traumatic memories can be prompted by external stimuli, but because they lack the narrative context that weaves normal memories into a life-story, are often experienced with what psychologists call a sense of “heightened reality.” The context surrounding a memory, differentiated from the context surrounding the time of remembering, allows for a spatial and/or temporal distance between the experience of remembering and the experience captured in the memory itself. Sitting in a coffee shop writing this, I might remember the conversation with my advisor on this topic, but because the memory of the conversation has been assimilated into a coherent narrative about dissertation-writing, my current action and experience remains at a distance from the conversation, despite shared content or context. By contrast, memories that lack context to one’s personal history intrude on the present as if they *are* the present. From the perspective of the trauma survivor, the fact that the event she is remembering happened months or years ago can be of no consequence—the same images are in front of her and she experiences the same bodily sensations and reactions as she did during the initial experience. For this reason, many psychologists and psychoanalysts prefer the phrase ‘traumatic re-experiencing’ or the more colloquial ‘flashback’ to traumatic memory, because the memory of a traumatic event is unlike and unlinked to the trauma survivor’s “normal” memories and thus, traumatic memory shares more in kind with experience-as-present than it does with memory-as-past.<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> See Richard Ulman and Doris Brothers (1993) *The Shattered Self: A Psychoanalytic*

The final category of PTSD symptoms is *constriction*. In contrast with hyperarousal, when the body's physiological awareness for danger is on high alert, under constriction, the trauma survivor is in a detached state of consciousness in which she becomes "numb" to both her own memory and to the world. The self-defense mechanisms that are over-activated due to hyperarousal, and can also be triggered in traumatic re-experiencing, shut off and the trauma survivor succumbs to feelings of powerlessness, and in effect, becomes powerless in relation to both herself and the world. Herman describes constriction in relation to intrusion as a process of "dialectical oscillation" (47). The intrusion of traumatic experiences on the normal life of a trauma survivor occasions the physiological stress responses that aid self-preservation, but in moments of constriction, the trauma survivor relinquishes control and gives in to the constant threat she faces. What results is an erratic movement between fighting for one's life and giving it up.

Just as the human body can adapt to survive in life-threatening circumstances, the human psyche can as well. In order to escape the hold of traumatic memories, the psyche can split, resulting in dissociative identity disorders, where a trauma survivor may have two (or more) ways of relating to others and the world.<sup>24</sup> The survivor in times of intrusion is living in the world as though the traumatic event is always or is always about to happen. Alternatively, in times of constriction, the survivor copes by detaching from herself. The erratic shifting between intrusion and constriction is one way of identifying

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*Study of Trauma* and Herman (2002) *Trauma and Recovery*, 37-8.

<sup>24</sup> Interesting work has been done recently on epistemological problems raised by dissociative disorders. See Michael Shaffer and Jeffery Oakley (2005) "Some Epistemological Concerns About Dissociative Identity Disorder and Diagnostic Practices in Psychology;" and Steve Matthews (2003) "Establishing Personal Identity in Cases of DID."

an individual as a trauma survivor. However, dissociation can also occur such that one appears to go on living in and relating to the world in the same way that she always did.<sup>25</sup>

If an individual's psyche adapts to "hold in" the traumatic memory with some success, the survivor may never or only rarely experience intrusion. The success of the psyche's ability to protect an individual from her own memory correlates with the individual's ability to function "normally" in relation to herself, the world and others.<sup>26</sup>

Hyperarousal, intrusion and constriction combine to produce immediate and long-term effects on trauma survivors. Trauma studies show the permeability of the human being to external influence, displayed in the ways that being a victim of or witnessing traumatic events can recondition a person's physiological and psychological response mechanisms. The person living in hyper-arousal never feels safe, she jumps at any out-of-place sound or disturbance; she suffers from insomnia, which can have long-term physical and psychological effects; and she might spend inordinate amounts of time obsessing over safety precautions for every-day activities. Traumatic memories can intrude at any time as responses to common or inexplicable stimuli. Traumatic memories thrust the trauma survivor into the experience of trauma all over again, causing her body to over-work to protect itself from the (real) danger it faces. Fear of traumatic intrusion can prevent a person from engaging in activities in which she previously had taken joy, for fear that she will once again experience trauma. Reflecting on her unusual behavior and unprovoked fear, the trauma survivor might even begin to think herself insane. An

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<sup>25</sup> Psychological fragmentation is necessary to psychological survival, in order to get past or move on from difficult experiences. This fragmentation becomes dangerous to an individual when the dissociation of those fragments actually occurs, commonly referred to as "splitting" (Todorov 1996, 155-57).

<sup>26</sup> Dr. John Gielow, clinical psychologist, conversation on 9/10/09.

overworked body and psyche, faced with continued intrusion, could finally just give out, leaving the survivor powerless in the face of her trauma. Feelings of powerlessness can pervade all aspects of a person's life, from negative health and hygiene behaviors, to withdrawal from previously important relationships, and lower work place performance (Herman 67-70, Paludi 1999, 109).

Hyperarousal, intrusion and constriction can have negative short- and long-term effects on an individual. In fact, because a violent event and its traumatic aftermath can “rewire” an individual, a trauma survivor might never be the same again.<sup>27</sup> And, although with enough documentation and classification, clinical psychologists have been able to roughly predict the kinds of PTSD symptoms a trauma survivor will experience according to the kind of trauma inflicted, the aftermath of a traumatic event cannot be defined, and has no timeline. The long-term effects of violence show us just how intrusive violence can be, and how far-reaching the moral implications of trauma will be.

As the history of PTSD's adoption in the DSM in 1980 shows us, PTSD has always been a gendered diagnosis, despite the fact that the category extends to men. Because of its original connection to women, and the social mythology surrounding hysteria, combat veterans resisted being categorized alongside “weak-willed” women. PTSD and the women who suffered trauma found legitimization in the medical community only after *male* veterans pushed for the community to legitimize their experiences. This, coupled with the simultaneous women's movement in the latter-half of the twentieth century linked the experience of violence (through combat) with

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<sup>27</sup> Dr. John Gielow, Clinical Psychologist.

psychological trauma common to women who suffered rape and domestic abuse.<sup>28</sup> The medical legitimization of trauma and PTSD influenced the social acceptance of the experiences of women, and also forced health insurance companies and health maintenance organizations to provide coverage for treatment of the condition. However, sociologists and psychologists have argued that this newfound legitimization came at the cost of appreciating the moral and political problem of violence against women. Demie Kurz (1987) writes in response to the medical profession's attempts at "diagnosing" battered women in the late 1970s and early 1980s: "The medicalization process can depoliticize 'social' problems by redefining them as problems of individual pathology," and further, that "due to sexist attitudes in the medical system, women's problems are particularly likely to be 'medicalized' or appropriated by the male medical establishment" (69, 70). Thinking of violence through trauma, which can be categorized, diagnosed and 'treated' through pharmacological and psychiatric therapies makes violent/traumatic experiences seem like events that can be scientifically coded and with the proper combination of therapies, ameliorated. And so, the 'cure' for violence is to diagnose and fix victims, rather than diagnosing and fixing the social structures and interpersonal dynamics that make violence possible. Medicalization and the pathologizing of victims makes victims of violence the "problem" that has to be solved, and in so doing isolates trauma from relationships out of which it can come and the social

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<sup>28</sup> Prior to the women's movement, rape and domestic violence were not popularly understood as crimes against women. The term 'rape' originally refers to the violation of a man's property, where the woman is viewed as the property of a male relative. The violence done, therefore, was not to a woman, but to her male custodian. 'Domestic violence' as a concept is itself a product of the women's movement. See Demie Kurz (1987) "Responses to Battered Women in Hospital Emergency Departments: Resistance to Medicalization."

conditions that make it possible. In this way, the medicalization of trauma can depoliticize violence and limit the scope of moral evaluation.<sup>29</sup>

#### 4. Conclusion

These ways of thinking about violence present a dilemma: the minimal conception of violence, rooted in force and conceptually restricted to narrow notions of physical harm, and the trauma-based understanding of violence, leave us with an understanding of violence that ignores the social dimensions of vulnerability, power and violence. In the former case, force can only describe the effects that an action had, and in so doing fails to capture the complexity of what it means to do violence over and above causing harm or injury, or even causing harm or injury in the service of benefit or healing. In the latter case, the medicalization of trauma has the effect of diagnosing victims rather than addressing social and moral wrongs. The other side of the dilemma appreciates that violence is a morally normative concept from the beginning, yet leaves us with two incongruous impulses. Thinking about violence through aggression locates the moral wrongness of an action in the intentions of an agent, while consent-driven legal definitions of violence locate the moral wrongness of an action in the violation of a person's ability to consent to a particular interaction. These represent two ways of proceeding with moral evaluation, both having to do with an individual's intentions and choices, but ultimately proceed in different directions: one evaluating the victim and the other evaluating the perpetrator. And problematically, they both present serious

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<sup>29</sup> See Peter Conrad (1975) "The discovery of hyperkinesis: notes on the medicalization of deviant behavior;" and Nicholas Kittrie (1971) *The Right to be Different*.

empirical challenges to determining whether or not violence has occurred, as they require unlikely or impossible epistemic and emotional access to individuals.

There is another tension in these ways of thinking about violence that has yet to be explored here. We see two contrary moves. The first one of these is to think about violence subjectively, and identify that violence has been done based on the experience of the victim or the intentions of an agent. Sonia Kruks (2001) has argued that relying on subjective experience in this way results in an “epistemology of provenance” because it isolates the individual as a knower and a moral agent from her epistemological and moral communities (3). Removed from dialogue and discourse, moral knowledge becomes the provenance of the individual, and moral reasoning becomes *de facto* monological. If this were in fact the case, philosophical and moral theorizing about violence would be impossible, because we would be limited to the range of our own experiences. Pulling against subjectivism in this tension is the impulse to think about violence objectively, that is, to identify a series of actions that are, by definition, violent or identifying physical effects and tracing them back to their source.<sup>30</sup> Ignoring the myriad ways that women experience these forms of violence is also troubling, as objective definitions risk losing their connection to the moral world they are meant to explain. This is the root of the critique offered by Kelly and Radford against legal definitions of sexual violence: these definitions attempt to carve out of a complex whole of women’s lives distinct kinds of experiences in order to classify and prosecute criminal violence. The subjective and objective movements share the same shortcoming. They miss that violence is a social practice, and that it is a social practice imbedded in and a product of extant power

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<sup>30</sup> I take the “comprehensive conception of violence” as an example of this.

structures. This was Bufacchi's valuable insight: that violence and vulnerability are socially constructed, and therefore there is a *social* meaning to violence that cannot be captured by the subjective experience of violence or objective definitions as they currently stand. All of these currents in thinking about violence struggle with how to take account of the social dimension of violence: what makes it possible and acceptable, why some are more vulnerable than others, how violence sets up this vulnerability, the ambiguity of consent, and how our reactions to violence and trauma are part of our socialization. A socially situated account of violence must address these questions and at the same time appreciate the ways that individuals themselves experience violence and its aftermath. I will offer an account of violence against women that begins with women's socialization *as women* through social processes and structures in order to account for why women are vulnerable vis-à-vis men in our society. Before I get to that account in Chapters 3 and 4, the next chapter addresses what I develop as the moral problem with violence—its effects on a person's moral integrity—so that moving forward, we can keep in mind the moral gravity of the explanatory task ahead.

## CHAPTER 2: A GENEALOGY OF INTEGRITY

As we saw in Chapter 1, theorizing about violence tends to struggle with appreciating the way that who we are and the experiences that we have are socially mediated, that is, we are part of a social world that informs and conditions who we may be, what lives may be available to us, and what meanings are available for our lives. In this chapter, I investigate, in a similar fashion, the concept of moral integrity. I choose integrity for this project for a number of reasons. First, and most significantly, integrity is often discussed as the most basic of all moral qualities or characteristics, that which attaches to the most basic level of selfhood and moral character. Violence, as we have seen and as I will continue to develop it, is an attack on selfhood in a similar way: on the body, one's security in the world, one's identity, one's will, or one's memories. In addition, thinking about violence and thinking about integrity share a common concern with vulnerability, with the ways in which it is manufactured and exploited by social structures, but also with the moral importance of recognizing human vulnerability. The question of vulnerability thus leads to questions of freedom and agency, the very activities violence attempts to undermine. As I will argue, integrity is irreducibly social, because human agency is a product and expression of the social situations in which we find ourselves and the others that open up possibilities for our lives.

Whereas Chapter 1 argued that theories of violence must account for the social conditions that make violence possible and meaningful for us, here, I argue that there are social forces at work behind the scenes, so to speak, in allegedly *asocial*, *ahistorical* and *apolitical* theories of integrity. I employ a social genealogy, inspired by the works of Michel Foucault and Friedrich Nietzsche, to expose this sociality. Genealogy also has a

critical function in that it is meant to draw out the contingency of claims to necessity that are part of allegedly *asocial* theories. In Section 1, I give a brief account of what I take to be the nature of a genealogical project, and I also argue for the appropriateness of a social genealogy for moral theorizing. In Section 2, I examine traditional accounts of moral integrity and expose the underlying assumptions about moral agency and moral life embedded within them. In Section 3, I utilize Cheshire Calhoun's (1992, 1995), Susan Babbitt's (1996), and Margaret Walker's (2007) critiques of those traditional accounts to show that the assumptions underlying such accounts are not just social, but also social biases. Section 4 discusses the legacy of integrity in moral theory as it is revealed through Babbitt's and Walker's critiques. And in Section 5, I explore how an existential account of integrity complements relational models offered by Babbitt and Walker, and recasts the legacy of integrity in terms of authenticity, through the work of Jean-Paul Sartre (1956, 1992) and Simone de Beauvoir (1948, 1952).

### 1. A Genealogy of Moral Practices

Besides a general agreement on the importance of integrity, there remain serious disagreements over what it means to have integrity and how it can be achieved. As we will see, there is a fundamental split between models or definitions of integrity that are personal and internal, and those that are relational. But within these, however, we find integrity rooted at times in the process of moral reasoning, and at times in the values that constitute an individual's identity. So, we have "integrities" that range from reflecting the extremely individual, cognitive dimension of moral life to those that are robustly relational, locating integrity in how well we fulfill our responsibilities to others. With

such a range of possibilities for what integrity could be, it is disputable that we are at all times talking about the same moral ideal, and in fact, at the margins, it is doubtful that we are.

As a method, genealogy can be undertaken in a variety of ways. Friedrich Nietzsche (1996, 1998), for example, uses genealogy to find the natural, that is, non-transcendental, foundation of moral values, pointing to an origin of morality that was neither transcendental nor divine. This assumes that morality was a phenomenon of life and not something superimposed on human life from without.<sup>31</sup> Michel Foucault (1984) on the other hand, argues that the search for origins is not appropriate to genealogy; rather the purpose of genealogy is to deconstruct a society's self-understanding by identifying the causal relationship between social power and our thinking, showing how what was thought to be necessary by divine will or transcendental justification has always been contingent. For Foucault, genealogy traces the development of human institutions and practices through that which "we tend to feel is without history—in sentiments, love, conscience, instincts" (76).

While I am not attempting to provide a genealogy in the true spirit of either of these authors, I take from their writings on and uses of genealogy two directives for a genealogical project: one, to describe the development of different accounts of moral life and the social assumptions they explicitly or implicitly rely upon, and two, explain how those assumptions about moral life are revised or dispensed within given alternative conceptions of moral life. In line with Nietzsche's genealogical project, this genealogy is naturalistic because it is grounded in the actual moral and social world of agents, and

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<sup>31</sup> Clarke (1998) "Introduction" to Nietzsche's *The Genealogy of Morality*, xxiii.

does not presume that there is a final, definitive ‘answer’ to what moral life ought to be. It is also Foucauldian in the sense that it traces these connections through aspects of moral life that are typically seen as *irreducibly* natural, that is, unchanging. As Foucault argued, sentiments, love, conscience and instincts are social, historical and material. They influence and are influenced by our interactions with others in social and political space. Thus, they provide us with clues to the underlying *social* assumptions about moral life that enable a *social* genealogy.

## 2. Traditional Models of Integrity

In this section, I describe two traditional approaches to defining integrity. One approach, favored by Gabrielle Taylor and Mark Halfon, situates integrity in the deliberative and reflective capacities that constitute rationality.<sup>32</sup> The other, favored by Lynne McFall and Bernard Williams, defines integrity along the lines of identity and fidelity to important projects and commitments that constitute one’s identity. What these approaches share, I argue, is their location of moral theorizing at the level of the individual moral agent, and the view that integrity is a desirable moral quality because it protects the agent from undue moral influences.

Taylor (1981) argues that underlying most descriptions of the person who possesses integrity (honest, loyal, upright, conforming to socially accepted morality, true to what she thinks is right, etc.) is a common understanding that the person of integrity “‘keeps his inmost self intact,’ whose life is ‘of a piece,’ whose self is whole and

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<sup>32</sup> “Traditional” here is meant to indicate common starting points and assumptions with common approaches to moral theory, including a focus on the individual’s decision-making processes, concern with the conditions for individual agency, and a tendency to downplay the role of intersubjectivity, relationships and social structures in moral life.

integrated” (143). She takes up cases such as the hypocrite (the person who acts on commitments contrary to those she claims to have), the shallowly sincere (the person who does not act on her commitments with consistency, and lacks the self-knowledge to recognize this), the weak-willed (the person who is not always true to her commitments), and the self-deceived (the paradigmatic person lacking integrity), to argue that what is common to each of these cases of *disintegration* is a lack of rationality. She writes, “The person of integrity will be rational in a number of related ways. He will not ignore relevant evidence, he will be consistent in his behavior, he will not act on reasons which, given the circumstances, are insufficient reasons for acting” (148). The various inconsistencies of the hypocrite, shallowly sincere, weak-willed and self-deceived are all indicative of a more fundamental inconsistency: irrationality. The hypocrite has contradictory reasons for acting: those she claims to act on and those she actually acts on. The shallowly sincere person lacks self-knowledge. The weak-willed accepts as good reasons for acting those other than what she believes to be good reasons, thereby undermining her rationality. Taylor argues that the self-deceived will suffer all of these inconsistencies because she is unable to recognize, assess and evaluate her reasons for acting at all. Inconsistency then, is the mark of irrationality. Commitments that are inconsistent with one another indicate an inability to rationally order one’s values and beliefs, while the inability to recognize one’s inconsistency indicates either a lack of self-knowledge or worse, self-deception. So, to have integrity will be to have consistent commitments that are acted upon consistently and with consistent reflective and deliberative self-assessment.

In addition to this description of integrity-as-rationality, Taylor adds that the person of integrity will be under the “due influence of his past” (149). This condition operates along the same lines as Lockean memory conditions for identity.<sup>33</sup> Recognizing that individuals have a past, and that commitments are developed and changed over time, the person of integrity will have the “experiential memory” that integrates the pieces of one’s life into a whole. This also enables the self-reflective capacities essential to rationality to account for the ways in which the past influences present and future actions. Likewise, she adds that the person of integrity will understand that “commitments may well have far-reaching implications in different areas of his life” (150). To make this point, Taylor invokes Bernard Williams’ example “George,” an out-of-work chemist who can find no other work than research involving chemical and biological warfare.<sup>34</sup> George finds himself caught between his poverty, family responsibilities, and his opposition to biological and chemical warfare. The point is that George’s beliefs about biological and chemical warfare are most likely connected to his more general views about how one ought to treat others, the latter spilling over into his personal interactions, the raising of his children, etc. So taking the job would result not only in a violation of his beliefs about such warfare, but would threaten the consistency of his beliefs in many other areas of his life. If he takes the job, he will no doubt fall into self-deception: either he will be unable to express consistent views about the proper treatment of others, or he will amend his views in order to fit his new line of work.

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<sup>33</sup> See John Locke (1975) *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, Book II, “Of Identity and Diversity.”

<sup>34</sup> See JJC Smart and Bernard Williams (1973) *Utilitarianism: For and Against*.

The conditions for rationality explained above (attention to relevant evidence, behavioral consistency and acting only on sufficient reasons) speak to the first way Taylor defines integrity, as “keeping one’s inmost self-intact.” The ‘inmost self’ imagined here is the moral self that is constituted by the values, beliefs and commitments one holds and by which one tries to abide. This ‘inmost self’ spans a life, and it is to this that the latter two conditions speak. Integrity concerns the temporal extension of a life through time, so that the person of integrity is connected to her past and the ways in which that past shapes her present and future. Integrity also concerns the whole-life extension of values and commitments, so that the person of integrity will not have pieces of her life unconnected or inconsistent with others. Taken together, these last two conditions flesh out the second way Taylor defines integrity, as having a life ‘of a piece,’ and “a self who is whole and integrated.”

Mark Halfon (1989) places similar restrictions on the beliefs and actions of the person of integrity. He focuses, in some detail, on the moral justification of beliefs for the person of integrity, and how integrity is imbedded in—while also resulting from—the process of moral justification. Halfon wishes to ride a course between moral absolutism and moral relativism by arguing that at a minimum, the person of integrity must make a commitment and employ the available means to that end. These commitments place restrictions on a person’s behavior such that not just *any* course of action is justified (avoiding arbitrariness and capriciousness) but only those courses of action that stand in service of fulfilling one’s moral commitments. While this may still lean towards relativism, Halfon urges, like Taylor, that the person of integrity will be committed to the

pursuit of the *truth* of their beliefs and the adequacy of their commitments.<sup>35</sup> He writes, “Assessments about an agent’s integrity should focus not on a state of affairs but on his or her state of mind, that is, on his or her beliefs and intention to pursue the truth of those beliefs” (34). Echoing Taylor, he argues that persons of integrity embrace an “open” moral attitude that urges conceptual clarity, logical consistency, appraisal of relevant evidence and the careful weighing of relevant moral considerations (37). The commitment to rational courses of action and the logical consistency of beliefs indicates that the only particular commitment important to integrity is the commitment to the truth of one’s beliefs.

Halfon is sensitive to the fact that we employ the term integrity in a variety of ways, and what has been said of integrity thus far could apply to any sense of integrity—artistic integrity, intellectual integrity, etc. What sets moral integrity apart from other kinds of integrity is not that the beliefs or ends have moral content, but that the beliefs and commitments in question, when compromised, would have a deleterious effect on one’s character. This is evident in Halfon’s discussion of moral compromise. When discussing integrity generally, we can evaluate good and bad reasons for compromising one’s beliefs. Halfon argues, however, that there can be no “good” reasons to compromise a moral belief, because any violation of one’s moral beliefs is, by definition,

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<sup>35</sup> It is not clear what definition of moral relativism Halfon is concerned with. He speaks explicitly of capriciousness and arbitrariness, which would indicate that for him, relativism concerns the ways in which individuals determine how to act. Many would argue that what he leaves us with *is* relativism, if the content of commitments is only subject to rational constraints. He argues in Chapter 2 of *Integrity* that when we typically describe an individual as having integrity, we generally also indicate that the individual adheres to accepted moral principles. This correlation may not be strong enough for some who argue that integrity should also concern the content of one’s principles rather than the form of their commitment.

morally wrong. To compromise one's beliefs is to violate the only restriction placed on integrity thus far, a commitment to the truth of one's beliefs, evidenced by the violation of those beliefs through the pursuit of morally unjustifiable courses of action.<sup>36</sup> Because Halfon is *not* committed to the view that integrity concerns the type or kind of commitment but rather *how* the agent is committed, the difference between moral and non-moral commitments is found not in the content of the beliefs towards which they correspond, but rather in the *effect* of their pursuit or violation. He writes, "Moral beliefs are not essentially bound up with relations between people or with states of affairs, but with the goodness or badness of a person's character ... Persons of integrity should not pursue courses of action that will bring their characters into disrepute, and acting in opposition to moral commitments will usually have this result" (79-80). So, while moral compromises do concern moral ideals, goals and principles, what moral integrity is *really* concerned with is how the holding of these ideals, goals and principles structures one's moral character. In the end, it is in view of one's character that integrity is important for Halfon. He likens the moral value of integrity to the value of a part to a whole. The

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<sup>36</sup> Compromising one's beliefs and amending one's beliefs are different. Halfon argues that there are two conditions necessary for compromise: 1) that an individual has a belief or desire that some action is undesirable or unethical; and 2) that same individual expresses a desire or a willingness to pursue a course of action in opposition to the aforementioned belief or desire. Beliefs and commitments can be suspended or overridden in the face of additional evidence, mitigating circumstances or in the face of more compelling arguments, without those beliefs or commitments being violated (87). Since compromise includes the belief that one is pursuing a morally unjustified course of action, reassessment, which challenges the justifiability of previous beliefs or commitments in favor of others that may be more justifiable, maintains the restriction that persons of integrity believe themselves to be pursuing morally justifiable courses of action (100).

whole here is the good, moral person, and integrity is valuable insofar as it serves to buttress and strengthen the “noble” qualities of the good person.<sup>37</sup> He writes,

If part of what makes any person noble is a consistent commitment to do what is best, then the possession of integrity will play an integral role in coming to be such a person. ...If honesty, fidelity, trustworthiness, sensitivity, courage and temperance are some of the virtues that characterize noble persons, then the presence of integrity will serve to strengthen those virtues. ...More generally, the possession of integrity may be paramount in the sense that the absence of integrity will very likely weaken one’s commitment to almost any principle or ideal ... For this reason alone, the possession of integrity is a characteristic that ought to be cultivated by any noble human being (161-2).

In defining integrity in terms of the pursuit of rational and logical beliefs and commitments, Halfon shows how integrity is valuable not in terms of the particular commitments one has, but rather to being committed to the pursuit of moral values in general.

Halfon’s concern for integrity’s connection to moral character indicates a point of transition away from the rational and logical approaches favored by him and Taylor, towards the next set of approaches in which integrity concerns an individual’s identity. One of the main differences between the two approaches, as will become clear, is that the first set defines integrity formally, that is, by way of the ordering of beliefs, desires and commitments while remaining agnostic regarding the content of those beliefs, desires and commitments. The identity-favoring approach focuses on the ways in which the commitments one has, and how one lives up to, or fails to live up to them, structures one’s identity. The latter set retains some of the formalistic, logical aspects of the former,

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<sup>37</sup> Halfon does not provide an argument for why he chooses the ‘noble life’ as the ultimate source of value. He indicates, and I tend to agree, that any argument at this level would most likely result in circularity. He does believe that a justification may be given, and I suspect it would come through along Aristotelian lines, while indicating that this may be beyond ‘proof’ (164).

while shifting the discussion of integrity away from the features of moral deliberation and justification towards how an individual's actions reflect the commitments and projects that make them who they are.

Lynne McFall (1987) argues that definitions of integrity like the ones above tend to be overly formal, and because of this, unenlightening about why integrity is such a preoccupation for us as individuals and as moral theorists. Rather than focus on the formal aspects of integrity, she explores how we intuitively import moral *content* into integrity, such that the following kinds of claims seem absurd to us: “Sally is a person of principle: pleasure,” or “Harold demonstrates great integrity in his single-minded pursuit of approval,” and “John was a man of uncommon integrity. He let nothing—not friendship, not justice, not truth—stand in the way of his amassment of wealth” (9). Because we think that the person of integrity will stand by her principles and bear the negative consequences that may come, Sally, Harold and John cannot be candidates for integrity because there's nothing to be lost. If Sally always pursues pleasure on principle, there's no possible conflict between her principle and pleasure; therefore, there can be no negative consequences for abandoning her principle. Harold's pursuit of approval, likewise, does not result in a conflict between principle and approval, because his principle is actually to have no other principle than that which will garner him approval. John suffers the same fate; he is ruled out as a candidate for integrity because nothing is ruled out for him; no principle could be violated and consequences suffered. McFall indicates here that the reason integrity is important to us is because it can be *lost*, and in the cases above, there is no possibility of loss if they give into temptation (9). However,

it is not merely resisting temptation that is the test of integrity, but that one resist temptation because of something that is *important*.

The reasons that will serve as important ones for any individual stem from the principles and commitments that constitute an individual's identity, what McFall calls "core commitments." However, because we always intuit content into judgments of integrity, not just any principles or commitments can be important in the way integrity requires. McFall writes, "Whether we grant or deny personal integrity, then, seems to depend on our own conceptions of what is important. And since most of our conceptions are informed if not dominated by moral conceptions of the good, it is natural that this should be reflected in our judgments of personal integrity" (11). McFall explains this as the "social strings" attached to integrity: it is not enough that a principle or commitment is important to an individual, but it must be recognizable to others as one that a reasonable person would take to be important. These core commitments, which are (warrantedly or unwarrantedly) socially sanctioned constitute an individual's identity, and set the limits of what she can do (and not do) and still continue as herself.

Of course, not all of the principles and commitments one holds are identity-conferring commitments. Some are peripheral to who one is, such that their violation would not threaten an individual's continuing on as the same person. For the person of integrity, these "defeasible commitments" will be sacrificed in favor of those "core commitments" that constitute an identity. McFall calls this the "Olaf Principle," that some of one's commitments be unconditional, after e. e. cummings' poem "i sing of Olaf glad and big," in which Olaf, the "conscientious object-or" declares "there is some shit I

will not eat” in the face of torture and death for his beliefs.<sup>38</sup> The Olaf Principle protects these, the core, identity-conferring commitments as the most fundamental commitments an individual has, so fundamental that they determine what will count as reasons for acting.

The above conditions for personal integrity are, according to McFall, prerequisites for *moral* integrity, because they add moral requirement to the demands of personal integrity. McFall distinguishes between ‘personal’ morality and ‘social’ morality. The difference between personal and social morality is the importance of impartiality to each: personal morality concerns the set of moral principles and commitments one has but does not expect everyone to share, whereas social morality is the set of principles and commitments that one has, with the expectation that everyone will have them, and which are typically characterized by impartiality. McFall argues that social morality, with its emphasis on impartiality, is antithetical to integrity, because commitments, by nature, make one partial to certain others and certain ways of acting. In

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<sup>38</sup> The poem reads: “i sing of Olaf glad and big/ whose warmest heart recoiled at war:/ a conscientious object-or// his wellbelov'd colonel(trig/ westpointer most succinctly bred)/ took erring Olaf soon in hand;/ but--though an host of overjoyed/ noncoms(first knocking on the head/ him)do through icy waters roll/ that helplessness which others stroke/ with brushes recently employed/ anent this muddy toiletbowl,/ while kindred intellects evoke allegiance per blunt instruments--/ Olaf(being to all intents/ a corpse and wanting any rag upon what God unto him gave)/ responds,without getting annoyed/ **"I will not kiss your fucking flag"**// straightway the silver bird looked grave/ (departing hurriedly to shave)// but--though all kinds of officers/ (a yearning nation's blueeyed pride)/ their passive prey did kick and curse/ until for wear their clarion/ voices and boots were much the worse, and egged the firstclassprivates on/ his rectum wickedly to tease/ by means of skilfully applied/ bayonets roasted hot with heat--/ Olaf(upon what were once knees)/ does almost ceaselessly repeat/ **"there is some shit I will not eat"**// our president,being of which/ assertions duly notified/ threw the yellowsonofabitch/ into a dungeon,where he died/ Christ(of His mercy infinite)/ i pray to see;and Olaf,too/ preponderatingly because unless statistics lie he was/ more brave than me:more blond than you” (emphasis added) from *Selected Poems* (1994), pg. 142.

fact, standing for one's commitments in the face of the demands of impartiality is one way in which we identify the person of integrity, and her commitment to those things that make her who she is. So, the moral requirement added to personal integrity is that one stand by one's moral principles and commitments, those core, identity-conferring moral values that differentiate individuals and constitute a *moral* identity as well.

Bernard Williams (1987, 1981) argues against impartiality-based moral systems on the same grounds as McFall.<sup>39</sup> He writes, “[To demand impartiality] is to alienate [the moral agent] in a real sense from his actions and the source of his action in his own conviction ... it is thus, in the most literal sense, an attack on his integrity” (116-17). Here, Williams invokes the distinction between internal and external reasons for acting, as well as his thesis that there can *only* be internal reasons for acting.<sup>40</sup> Williams claims that an adequate explanation of an individual's action must make reference to the subject's motivational state. The subjective motivational state is comprised of desires, dispositions of evaluation, patterns of emotional reaction, personal loyalties, and the various projects that embody the commitments of the individual (1981, 105). *External* reasons explain an individual's action according to a motivation that exists outside of an individual's subjective motivational state. For instance, Williams argues that an objective, categorical (i.e., Kantian) “ought,” which is divorced (by necessity) from an individual's particular desires and interests cannot, by itself, explain why an individual acts. To explain why an individual follows such an ‘ought,’ it is necessary to make

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<sup>39</sup> In Williams (1981) *Moral Luck*, see “Persons, Character and Morality,” and “Internal and External Reasons.”

<sup>40</sup> Since its publication, Williams has been taken to task on the nature of this distinction, and the quality of arguments for internal and against external reasons. The adequacy of the distinction is important here only insofar as it is connected to Williams' more general views on motivation, character and integrity.

recourse also to the subjective motivational state that makes the external ought a good reason *for the individual*. So, there must be a “psychological link” that makes any external impetus relevant to the individual. More than this, Williams argues that an individual’s disposition to accept external reasons is determined by her subjective motivational state. Her current desires, dispositions, loyalties and projects determine what will count as a compelling reason for her in the first place. This leads Williams to the conclusion that explanations of individual action on the grounds of external reasons are “false, or incoherent, or really something else misleadingly expressed” (1981, 111). So, external reasons for acting, like those important to impartiality-based moral systems, at least under-explain individuals’ actions, and at worst, are impossible reasons for acting at all.

Because the demands of impartiality are a threat to integrity, those aspects of an individual’s subjective motivational state that make her *partial* to certain others and actions concern integrity. Williams argues that individuals, by necessity, have particular “ground projects” that give meaning to a life and constitute reasons for acting. Projects can be moral or non-moral, egoistic or altruistic, but what makes them important to an individual is the strength of her *identification* with them.<sup>41</sup> An individual’s identification with such desires, interests and projects constitutes her *character* insofar as she finds herself “bound up with them” (1981, 15). The concept of integrity that emerges from

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<sup>41</sup> Williams is concerned here with the way that actions and projects are future-oriented. He writes, “One’s patterns of interests, desires and projects not only provide the reason for an interest in what happens within the horizon of one’s future, but also constitute the conditions of there being such a future at all” (1981, 11). An individual’s desires, interests and projects, accompanied by the hope of their fulfillment, make human lives essentially future-oriented. The future that is structured in and through projects and interests concerns not only the fulfillment of one’s own projects, but also the future of the others to whom one has loyalties.

Williams' discussion of internal reasons and character is similar to Taylor's on the grounds that it requires keeping one's "inmost self intact," but rather than ending the analysis at motivation and reasons for acting, Williams broadens the scope of integrity to include the projects that constitute one's character—one's identity. The projects that constitute who one is also give meaning to one's life, so to demand that an individual sacrifice important, identity-conferring projects is not merely an inconvenience for her, but it is to frustrate her *self*, that which compels her to care about her future, and makes her life worth living. Invoking identity and character highlight the necessarily *partial* nature of human life. While an individual's identification with certain projects constitutes her character, differences in character among persons add a notion of irreplaceability, both for oneself and for others. This, again, ties integrity to partiality over and against impartiality. The belief that *I* and only *I* am this nexus of projects and relationships forces integrity to concern not just having reasons for action that are appropriately *mine*, but encourages me to act in ways that foster and protect my projects and those of others important to me in order that I can go on as myself. Because integrity concerns identity, and part of what makes us who we are is the projects we identify with, including our loyalties and relationships with others, integrity as he discusses it is already moralized. Moral conflicts, problems and questions will arise at the intersection of an individual's projects and the projects of others. So, how one integrates the demands of personal relationships into her identity is a moral issue, and what projects an individual will prize over her other projects will have consequences, to be sure, in many areas of her life—moral and otherwise.

As we will see in the next section, all of the accounts of integrity reviewed here share certain assumptions about the nature of the moral agent and the kind of person one ought to be. In these accounts, integrity is a value or project that is self-protective, and the ‘self’ being protected is inward-looking individual whose essence is comprised of her core values, beliefs, commitments or projects. To justify an action on the grounds of the pursuit of integrity is to protect one’s own beliefs about morality from the input or influence of the reasons or projects of others. We must, they argue, protect our “self” from inconsistency or contradiction so that our moral lives are legitimate. There is also a shared assumption that the values and beliefs to which we are committed or which we pursue in our projects exhaust the “real” moral self, while our commitments arising from or demanded by particular others can be extraneous, or even hostile, to our moral standing.<sup>42</sup> An important disagreement emerges from the examination of these models over the importance or place of impartiality in moral life. Linking integrity to identity, and pitting integrity against the impartial moral standard, leaves us to consider what the role of *others* is in the constitution of our moral selves, and the way we conceive of moral life, including values, beliefs, commitments and projects. Williams (and to a lesser degree, McFall) opens up the possibility that standing behind our particular commitments to others, even if it means sacrificing consistency to a principle or belief is necessary,

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<sup>42</sup> This assumption is present in greater and lesser degrees in the models of integrity reviewed here. For the models that locate integrity in the deliberative processes of moral agents, demands for action arising from others are a threat to one’s autonomous moral deliberation, but for the models of integrity that tie integrity to identity, it may be that our commitments to others make us who we are, and in this case, are not dangerous to integrity. As we will see in the next section, the “identity” models of integrity falter on account of the social assumptions at work behind their conception of the moral agent, and in so doing, miss that there are particular commitments or projects that some members of society have that they cannot and do not choose.

while such a sacrifice is a hallmark of a *lack* of integrity for Taylor and Halfon. The role of others in the constitution of our moral beliefs and commitments will be explored in the following section.

### 3. Relational Models of Integrity

The next set of approaches examined here flesh out the shared assumptions mentioned above. I categorize these as broadly ‘relational’ because they conceive of the moral agent as a complex of not only beliefs, values, commitments and projects, but also relationships that are more and less important to one’s sense of moral life and one’s identity.

The following three approaches share this relational focus, and to varying extents, refocus moral theorizing away from the individual and towards the relationships through which individuals develop their moral capacities and structure their lives more generally. Cheshire Calhoun’s approach reveals how McFall, Halfon and Williams’ views are limited because they are committed to the idea that integrity is a *personal* virtue, and do not consider that it might be a *social* virtue. Susan Babbitt’s writings on integrity reveal that the models of integrity centered around personal identity—those of Williams and McFall—unduly limit the forces that act on an individual’s identity, specifically, the role that society plays in who gets to be and who does not get to be an *individual*. Margaret Walker’s revisioning of integrity exposes more concrete, political assumptions present in these ways of thinking about integrity. On her reading, they suffer from the problem of representation: that under the guise of universality, they are thoroughly rooted in particular economic and social roles.

Calhoun argues that approaches like the ones examined in Section 2 are limited, because they assume that integrity is a *personal* virtue. In this regard, they are inadequate explanations of what it means to stand for something—a principle, commitment or moral ideal—in the face of adversity, and they fail to recognize the importance of relationships to human life. She writes, “What drops out of these accounts is the centrality of standing *for* principles and values that, in one’s own best judgment, are worthy of defense because they concern how *we*, as beings interested in living justly and well, can do so” (1995, 254). Against the personal models of integrity, she prefers to begin with a model of integrity wherein integrity is a *social* virtue, where integrity concerns some common project(s) or a way of comporting oneself among others. As a social virtue, integrity might still concern the individual deliberative processes that foster a sense of identity and character, but it leaves behind the assumption that these processes do not have social or relational elements. For instance, integrity as a personal virtue insists that one be true to the principles that concern one’s core values. But as a social virtue, integrity might focus on assessing ways in which values are shared by groups of persons, it might focus on the ways those values help structure relationships and communities, and it might take up questions about how relationships both help and hinder the formation of and fidelity to values.

For Calhoun, integrity concerns “standing for something,” which seems to echo the insistence—shared by McFall, Williams and Halfon—that integrity is “being true to one’s commitments,” but for Calhoun, “[An individual’s] standing for something is not just something she does for herself. She takes a stand for, and before, all deliberators who share the goal of determining what is worth doing” (1995, 257). Instead of being

true to *one's* commitments, or standing for something that *one* thinks is right, Calhoun argues that individuals must take up the “co-deliberative perspective,” in order to have integrity. She writes further, “To have integrity is to understand that one’s own judgment matters because it is only within individual persons’ deliberative viewpoints, including one’s own, that what is worth *our* doing can be decided” (1995, 258, emphasis added).<sup>43</sup> That is, the person of integrity is concerned with how her judgments matter to the general project of living together, and understands that her individual judgments are important because she is and those judgments are part of the co-deliberative process.

Calhoun argues that rethinking integrity as a social virtue better explains why integrity is important to us. It is not just that one stands for something, but rather that one stands for something *before* others for whom one’s actions are important. If integrity were a personal virtue, it shouldn’t matter to us that someone lacks it through hypocrisy or wantonness, for example. However, our preoccupation with identifying all the ways in which persons *lack* integrity betrays an underlying belief that whether a person has or lacks integrity matters *to us* because they have abandoned the co-deliberative project of figuring out what is “worth *our* doing.”

If integrity is a social virtue, it will have both internal and external obstacles. As a personal virtue, integrity stands over and against self-deception, weakness of will, deficiencies in practical reasoning and incoherence, among others. As a social virtue, we must add that that social contempt, ostracism, loss of economic means, penal sanctions,

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<sup>43</sup> Part of Calhoun’s concern here is to endorse integrity and at the same time respond to challenges that integrity results in moral self-indulgence, a topic taken up by Bernard Williams (1981) as well. The charge is that to safeguard one’s own values and principles against those of others may result in actions “in the name of” integrity or morality that can clearly violate common-sense moral values.

the breakdown of relationships, social labeling and loss of confidence by others will all be obstacles to “standing for something” (1995, 259). The personal models of integrity to which Calhoun is responding would all argue that giving in to any of these obstacles is, by definition, to lose integrity. On the social view, conceding to the social pressures mentioned above does not, by definition, mean that one does not have integrity. In fact, proper regard for one’s place within a community of deliberators would require us, as Calhoun says, “simultaneously to stand behind our convictions and to take seriously others’ doubts about them” (1995, 260). To stand for something means to stand for one’s own best judgment while at the same time standing for the judgments of others. This does not mean that compromising one’s beliefs is always warranted, nor does it grant license to follow one’s own best judgment all the time. Integrity requires, at least, sensitivity to the fact that we will always be pulled both ways.

In highlighting why integrity is important to us, Calhoun unearths something important that is missing from the traditional accounts of Section 2. Those models of integrity that identify it with rationality or the processes of moral justification assume without question that moral decision-making is fundamentally monological. That is, good (moral) decision-making requires only the unhindered rational processes of the agent. Calhoun’s suggestion that “standing for something” actually means standing for something in front of and for others who matter to us is at the same time an argument for why moral decision-making is dialogical, if we are truly involved in co-deliberative projects about the best kinds of lives for *us*. In this argument we can also locate the assumption, shared by the traditional models of integrity, that values, beliefs and projects are also monological, that is, they can still have meaning for us when removed from the

social conditions of their origin. By the fact that our beliefs, values and commitments require cultivation through education and moral development (which is necessarily interpersonal) it would make sense that they can be meaningful for us only as *part* of that social world, and through the co-deliberative process that sets out what can be valuable to us. So in the end, it is not that integrity has nothing to do with the rationality of our beliefs, values and actions, or the deliberative processes that enable us to have confidence in these things. Rather, integrity, for Calhoun, means that these things are necessarily social and dialogical, not strictly internal and personal.

Whereas Calhoun's definition of integrity emerges from her revision of the traditional models that define integrity along the lines of rationality or moral deliberation and justification, Susan Babbitt focuses on revising the models of integrity grounded in personal identity. She argues that integrity is a normative judgment about a person's identity, where identity is understood as the 'self' presupposed in an individual's deliberation and actions, and also that this self is in control of her actions towards realizing her real interests (autonomy) (104). So, identity for Babbitt is already a moral concept, and personal integrity is a moral judgment about the kind of identity a person has. This would seem to fit with the models of integrity that are connected to personal identity, such as those of McFall and Williams, because integrity is a judgment about how well we protect those values, beliefs and projects that run to our core. The problem, as Babbitt sees it, is that identity in this sense relies on a person's fundamental belief *that* they are a person. This belief, she argues, is a social privilege. Social processes not only

create social groups, but also set the criteria for who counts as an individual.<sup>44</sup> When one is primarily woman, and/or Black, and/or poor, over-and-against primarily *herself*, and is treated as primarily a group member and not an individual, the belief in oneself as an individual is frustrated. For instance, the only woman in a classroom asked to explain “what women think” about a particular issue, or the Black man asked to explain certain behaviors of “his people” is thought to be not an individual with particular thoughts, beliefs, values and reasons for acting or thinking the way he does, but becomes for others “the group.”<sup>45</sup> In this way, Babbitt argues, “being ‘true to oneself’ cannot by itself explain intuitions about personal integrity for people who are not individuated as people at all (114). So, when we interrogate our intuitions about who has integrity and who does not, or when we make judgments about integrity, we are *de facto* making judgments about the nature of society as a whole. The already-moralized conception of integrity and identity at work is thus also already a social and political conception. So, rather than beginning and ending with identity itself, Babbitt opts for a model of integrity that is attentive to the *processes of development* whereby persons can come to believe that they are, in fact, persons.

Babbitt defines individuality in terms of the possibility for making rational choices that bring about our ‘real human interests’ in our own dignity or self-worth.

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<sup>44</sup> The role of social processes and practices in the construction of identity and beliefs about oneself will be more fully explored in Chapters 3 and 4. In brief, I subscribe to an existential-phenomenological model of selfhood that emphasizes how the social world conditions who we can be, what we can do and how we conceive of ourselves. This is not a deterministic theory because we, as subjects, also help to constitute who we are, what we can do and our beliefs about ourselves.

<sup>45</sup> It is also worth mention that there are actual social practices define certain groups as less-than human or not fully rational. Belief in oneself as an individual under these circumstances is even more difficult.

Rationally choosing that which brings about our own dignity depends further on moral imagination. Because social structures can frustrate the very belief in oneself *as a self*, and in turn compromise feelings of self-worth, we must be able to imagine possibilities for a better social world that aid rather than hinder our moral development. Moral imagination provides us with an alternative view of ourselves through revisioning the social world in which we live, and can help structure projects and goals for bringing about that world. Thus, moral imagination is important not only for those who are grouped rather than individuated, but also for the morally privileged who already have the fundamental belief in themselves as persons. Imagining a better social world might even require a “radical disruption of one’s secure sense of self” in order to be in a position to see the social world for what it is, and to construct alternative ways of life that better allow for the moral development of all (120).

Whereas the traditional models of integrity rooted in identity were designed to protect an individual from moral or social commitments that might disrupt who one takes oneself to be, identity for Babbitt may require that we challenge or give up who we are, and the possibilities for who we may become, for the sake of the moral development of all. Our thinking about identity in general, and judgments about integrity (as the adequacy of a person’s identity) in particular must be conscious of the social conditions under which particular identities are made possible by social structures and socially-sanctioned values or ways of life. This opens up a critique of the traditional models of integrity concerned with consistency and rationality by interrogating the social conditions

under which persons can develop rationally, or have a consistent set of beliefs or values.<sup>46</sup> Compromising who one is—the values, beliefs or commitments that constitute an identity—might be necessary in order to disrupt the social norms and processes that create a socially or morally privileged group of people. And, in fact, we are able to see that integrity, as it is traditionally understood, is a luxury for some, and a burden for others. We will find in Margaret Walker’s work on integrity a development of the insight offered by Babbitt here, specifically, that given the social structures that influence development, achieving what the traditional models require for integrity is a social privilege.

Walker argues that these agent-centered, inward-looking, individualist definitions of integrity rely on faulty assumptions about moral agents and how real persons conceive of moral life. The first assumption she unearths is that of the “autonomous man.” The myth of the autonomous man has been attacked by communitarians and feminists alike—the former arguing that the ideal of autonomy is just that, a mythic ideal, that no one does or could live up to, and the latter arguing that the autonomous man is in fact *some man*, a representation of typically white, middle class, liberal males (137-9). As we have seen, autonomy is important to both models of integrity explained in Section 2: integrity is self-protective, meant to shield one’s innermost self from the demands of others to

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<sup>46</sup> Lisa Tessman has recently been working on the relationship between oppression and increased moral dilemmas in one’s life. The general thesis is that living with conflicting moral prescriptions or systems is evidence of oppression. For instance, that a single mother might have to choose between taking her child to the doctor for treatment and keeping her job is evidence of the oppression of women and working-class individuals. “Moral Conditions Under Oppression: Dilemmaticity as a Measure of Moral Disrepair” at the International Social Philosophy Conference, sponsored by the North American Society for Social Philosophy (NASSP), 2008; and “Dilemmaticity in Moral Life” at the Biennial conference for the Association for Feminist Ethics and Social Theory (FEAST) 2009.

compromise one's beliefs, values or commitments. The preservation of these things is at the same time the preservation of what is necessary for individual deliberation and thus, for autonomy. The *problem* with the ideal of the autonomous man, Walker argues, is that, "[it] treat[s] an aspirational ideal for a moral agent as if it were a constitutive requirement of being one, and it treats as a uniform measure an ideal to which not everyone has been encouraged or allowed to aspire even in those places where the ideal has obtained" (138). Walker is not denying that a certain amount of autonomy is important to living a good life, but she is denying that the *ideal* of autonomy, operative in these models (though admittedly in various ways) is truly the cutoff for agency, personhood or integrity in some way. In short, theorists guilty of relying on the ideal of the autonomy treat autonomy as a transcendent fact about human persons rather than a way of being that is learned, and a process that is subject to social and political gate keeping.<sup>47</sup> If autonomy is not a given and not just there to be protected through the pursuit of integrity, then a new conception of integrity can emerge that is outward-looking, rather than inwardly self-protective. In questioning the ideal of autonomy, we also pose a challenge to Babbitt's vision of integrity as a judgment about the social processes of development that influence the beliefs necessary for the rational pursuit of dignity and self-worth. This does not, on its face, seem to contradict what having integrity *means* on the traditional models; rather, it is a broadening of our judgments of integrity to include how individuals *get there* from where they are located in society. Walker's criticism of the "autonomous man" seems to follow the same path as Babbitt's critique of the social processes of development, in that we recognize that there are

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<sup>47</sup> And as we see with Babbitt's work, the fundamental assumptions about oneself required for autonomy or personhood are subject to social processes.

prejudicial social assumptions buried in our thinking about moral agency, but it parts ways with Babbitt's critique on the latter's assumption that autonomy is foundation of agency.

The second assumption Walker brings to the fore is the "career self" (136). The career self is way of modeling the moral agent in and through the forward-looking plans, projects or quests that structure their lives, such as Williams' model of integrity. On this model, agency and personhood are bound up not only with autonomy, but also with *rational choice* in terms of life planning and projects. The career self is a kind of moral retirement plan—the person who sets out on a plan for his life that organizes benefits and rewards against sacrifices and setbacks, all in view of the plan's realization. Given the uncertainties and contingencies of life, plans and projects are certainly one of the rational ways (if not *the* rational way) to go about navigating our lives, and certainly, it may seem so to many of us. What Walker questions here is what kind of biases are represented in this correlation of the person with the career self, and it is here where the economic analogy to the retirement plan is purposeful: having life-spanning plans or projects that govern both major decisions and the minutiae of one's life might be a privilege of a certain class of people. She writes,

I recognize with resentment how many things that *are* parts of a normal form of life for very many people in a particular social environment count (and are felt) as failures and occasions for shame, when they appear under the aspect of lack or loss of control. They appear under that aspect in the very form of social life that makes the successfully planned life a (restricted) possibility and a powerful ideal. The entropy of pregnancies and illnesses, the unpredictable care of vulnerable and dependent persons, and the shabbiness of poverty and its lack of insulation from the catastrophic effects of 'changes at the lower levels' of plans are among these (143).

There are two critiques of career selves possible here: one is that planning on the macro scale is a middle-class, democratic phenomenon, and therefore fails to represent how people in general direct their lives. The other is that even if planning is a hallmark of all people generally, the success and vulnerability of plans falls along economic lines, too. It is the relatively poor who are affected most by a sudden loss of employment, a pregnancy or an illness. And it is often the women of the relatively poor class upon whom responsibilities for care fall when such things happen. On both lines of critique, it is fair to say both that the success of plans is contingent on social factors, and the ability to plan ahead at all represents a certain social ideal. The danger of these assumptions, and the models of integrity they support, is that they form a dominant social ideal that sets the limits of who counts morally and politically. They have a social gravity to them that pulls towards conformity by defining what it takes to be a full moral or political agent, yet at the same time, they operate at limits that necessarily exclude some members of our moral world. In light of her critique of the underlying assumptions that gird traditional accounts of integrity, Walker offers a relational model of integrity that she thinks is a better representation of moral life than the idealized versions offered previously. She writes, "This ethics does not find those conceptions of integrity true to the changing, deeply relational character of human lives and the way we make sense of them. Those conceptions do not reckon with how much and how inevitably most lives are entangled with and given to others, as well as to chancy circumstances beyond our control" (112-13).

The ethics she refers to is an ethics of responsibility that takes as its starting points a moving horizon of commitments and adjustments, livable flexibility and

reasonable reliability. An ethics grounded in responsibilities appreciates that moral claims arise for us because of our relationships—both chosen and unchosen—with others whose lives are vulnerable to our choices and actions. In contrast with an ethics within which moral demands come from the beliefs, values or commitments one finds most important, in an ethics of responsibility, our moral demands come from others whose needs or interests demand a response from us because of the particulars of our relationships, proximity or personal strengths. On the face of it, integrity seems remiss in a context of responsibilities, because preserving our integrity is supposed to save us from the over-burdensome demands of others. But, as Walker argues, integrity concerns *precisely* these demands that arise from others' vulnerability and our correlative responsibilities to meet these demands. We are responsible and accountable for those demands that we meet, but we are also responsible for the justifications we give for how we meet those demands, why we meet some and not others, how we take responsibility for moral wrongdoing, and how and when we change our moral course. While this might seem, again, to enlarge the circle of responsibility beyond what could be reasonably expected, it could be argued that we are *already* responsible and accountable for these things, but that they are not typically thought to reflect a person's integrity. What Walker insists on here is that those processes of deliberation and justification are not after-the-fact and outside of what makes a person one of integrity, but that these are part of the *integrated* moral self. How we deliberate, make decisions, act, and justify ourselves to others are not disconnected aspects of our moral world, but betray who we are and what we take to be important.

Along with the alterations necessary to integrity within the ethics of responsibility, Walker also argues that when thinking of integrity as reliability in our response to the vulnerabilities of others, we must also acknowledge that reliability is not static, and we might have to become *differently reliable*—in magnitude or scope—in certain situations and in relation to different others. To understand reliability here, Walker invokes the image of a sound building. For example, on the sides of the Sears Tower (now Willis Tower) and the John Hancock Building in Chicago, there are diagonal cross-beams in the shape of an “X” from bottom to top. The point of these cross-beams is not to brace these buildings against the wind so that they do not move, but the X-beams hold the structure in place *as it moves* with the wind. The X-beams make the building reliable, but its reliability is grounded in its ability to move and change with the circumstances.<sup>48</sup> The same is true of integrity-as-reliability. We want reliability in ourselves and others, not because we need to be able to predict their every behavior, but we need to know who we can count on in the variety of circumstances in which we find ourselves. This also means that integrity is not necessarily a whole-life referent, such that one may have integrity in certain contexts or at certain times, but not others. Removing the restriction that integrity be a zero-sum moral concept reflects the contingency, complexity and uncertainty of our decisions and actions.

#### 4. The Philosophical Legacy of Integrity

Whereas Calhoun argued against rationality-centered models of integrity and Babbitt against identity models of integrity, Walker’s contribution to the line of criticism

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<sup>48</sup> I am grateful to my brother, Michael Mosko, for the lesson in architecture and engineering while we were on a boat tour of the Chicago River.

developed by Calhoun and Babbitt is to identify the specific social assumptions at work in traditional models of integrity. Babbitt's argument that some persons are, by fiat of social processes, unable to have identities, let alone integrity, is mirrored in Walker's discussion of the social processes that allow some and not others to plan lives for themselves. And the myth of the autonomous man, who is given the social and moral space to determine his values and actions on his own, complements Calhoun's argument that moral life actually requires other people, and that values are not valuable to us unless there is an *other* with and for whom we stand.<sup>49</sup>

Each of these authors assumes an explicitly *relational* model of integrity in opposition to the individualist models they criticize. In so doing, they each take a step towards returning the moral agent to her moral life, which is lived with uncertainty, in concert and contest with others, and in the context of real social and political practices. In effect, what these authors show us is that *all* of our models of integrity, even those which believe themselves to be above the world, employ and reproduce the social and political world in which their supposedly a-social and a-political moral theories exist. *This*, Walker argues, is what makes them pernicious. For it is not the fact of their sociality that is problematic (or we would have to reject the latter set of models on the same grounds) but it is that they reflect a certain kind of person in a particular kind of

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<sup>49</sup> Babbitt makes much use of the term 'autonomy' in her work, as she argues that identity itself is bound up in the achievement of autonomy, which is precisely what is denied those on whom social processes work to group rather than individuate. However, I do not think that Babbitt's use of autonomy here--as something to strive for rather than a prerequisite—is an instance of the myth of the autonomous man. Walker is not arguing that autonomy is not important at all, she is just arguing that it is not a justifiable test of moral agency, and more importantly, is not the most important of our moral characteristics.

social context, while *purporting* to reflect all of us. So from the very beginning, we have been up against a moral litmus test that for some establishes impossible prerequisites.

The models Calhoun, Babbitt and Walker criticize influence to a large extent their positive contributions to what integrity might mean and what its value to moral theory might be. Of note, however, is that in highlighting the interpersonal or social (or political) dimensions of moral life, each of these models of integrity hinges on the idea that as moral agents, we are always *at work* in being and becoming such agents. That is, where the traditional models of integrity, and I would argue (following Walker) traditional moral theory in general, begins by assuming a fully-formed, rational, adult (male) moral agent, these models highlight that not only does agency require development through relationships and social processes, but that this development *is* moral life itself, not a precursor to it. In Calhoun's description of integrity, she makes clear that when we "stand for something," an idea she shares with Taylor and Halfon, we are not just standing for our own beliefs or commitments; rather, we affirm our role in the co-deliberative process of defining and refining the values *we* live by. In this way, integrity is transformed from an individual virtue, marking something about an individual's character, to a social virtue, describing how one stands in relation to others in their shared way of life. Given that ways of life change and develop in a dialogical deliberative process, what it means to have integrity, to stand for something in this way, means not to inhabit one's dialogical position forever and for always, but necessitates that we play different roles in different co-deliberative processes. To have integrity will not mean to stand for something in the same way at all times, but rather to be ready and open to assume new positions in dialogue with different others under different circumstances.

So, one does not *have* integrity as a character trait or virtue as could be argued by Taylor, Halfon or Williams, but rather it will be an activity that requires vigilant attentiveness to our position in the process of determining ways of life for ourselves.

That integrity is an activity and not a state or quality that one possesses is obvious for Babbitt, because the beliefs that make integrity possible are themselves developed through social processes. And ultimately, for our beliefs about ourselves and the world to push us towards the better social world that is a product of moral imagination, they must be responsive to our dynamic positions within the social world. She focuses on the moral development of persons because she recognizes that we are not *sui generis* moral agents, but who we are—individuated or grouped—is as much accomplished by social processes as it is on our own. While integrity requires moral imagination and the achievement of autonomy, in a non-ideal moral world, these are met only by contrary paths of development that enable one to resist systems of behavior and meanings that preclude the possibility of genuine individuality (116). In this, Babbitt locates the dynamism of integrity and agency in moral development, and shows that our chances of achieving certain moral goals may be frustrated if social processes inhibit such development. Babbitt does urge that the moral ideals we work towards must be attainable, and that there is some objectively good way of life for us (she calls this flourishing), so this development is also a development *towards* something. But she also insists that we cannot rest on these achievements, and much like with Calhoun, we might have to disrupt the security of our position as autonomous moral agents pursuing our real interests in order to challenge the social structures and values that inhibit the moral development of others. So, the attainability of our moral ideals does not mean that we are free-and-clear

of moral development once we've reach such ideals, if this is even possible, but rather that moral development would also require destabilizing our sense of ourselves for the sake of social and moral change.

Walker echoes the insistence that integrity ought not operate to rigidify the moral agent against the persuasion of others, and explicitly argues that integrity will mean that we be differently reliable in different contexts with different others. It requires, rather than avoids, the particularity of others when we make moral decisions, and it requires that we be ready and willing to justify what we take to be our responsibilities to others and how we live them out. Even these justifications may take different forms in different contexts. Integrity-as-reliability for Walker means to be attendant and responsive to others because of the responsibilities we have by nature of our dependency on and vulnerability to them. This constant vigilance may require new ways of understanding ourselves and others, or finding new ways to fulfill our responsibilities to others as our relationships grow and change. To be reliable, to re-evoked the image of the Sears Tower, is not to be unwavering, but in fact, to change as the circumstances require.

In sum, what the relational models of integrity explored here teach us is that integrity is not something that we achieve *per se*, but is something we continually need to work at. Agency itself is bound up in the possibility of never being settled, the possibility that we can always envision a better kind of self or way of life, and that we can act on behalf of these visions. What integrity does for these models is ensure us that even if we relinquish the myth of the autonomous man and bankrupt the career self, our agency is not compromised, but rather, shines through in our ability to grow and change in our relationships with others and the demands that those relationships may place on us. In

order to meet the challenges of social life, we must be as dynamic and unstable as the social world and our relationships in it. Where integrity on the traditional models sought to seal off the self and her deliberations, or autonomy, or values or commitments from the uncertainty of the social world, the relational models of integrity seek to negotiate that tension between the self and the world by situating the moral self *in the world* in the first place, and discovering what integrity can do for our lives as we actually live them. So, we see that the revisions to the traditional models offered in the relational models of integrity have imbedded in them an important critique of those traditional models: that the achievement of stability and consistency prized in the former is in fact a *lack* of integrity, and thus, a moral failure.

Granting this, there is an important thread of continuity between the traditional and relational models of integrity reviewed in this chapter, and it is this continuous tension that I see as the genealogical connection between the former and latter. I have already discussed how the traditional models of integrity can be interpreted as self-protective, whether the “self” referred to here is one’s deliberative processes, or our character, or our commitments and identities, “integrity” is invoked as a defense against challenges to who we are and what we stand for. Regardless of the content of our beliefs or values, it is thought that sticking to one’s moral guns, so to speak, is a justification for action (or inaction). The relational models, by highlighting the social processes of our development, or the way that moral demands arise because of our relationships to others, argue that this kind of self-protective moral stance is both unavailable to some, and undesirable for all, undesirable because of the way it hinders our moral growth and the development of relationships that foster moral growth. What I take to be at stake in these

models, therefore, is a tension between *autonomy* and *vulnerability*. In general, the traditional models seek to protect autonomy, though they may define this in different ways.<sup>50</sup> And in general, the relational models highlight the ways that our vulnerability to social processes and others is unavoidable. However, this tension is not limited to the traditional-relational division as I have constructed it but exists even within the relational models.

Calhoun's insistence that the values we live by are determined or interpreted through a dialogical, co-deliberative process is important, but at the same time, is subject to the critiques of traditional models of integrity offered by Babbitt and Walker. Calhoun is in agreement with the latter two authors that if integrity is meaningful for us, it is so only because of what it tells us about our relationships with others and our position in determining a way of life we can share. What she does not account for is the way in which the moral agents participating in these co-deliberative processes are constituted by their social and political circumstances. As Babbitt showed us, there are prior social processes at work that influence our moral development toward agency, and that agency cannot be assumed for all persons. Those for whom a belief in their own individuality and dignity is a question are in no position to deliberate about the values we live by, for their lives do not seem to count at all in our deliberations. Of note in the disagreement

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<sup>50</sup> Some primary distinctions in defining autonomy are found in Sonya Charles (2010) "How Should Feminist Autonomy Theorists Respond to the Problem of Internalized Oppression." Charles follows a trend common in ethical theory and distinguishes between procedural and substantive autonomy. The former refers to how individuals make decisions, and would be applicable to Taylor and Halfon's descriptions of integrity. The latter is further divided into strong and weak substantive theories, but they have in common certain conditions added to the decision-making procedure that may be internal or external to the individual (such as motivational factors or social circumstances) and may even, in the strongest cases, rule out or require certain choices for autonomous behavior.

between Calhoun and Babbitt is that integrity for the former is bound up in the activity of co-deliberation, which might require standing for something different from what we intended given the concerns and criticisms of others, while integrity for the latter strives towards autonomy, cashed out in terms of being in control of one's life.<sup>51</sup> Given the social issue she is concerned with, it makes some sense that Babbitt would emphasize individuality and autonomy over dependency and co-deliberation, for she is concerned about members of our society who are not granted the privilege of being individuals at all. What's at stake here is whether the vulnerability to others' positions that Calhoun finds to be a mark of integrity is the same kind of vulnerability to social processes that Babbitt identifies as morally problematic. Calhoun's emphasis on co-deliberation requires that we may have to challenge our own thinking and stand for something different from what we have in the past, but this might not be the morally damaging compromise of selfhood with which Babbitt is concerned. If strict defense of the values we live by is not, as is assumed in the traditional models, itself constitutive of who we are, then being vulnerable to the moral claims of others is not the demise of selfhood feared by some of the traditional models. But, not being able to make moral claims at all, which is Babbitt's concern with social processes that prevent individuality, does frustrate selfhood.

The tension between vulnerability and autonomy is also found in McFall and Williams' accounts of integrity in Section 2. Recall that for McFall, the "core commitments" that make us who we are have what she calls "social strings" attached.

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<sup>51</sup> Walker's position is also a foil to Babbitt's on this count, and is in fact much more radical than Calhoun's on the importance of interdependence and vulnerability. I chose to explore this using Calhoun's position because this milder version highlights that the tension is still present.

That is, the commitments that we make and claim as important to who we are must be the kinds of commitments that “any reasonable person” would make. Our core commitments—who we are—must be, at least in principle, recognizable and sanctioned by others. But, she argues, this does not mean that integrity is part of a social morality. Social morality, which is characterized by impartiality towards others, is a *threat* to integrity, because our commitments make us *partial* to certain others. Likewise, Williams invokes integrity as a response to utilitarian ethics, on account of the demand that we concern ourselves with the greatest happiness for the greatest number, regardless of what effect such actions might have on our own commitments and relationships. In this way, the identity models of integrity suggest that integrity is valuable because it protects us from the demands or claims of others who are not implicated in our commitments. In other words, integrity protects our ability to be autonomous moral agents, *because* we are vulnerable to others. However, both McFall and Williams recognize that this vulnerability is inescapable. If integrity is something we have to *work at*, and if *partiality* is something important to us, then we cannot escape this vulnerability, try as we may.

Looking at integrity through the lens of this tension between autonomy and vulnerability, I believe, shows us why integrity has been so prominent in moral discourse. Setting up autonomy as a moral ideal is motivated by the recognition that there must be something “ours” about our moral selves, and that we cannot always be vulnerable to the demands of others, lest we lose ourselves. This concern is real, and valid, and we see the strength of this concern in the writings of McFall and Williams, who show us that it is not just morality at stake, but *who we are* is put into question if we are too vulnerable to

social pressures. But we also see in their writing attempts to mediate between the vulnerability or dependency they recognize as important and the autonomy they want to combat this. On the other side, the relational models of integrity highlight how we are fundamentally connected to others, and that integrity will require our attunement to vulnerability and the attendant responsibilities that come with it. The strength of relational models on this point is that they highlight an often-neglected aspect of our moral lives: the relationships we find ourselves in and those that we choose, and the responsibilities or demands that come with those relationships. But as we see in Babbitt's model, attunement to the vulnerability that comes from our social dependence is not morally desirable if that means we are left in no position from which we can determine our own lives or work for social change.

This tension reveals that these writers—from Taylor to Walker—are engaged in a common project of navigating moral life between the poles of autonomy and vulnerability—their diverse positions are a product of their diverse concerns as we approach either pole. In the end, I find the critiques offered in the relational models compelling—that the traditional models presuppose social norms that accept some and except others, while purporting to represent an ideal that applied to all. This ideal, far from reachable, was also found undesirable for the important aspects of moral life it concealed in the name of rationality or control over one's life. The *weakness* I find in the relational approaches is that they still seem caught up in the tension between autonomy and vulnerability that is the root of the philosophical legacy of integrity. I do not propose to resolve this tension, but I do propose that we can recast it, and perhaps find that this tension itself can be put into relief.

## 5. Integrity-as-authenticity

The authors responsible for the relational models of integrity reviewed above reveal two important aspects of integrity: one, that the conception of agency in any model of integrity that will be appropriate to how moral life is actually lived will respect that we are developed and developing as agents, and two, that integrity's role in moral life has been conceived within the perceived tension between our autonomy or independence from others, and our vulnerability to, and dependence or interdependence on, those same others. I suggest at this point that underlying these models and their concerns is a question of freedom, and indeed, in the context of moral philosophy, freedom is often synonymous with autonomy. When freedom is cashed out in terms of rationality, integrity is a mark of a system of values or beliefs that is not contradictory, and when it is manifest in commitments that make us who we are, integrity is about protecting our freedom to make these commitments in unique ways. Likewise, the models that tend towards autonomy in the tension with vulnerability protect the self from moral interference from others, and those that highlight our vulnerability to social processes or particular others do so in order to show how our agency or freedom may be compromised by vulnerability. Working within the philosophical frameworks of the authors presented here, it seems that we can only illuminate the problem that sparks the need for moral integrity, and we are left to choose on which side we want our concept of moral integrity to fall.

Existentialism offers an alternative approach to ethics that might help guide us through that tension.<sup>52</sup> For the existentialist, our values, beliefs, commitments and projects are ways that we exercise our freedom to create ourselves. Jean-Paul Sartre proclaimed that “man is nothing,” and it is in virtue of being *nothing* that human beings are free to create themselves and meaning for their lives.<sup>53</sup> But for Sartre, this does not mean that we are *radically* free to be anything or create any kind of self or live any kind of life we can imagine. We are always situated: there are biological, historical and social facts that in part condition who we are and what we may become. This is the ontological duality of the human condition: transcendence and facticity. We *are* free to create ourselves, to engage in projects and relationships that might provide meaning for us, to have values and beliefs and to act on those; however, real possibilities for us arise from within our social and historical locations, those things that limit us. For the existentialist, the poles of this duality are not, however, absolute. Admitting that we are limited by our situation does not constitute a resignation of our freedom, and affirming our freedom is not a denial of the limitations we have as natural or social beings. Freedom also entails that we can take an *attitude* towards our existence, towards our freedom and our facticity, but also that we can never *be* either absolutely undetermined or completely determined. For the existentialist, the ability to be conscious of the facts of our existence, and our ability to reflect on facticity to imagine new possibilities and projects is evidence that

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<sup>52</sup> I use here elements from the work of Jean-Paul Sartre’s *Being and Nothingness* (1956), *Notebooks for an Ethics* (1992), and *Existentialism is a Humanism* (1946); and Simone de Beauvoir’s *Ethics of Ambiguity* (1948) and *Second Sex* (1952). For the purposes of this discussion of integrity, I will highlight the areas of thought where they, for the most part, agree, and highlight their philosophical differences where appropriate.

<sup>53</sup> Sartre (1946) *Existentialism is a Humanism*,  
<http://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/sartre/works/exist/sartre.html>.

who we are is not reducible to facticity. In other words, there is a gap between facticity and who we are, and it is in this gap where we decide what attitude we will take to our condition. The interplay between facticity and transcendence is dynamic and ambiguous, and, as Sartre argues, we are always trying to escape it, to escape taking responsibility for who we are and who we might be that requires action from within this dynamic, ambiguous space.

Our attempt to escape freedom and responsibility manifests, for Sartre, in bad faith. Bad faith is described in *Being and Nothingness* as the attempt to deny or overcome that we are nothing, that we have no essence. Take, for example, Sartre's waiter in the café from that work: the waiter exaggerates all the movements of being a waiter—he moves quickly, he bends dramatically to take an order, rushing too quickly around the dining room. He balances the tray on his fingertips high above him in an unstable, reckless way. Of the waiter, Sartre writes,

All his behavior seems to us a game ... he is playing, he is amusing himself. But what is he playing? We need not watch long before we can explain it: he is playing at *being* a waiter. The game is a kind of marking out and investigation. The child plays with his body in order to explore it, to take inventory of it; the waiter in the café plays with his condition in order to realize it (101-2).

The waiter is engaged in a project of being a waiter, by doing what a waiter does. But the waiter is not being a waiter in the way that he means to. His exaggerated attempts betray that he is acting in order to play the character of a waiter, which means giving up his own possibilities. The waiter represents for Sartre the fundamentally human attempt to escape the anguish of our freedom and the responsibilities that come with that. Playing a character or taking up a role is easier than the work of creating ourselves. Simone de Beauvoir (1948) captures this tendency to escape our freedom in her description of the

serious person, who denies her freedom by identifying herself with a cause, a value or a role. She denies the contingency that comes with freedom by ‘objectifying’ herself. She gives herself over to something in order to avoid determining *for herself* a way of life or identity. Beauvoir writes of the serious person, “The thing that matters for the serious [person] is not so much the nature of the object which he prefers to himself, but rather the fact of being able to lose himself in it ... he is no longer a man, but a father, a boss, a member of the Christian Church or the Communist Party” (47-8). The serious person objectifies herself by funneling her freedom into values that for her have a static meaning, which she does not have to negotiate, and which define her like physical properties define objects. For Sartre, the inescapability of the human condition was anguish, and for Beauvoir, it is anguish because we cannot escape the ambiguity of human existence that freedom opens up, and all of our attempts to avoid this will fail.

Both argue that a conversion from these corrupted ways of being is necessary to live authentically or genuinely.<sup>54</sup> Sartre defines authenticity as “a self-recovery of Being which has been corrupted” (1956, 116, n.9). Take the waiter in the café: his carefully planned and exaggerated movements, his many attempts to be exactly *what a waiter is* will always be frustrated. He cannot live in the rigid caricature of the waiter he imagines because he is not an object whose existence is exhausted by its facts. These failures can become redemptive because they are the occasion for reflection on our lives and our projects. At first, the waiter in the café might rethink how he goes about being a waiter, the particular movements, his cadence and his words. But when he continues to fail at

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<sup>54</sup> Sartre’s focus is on authenticity, while Beauvoir’s project focuses on the attitude the genuine person takes to her ambiguous condition. For the sake of brevity, I will refer to both of these positions as ‘authenticity,’ although there might be variations in what these terms mean between the two authors. If appropriate, I will distinguish between the two.

being the waiter of his imagination, this in turn can occasion a “purifying reflection,” through which we re-examine, or examine for the first time, the values and projects we’ve been working towards. In *Notebooks for an Ethics*, Sartre writes,

The problem gets posed as follows: Why is the human world inevitably a world of failure, what is there in the essence of human effort such that it seems doomed in principle to failure? This question is a solicitation for us to place ourselves on the plane of reflection and to envisage human action reflective in terms of its maxims and means and its goals (472).

For existentialism, what reflection on our goals and projects reveals is that these things are always lived, and for that reason, dynamic and uncertain. The same is true of the values we hold. This is part of the ethical dimension of authenticity. Just as the waiter cannot perfectly embody what he thinks a waiter is, we cannot live out and embody values and projects like they are states we inhabit or goals we reach. If values are a construction of—or at least an interpretation of—human existence, which is in turn necessarily imbued with ambiguity, dynamism and uncertainty—an authentic moral attitude recognizes and appreciates these things as lived out by us. Of this ethical, genuine person, Beauvoir writes, “[The] genuine [person] will not agree to recognize any foreign absolute ... he will abandon the dream of an inhuman objectivity ... he will also refuse to believe in unconditioned values which would set themselves up athwart his freedom like things” (1948, 14). So, the existentialist conversion sought by Sartre and Beauvoir requires not only that we recognize the contingencies and ambiguity of our own condition, but also that the values and projects we use to structure our lives are likewise always in question, and we must question them in order to remain subjects in relation to them, rather than servants to them. Because values are made and not given, dynamic and not facts, the authentic moral attitude also assumes *responsibility* for the creative activity

of moral life. How we wrestle with values, our attempts to live in them and our attempts to escape them, are all part of what make values *valuable to us*. Thus, to be ethical is not to live by a code that has been given to us or to stand behind principles or projects unwaveringly, but to take responsibility for the constant shaping of the values that give meaning to our lives.

When we run up against the inevitable failure of our projects to exist objectively in values or in roles, we must call into question the ends or goals for which we have been acting in order to recognize our attempts to escape the “exigencies of freedom.”<sup>55</sup> We can then return, authentically, to ourselves. This return is to the dynamic interplay between transcendence and facticity that makes us human beings, not to an underlying essence, or to essential values or projects, because human beings are not *things* in this way. Authenticity thus structures a response to some of the models of integrity examined here. If integrity means unquestioningly committing oneself to values or projects for the sake of moral consistency, then integrity defines Beauvoir’s serious person who gives up her freedom to negotiate and create herself. Integrity-as-seriousness is an attempt to escape the ambiguity and contingency of both the human condition and the values and projects through which we exercise our freedom. The desire for such consistency is a “vain attempt to be God” to escape the uncertainty and dynamism in which human freedom and the responsibilities that come with it is manifested (12). Integrity-as-seriousness is at the same time an attempt to objectify oneself, to give up one’s freedom to an unchanging, non-subjective value or project. To see values and projects as outside of us in the first place is existentially problematic, but to relate to them as static things we want to *be* is

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<sup>55</sup> This is Beauvoir’s phrase.

the resignation of freedom that Sartre and Beauvoir warn against. Exaggerated honesty or caricatures of beneficence are attempts, just like the waiter's, to *be something* rather than face the task of *becoming* oneself.

It has been charged that existentialist ethics, especially Sartre's focus on authenticity as a *self-recovery* from bad faith, results in ethical solipsism that isolates the self from others in one's projects to create *oneself*.<sup>56</sup> Moreover, it is assumed from Sartre's writings in *Being and Nothingness* that the fundamental relation between self and other is one of contest or hostility.<sup>57</sup> However, both Sartre and Beauvoir insist that our freedom, indeed the very condition of our morality, is dependent upon the freedom of others. In *Existentialism is a Humanism*, Sartre writes,

We will freedom for freedom's sake, in and through particular circumstances. And in thus willing freedom, we discover that it depends entirely upon the freedom of others and that the freedom of others depends upon our own. . . . Consequently, when I recognize, as entirely authentic, that man is a being whose existence precedes his essence, and that he is a free being who cannot, in any circumstances, but will his freedom, at the same time I realize that I cannot not will the freedom of others.<sup>58</sup>

As a return to ourselves, authenticity retrieves for us a sense of our own subjectivity that is lost in our attempts to escape the responsibility of being free. And this sense of subjectivity is not limited to one's own existence, but necessarily extends to the existence of others. If I will that I may be free, and I recognize we share the same (human)

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<sup>56</sup> There are a number of resources on this problem. Of note in recent scholarship are Robert Baird (2007) "The Responsible Self: An Interpretation of Jean-Paul Sartre" and T. Storm Heter (2006) "Authenticity and Others."

<sup>57</sup> See Sara Coen Shabot and Yaki Menschenfreund (2008) "Is Existentialist Ethics Unethical," 3. Since I am providing a sketch of existentialist ethics, it is not necessary to take a stand on the issue of Sartre's position on self-other relations at this point.

<sup>58</sup> Sartre (1946) *Existentialism is a Humanism*,  
<http://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/sartre/works/exist/sartre.html>

condition, I must also recognize that you will to be free, and I then become responsible for your freedom as much as my own, for *our* freedom is the condition upon which either of us can be free. Likewise, in *Ethics of Ambiguity*, Beauvoir challenges the criticism that existential ethics results in a relativism about how we ought to relate to others.

While “nothing can be decided in advance,” it is also true for existential ethics that the limiting rule of action is that “the freedom of other men must be respected, and they must be helped to free themselves” (60). The genuine man “acts in this way, whose end is the liberation of himself and others, who forces himself to respect this end through the means which he uses to attain it” (ibid). For Beauvoir, as for Sartre, we have a choice to either will ourselves free or to deny our freedom in the face of the anguish of responsibility. To choose our own freedom, however, is to also choose the freedom of others, since all human action has human effects in the world we co-create through our projects.

Therefore, for the existentialist, to manifest our freedom in projects that create ourselves and meaning in the world is to at the same time to choose that others manifest their freedom.

So, existentialist ethics, like the relational models examined above, offers a critique of the traditional models of integrity, and offers a replacement: authenticity. Authenticity requires embracing the contingency and ambiguity of our condition as human, the freedom that springs from this, and the responsibility that entails. We can crudely describe authenticity as “being oneself,” but the “being” of being oneself is never done, fixed or static, it is always projecting into the future through projects taken up to create oneself. If we cannot “be” ourselves but are always “becoming” ourselves, we must understand the self as a being capable of constantly becoming, as dynamic and

contingent. We always remain free to question, rethink or abandon our projects, and we remain free to take up different attitudes towards the situations in which we find ourselves. The built-in dynamism of the self is a well-suited complement to the kind of moral agency that supported the relational models of integrity—understanding that the moral self is developed and developing, and that a change in our values or actions could be required.

It might also be possible to authentically relate to the tension we found running through all the models of integrity examined in this chapter—the tension between autonomy and vulnerability. The tension remained through the relational models as well because they assumed, like the traditional models, that we can *be* either autonomous or vulnerable, and that these were facts about our nature or our sociality. Accepting them as facts conceals that we are always free, as the existentialist teaches us, to take an attitude towards the ways that we are free, and the ways that we are tied, necessarily, to others. In fact, it is our freedom, our “autonomy” that is the condition of our vulnerability to others.<sup>59</sup> The tension that we found running through the literature on integrity might be just another interpretation of the ontological duality between facticity and transcendence that the existentialist argues is an inescapable part of the human condition. In this way, authenticity fits in the lineage of integrity as a “solution” to this problem. However, it is not really a solution, because authenticity requires that we not see our condition as a

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<sup>59</sup> There is a terminological slippage here. Translators of Sartre and Beauvoir, and even contemporary writers on existentialism employ the term ‘autonomy’ as a stand-in for freedom, especially when discussing existentialist *ethics*. My sense is that autonomy is preferred to freedom in the ethical sphere because freedom is an ontological or metaphysical question. The distinction between the two becomes blurred for the existentialist who believes that “existence precedes essence,” and this might explain the slippage between the “ethical” and “metaphysical” terms.

problem that has to be solved. Instead, it is something that we choose to relate to in different ways, and out of which emerge projects for creating ourselves and meaning for our lives. So rather than suffocate in the tension between autonomy and vulnerability, or independence and (inter)dependence, the authentic person recognizes that this duality is what sustains her freedom.

## 6. Conclusion

There are two moves in this chapter. The first move locates the social assumptions at work in allegedly *asocial* theories of integrity and moral life. Calhoun's analysis highlights that moral deliberation, and indeed values and beliefs themselves, are bound up in co-deliberative and necessarily dialogical processes, and therefore put us in relation to others. Babbitt's work exposes that the fundamental beliefs necessary to have integrity are not just givens for many members of society, but are embedded in the same social processes that work to disenfranchise certain members of society. Walker shows that these social processes are also moral processes containing assumptions about who counts and does not count in our moral deliberations. These three critiques together highlight the social biases in the traditional accounts of integrity, and at the same time reveal that moral thinking occurs within our own social positions.

The second move this chapter makes is to see integrity as a response to the tension between the exercise of freedom and the ways in which we are vulnerable to others and others are vulnerable to us. I offered existentialism as a step in the lineage of integrity because it, too, recognizes freedom and vulnerability as the hallmarks of the human condition. Unlike its genealogical counterparts, however, authenticity is not a

position in that tension, but an attitude towards it. Existentialists refuse to see the tension as a problem, and by doing so are able to forward a more *human* ethics. As a question of autonomy and freedom, integrity is germane to the discussion of violence and sexualized violence in this dissertation, but as I have argued in this chapter, integrity cannot be a demand for us to push ourselves towards autonomy *at the expense of* authenticity. As I will explore in the next two chapters, women's vulnerability is different in type and in magnitude because of women's situation *as women* within oppressive social structures. This sets up a unique problem for women's lives: authenticity requires that we embrace our vulnerability to others within the human condition, but women are more vulnerable to violence because of their unique situation.

### CHAPTER 3: OPPRESSION, SOCIAL GROUPS AND EMBODIMENT

This chapter picks up where my argument in Chapter 1 left off, namely, that to understand the meaning of violence, we must take stock of the social forces that make some members of society more vulnerable to violence than others, and what social or political purpose this vulnerability, and indeed violence, may serve. It also draws on my argument in Chapter 2 that our vulnerability to others and to the social conditions of our lives (facticity) is interpreted through such vulnerabilities' tension with freedom and autonomy. Here, I examine the social conditions that make women, in particular, vulnerable to violence, and how violence exposes and reinforces this vulnerability. In Section 1, I explore the relationship between violence and oppression, and argue that we must understand violence against women *through* oppression, as a way that oppression is manifested in the lives of individuals and also as a force that maintains oppressive social structures. In Section 2, I explain how oppression also structures what it means to be a woman in our society, ultimately paving the way for understanding how violence also structures women's identities and lives. Finally, in Section 3, I explore how oppression extends to women's bodies and the way that women live through their bodies. The overall argument of this chapter is that women, because of the bodies they have and the social systems in which they live are vulnerable *qua* women in our society, and indeed this vulnerability is part of what it means to *be* a woman.

#### 1. Violence and Oppression

Feminists have argued that to understand violence against women, we must first understand women's oppression, and then we will be able to see how common forms of

violence against women are connected to and reinforce oppressive social structures. Of oppression generally, Marilyn Frye (1983) writes,

The experience of oppressed people is that the living of one's life is confined and shaped by forces and barriers which are not accidental or occasional and hence avoidable, but are systematically related to each other in such a way as to catch one between and among them and restrict or penalize motion in any direction (4).

She employs the heuristic of a birdcage to explain why many ethical, social and political theories/theorists “miss” the operation of oppression on certain people's lives.

Oppression works by confining a group's social mobility from many sides, but Frye (along with many feminist theorists) argues that moral and political theory tends to focus myopically on “individual wires” of the birdcage, and in so doing, is ill equipped to understand the reality and operation of oppression. Individual wires of a birdcage do not, by themselves, prevent a bird from flying away. Rather, it is a number of wires, systematically arranged that keep the bird in its cage. To focus on one wire instead of the multitude and its systematic arrangement misses why the bird is caged in from all sides. For example, analyses of the gendered wage gap can explain the difference between men and women's earning potential over time. But such analyses blind themselves, through their limited focus, on the ways in which the wage gap is part of a larger social structure that both causes and reinforces the wage gap, a wage gap that then causes and reinforces the social structure. When this particular reality is taken together with the gendered division of labor more generally, expectations to balance domestic and public work, and gendered norms that influence behavior (among social structures), we see not just disparities in earning potential, but larger disparities in economic and social mobility. To see all of this requires us to step back and “take in” the birdcage, to see the way that all of

these social systems create a rigid structure that inhibits the mobility of certain social groups.

Iris Marion Young (1990) argues that in order to “take in” the birdcage, we must step outside of the logic of the reigning liberal (distributive) paradigm in order to see that certain kinds of inequalities are not just matters of unequal distribution (such as the gendered wage gap), but are matters of social *injustice* that redistribution cannot address.<sup>60</sup> For Young, it is not possible to offer a definition—that is, necessary and sufficient conditions—of oppression because different persons are oppressed in different ways, along different axes of power.<sup>61</sup> Even though a black man and white woman can both be considered oppressed, their social situations have different historical, economic and social constitutions that affect their lives differently. In light of this, Young argues that oppression names a common condition. She writes, “All oppressed people face some inhibition of their ability to develop and exercise their capacities and express their needs, thoughts and feelings” (40). Furthermore, people are not oppressed *qua* individuals, but *qua* groups. That is, an individual woman is not oppressed because of her individuating qualities, but because of her membership in the group ‘women.’ According to Young, a social group is a collective of persons that is differentiated from at least one other group by cultural forms and practices or a way of life, which then cause members to associate

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<sup>60</sup> See Young (1990), Chapter 1, “Displacing the Distributive Paradigm,” 15-33.

<sup>61</sup> Maria Lugones has offered an extended explanation of the way that oppression is intersectional. She argues that oppression occurs along different axes of power, and at the intersection of these axes, for instance, of Black and woman, or of woman and working-class, the experience of oppression is different from that at other intersections. While the insight here is correct—that Black women are oppressed differently from white women, and that lesbians are oppressed differently again—I would opt for a more fluid understanding of power and identity that blurs these distinctions and the relative social power associated with identities. See “Peregrinajes/Pilgrimages: Theorizing Coalition Against Multiple Oppressions” (2003) and “On Complex Communication” (2006).

more frequently with one another.<sup>62</sup> Women are a social group, then, because of the ways their lives are structured according to gendered norms and practices. According to Young, the oppression of women—or any group—results from “unquestioned norms, habits and symbols, in the assumptions underlying institutional rules and the collective consequences of those rules” (1990, 41). These unquestioned elements of our shared culture manifest in what she terms the “five faces of oppression.”<sup>63</sup> Oppression appears to us differently in each case, and affects us differently because of our social and historical locations, yet these five “faces,” exploitation, marginalization, powerlessness, cultural imperialism and violence are all ways in which norms, habits, symbols and rules affect the social mobility of oppressed groups.

Of violence as a face of oppression, Young writes, “Members of some groups live with the knowledge that they must fear random and unprovoked attacks on their persons or property, which have no motive but to damage, humiliate or destroy the person” (1990,

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<sup>62</sup> Young’s definition of groups as collectives is different from groups as aggregates or groups as associations. Aggregates are grouped according to a particular attribute that is picked out as socially important. It could be argued that women are a social group along the lines of an aggregate identified according to biological sex morphology. Feminists as well as post-structuralists have argued against this as a possibility because of the fluidity of gender across cultural groups, the social construction of gender and the sex-gender distinction. Young argues against women as a group on the model of an association because of this model’s theoretical roots in contract theories of social relationships. Underlying these contract theories is the assumption that individuals are ontologically prior to the groups of which they are members, and these individuals freely choose to come together and form groups. Young’s social ontology strongly differs from this model, as she argues that groups are ontologically prior to individuals. Groups exist, along with cultural norms, practices and ways of life, and individuals find themselves in them before they are able to negotiate their way in or out of them. It should also be noted that Young’s position on the nature of women as a social group has changed in the course of her career, a change which develops alternative ways of thinking about one’s identity as woman through what she calls *lived body*, versus thinking about oneself as part of a gendered group that is defined according to social norms and structures and institutional practices.

<sup>63</sup> See Young (1990), Chapter 2.

61). She notes that while physical attacks are the most prevalent form of violence, we should also include less severe forms of violence such as harassment, intimidation or ridicule for the purpose of degrading, humiliating, or stigmatizing group members.<sup>64</sup>

The concept of violence at work for Young is double-sided. On the one hand, there are truly random, non-structural violent events. On the other, violence is often systematic, and therefore, a form of oppression. She writes, “What makes violence a face of oppression is less the particular acts themselves, though these are often utterly horrible, than the social context surrounding them, which makes them possible and even acceptable” (1990, 61). The social context of concern here is an individual’s group membership, and violence is systematic when it is directed at a member of a group *because* of that membership. Familiar forms of violence against women, such as rape and domestic abuse, are considered forms of systematic violence *par excellence* not because they are extremely common, but because they are a *social practice*. She writes, “It is a social given that everyone knows happens and will happen. It is always at the horizon of social imagination, even for those who do not perpetrate it” (1990, 61). Living under the threat of violence influences the way of life for a group, from big decisions about the kinds of lives that are open to them, to small decisions about daily routines and safety habits. For example, the website [corporatesafety.com](http://corporatesafety.com) is one of many that suggests rape prevention strategies for women. They suggest the women hold their keys like a weapon, carry pepper-spray or a rape-whistle, park in inconvenient locations that are

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<sup>64</sup> This is not an exhaustive list of the purposes or functions that harassment, intimidation and other forms of ridicule may have, and neither is violence limited to damaging, humiliating or destroying the person. I believe Young singles these out as the most common effects of violence and harassment because they represent the way oppression affects the “inner life” of victims, that is, their feelings self-worth and empowerment as well as their identities as a member of a particular group.

safer than others, and plan their social outings around the presence of others, most notably around men who can protect them. The way that the constant threat of violence inscribes these particular habits is part of the way that oppression, via violence, constrains the movements of and options for women. These habits, in another way, have an effect on an individual's inner, psychic life in that they reinforce norms of women's weakness and vulnerability against the aggression and power of men.

While for Young violence is a face of oppression, or one of the ways that oppression is made manifest to us, Ann Cudd (2006) argues that violence is a *force* of oppression. That is, violence is one of the ways in which oppressive social structures originate and are maintained through generations (117).<sup>65</sup> Cudd defines violence as “The intentional, forceful infliction of physical harm or abuse on one or more persons or on their material or animal possessions” (87).<sup>66</sup> This definition of violence insists that violence must be physical and intentional, and it also leaves open the possibilities that violence can be truly random, that violence is not, by definition, unjustifiable, and that one can do violence to inanimate objects. However, not all forms of violence are a force of oppression. For Cudd, only *systematic* violence is a force of oppression, because random, that is non-systematic, forms of violence are intended to harm an individual *qua* individual, rather than harm a social group or individual *qua* member of a social group.

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<sup>65</sup> This question, regarding how oppressive systems maintain themselves over time, through generations, and even through major cultural revolutions, is one of the motivating questions of *Analyzing Oppression*. She argues that violence is one of the forces, along with economic forces and psychological mechanisms that perpetuate systems of oppression.

<sup>66</sup> Cudd's definition of violence is structurally similar to those examined in Chapter 1, in that it calls on both force and intent to ground our conception of violence, and includes that harm to an individual's property may be considered violence. Cudd departs from the definitions offered in that chapter because she situates violence within the context of oppression in order to show the nature and meaning of such violation.

Of note here is a theoretical shift in the concept of violence at work in the distinction between systematic and random violence employed by Cudd.<sup>67</sup> Cudd's definition of violence indicates that violence is the *intentional* infliction of harm, which explains random violence. However, to see violence as systematic requires not an evaluation of the intention behind an act, but an evaluation of its effects, i.e., an assessment of how violence against a social group reinforces the social structures and institutions that harm them *qua* group.

This is important for two reasons. First, within oppressive social systems, privileged groups are often blind to the ways that cultural norms and practices work to disadvantage other social groups. It would be wrong to say that all men *intend* the oppression of women because they participate in a masculine culture that devalues femininity. Alternatively, individuals might participate in symbolic practices, like the hanging of nooses in the front-yard of a Black family's home, by which they might not intend immediate physical harm, but they do intend to reinforce presumptions about certain groups' place in the social world. Second, focusing on the effects of violence opens room for understanding that while direct victims often suffer the most from acts of systematic violence, such acts affect an entire social group.<sup>68</sup> On this point, Cudd writes,

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<sup>67</sup> Categories of random violence for Cudd are (1) Intragroup violence and (2) subordinate resistance. Categories of systematic violence that are potentially oppressive are (1) Non-State-sponsored violence by dominant groups against subordinate groups, (2) State-sponsored violence by dominant groups against subordinate groups and (3) War between independent nations (89). Dominant-over-subordinate group violence tends to lead to long-standing, ongoing oppression because "it is more easily hidden under an ideological cloak that appears to justify the violence" (90).

<sup>68</sup> I dismissed consequentialist definitions of violence in Chapter 1 on the grounds that harm and injury could not, by themselves, motivate a sufficiently moralized and politicized conception of violence. Cudd's move here to consider systematic violence through the effects it has retains the moral and political force of violence, because the

“All members of social groups are harmed when some of their members suffer violence motivated by their group membership. For ... they suffer from the threat of violence” (90).

Cudd argues that an important way oppressive systems are maintained over time is through the “social threat situations” that structure the lives of some social groups. A social threat situation obtains when group members share the common belief that members of other groups frequently threaten or perpetrate violence against them. Threats may be explicit, as when a would-be robber says, “Give me the money or I’ll shoot you,” but they can also be implicit, as when a bully on a playground says, “Got any money?”<sup>69</sup> A further distinction is drawn between threats that are objective, that is, when one has good reason to believe that what is threatened will come to pass, or subjective, when one believes without strong evidence that what is threatened will occur. And again, a distinction is drawn between threats that are credible, those that are incredible and those that are ineffective. For a threat to be credible, it must be both objective and subjective, that is, one must believe it to be true, and there must be good evidence to back up that belief. A threat is incredible if it is only subjective and there is no good reason for one to believe that the terms might obtain. Finally, a threat is ineffective if it is objective but not subjective, that is, the threat does not work because the one threatened does not believe themselves to be under threat. Cudd argues that the social threat situation under which women live in fear of violence is both *tacit* and *credible*, so, it constitutes a veiled threat

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effects are the maintenance of oppression, which is already positioned within moral and political discourse.

<sup>69</sup> Examples taken from Cudd, 90.

that women feel is true,<sup>70</sup> and which is backed up by evidence.<sup>71</sup> Cudd argues that sexual assault and domestic violence are the most powerful forces of the oppression of women because of the connected psychological and material effects on victims. She explains,

The threat of these kinds of violence limits women's mobility. [...] They feel fear, however subtly it affects their behavior, in any place where they might be victims of this, that is, anywhere there might be men. Furthermore, they feel vulnerable, physically weaker and so inferior to men. This further reinforces stereotypes about women's weakness and vulnerability, and ironically, their need for protection by men. And this stereotype, once assimilated to the self-concept of individual women as a positive distinctive sign of feminine grace, actually makes women weaker than men. Because stereotypes are normative prescriptions for behavior, men assimilate their stereotypes for aggression and violence and women for passivity and weakness (95).

So, violence and the threat of violence physically limit the mobility of women to the confines of safe places and safe people. It in turn necessitates that women be able to determine the "good guys" from the "bad guys," in order to go about daily life.<sup>72</sup> The norms in play in all of these judgments become internalized, and both women and men begin to fulfill the roles set out for them by the social system in which they find themselves. Violence is a force of oppression because it limits individuals both psychologically and materially. Victims may suffer psychological trauma (feelings of powerlessness and fear) and this may affect their ability to work, which affects their economic power. These roles of weakness and vulnerability can also affect their upward

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<sup>70</sup> Evidence for the claim that women feel the threat is true can be found in the discussion above on common strategies employed by women to avoid assault. That women participate in these strategies is *prima facie* evidence that they feel threatened.

<sup>71</sup> Evidence for the reality of violence against women can be found in the Introduction, in the discussion of national statistics for rape, other forms of sexual assault, domestic violence and harassment.

<sup>72</sup> Claudia Card (2002) has offered a similar explanation of how violence affects the relations between men and women. She argues that the threat of rape constitutes a "protection racket" where women must hand themselves over to the protection of men (making them vulnerable to the men who are their protectors) in order to avoid violence.

economic mobility. This generates a vicious circle, since, over time, economic disadvantages accumulate exponentially, which in turn makes individuals more and more likely to be victims of violence.<sup>73</sup>

Violence against women is systematic because it is widely prevalent, usually perpetrated by men, reinforces the division of men and women into dominant and subordinate social groups, and because the social threat situation created by targeted violence against women constitutes a social threat to *all* women. Violence against women is systematic and *oppressive* because, as Cudd notes, “It alters the sense of the possible for its victims, victims who are not only the direct objects of violence, but also those who share group membership with them” (116).

For the purposes of this analysis, what Cudd and Young show is that to understand systematic forms of violence, we need an alternative account of violence and sexual violence from those reviewed in Chapter 1. There, we saw how focusing on effects—through physical injury or psychological trauma—left us with a morally limited conception of violence, and the work of feminist theorists discussed in that chapter exposed the limitations of using consent to ground violence. I argued that intention, understood through aggression, was also problematically linked with violence for the purposes of moral and political theorizing. Likewise, Young and Cudd both highlight in their analyses of violence and oppression why intention is so problematic (Cudd 2006,

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<sup>73</sup> For instance, in the Introduction, I quoted statistics that show that low income women are six times more likely to be victims of domestic violence than their middle-class and upper-class counterparts. This shows the relatedness of different forms of disadvantage—both vulnerability to violence because of one’s group membership and economic marginalization.

42, Young 1990, 40-42). Because actions are mediated by social systems and institutions, the motivation behind acts is not always the harm or suffering of victims. Young writes,

Sometimes the motive may be ... to victimize those marked as vulnerable by the very social fact that they are subject to violence. If so, this motive is secondary in the sense that it depends on a social practice of group violence. Violence causing fear or hatred of the other at least partly involves insecurities on the part of the violators; its irrationality suggests that unconscious practices are at work (1990, 62-3).

Similarly, Cudd writes that violence against women, “has a variety of motivations and causes. Sometimes it may not seem like part of a systematic application of force, although it is by the effect on the victim group, not the motivation of the perpetrators that this must be judged” (95). Although we may not be able to pin violence on the intentions of specific agents to cause harm for their own benefit (as in Bäck’s definition in Chapter 1), Young and Cudd would argue that when one social group suffers harm, there is a correlative group that benefits from the social demotion that occurs. However, being the beneficiary of oppressive social practices does not necessarily mean that one is a perpetrator of such practices, nor is one necessarily morally responsible for those practices and the harm that results. In order to argue that an individual is morally blameworthy for benefiting from unjust or immoral practices, we must make the case that individuals can be morally responsible for things outside their control, in addition to clarifying the relationship between individual and collective responsibility.<sup>74</sup> The preceding discussion is to say that since part of what makes violence possible and meaningful for us is its connection to oppression, and we cannot simply explain

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<sup>74</sup> See Cudd (2006), Ch. 7 on “Resistance and Responsibility” where she clarifies this distinction.

oppression via the intentions or motives of particular oppressive agents, then intention is, again, a weak foundation for understanding what violence is.

## 2. Social Ontology: What is a Woman?

The analysis presented above explored how violence is related to oppression through an individual's membership in a group whose social mobility and possibilities are circumscribed. Violence is both a way in which oppression becomes manifest and a force that perpetuates the norms and ways of life that allow oppressive structures to work. The forms of violence under consideration are those commonly perpetrated by men against women, and if the insights of Cudd and Young are correct, perpetrated *because* they are women. But what is a woman?

In a candid statement, Simone de Beauvoir (1952) writes,

To go for a walk with one's eyes open is enough to demonstrate that humanity is divided into two classes of individuals whose clothes, faces, bodies, smiles, gaits, interests, and occupations are manifestly different. Perhaps these differences are superficial, perhaps they are destined to disappear. What is certain is that right now they do most obviously exist (xxi).

Beauvoir is right that the world, and her world perhaps even more so than ours, is divided along gendered lines. Most people identify as a man or a woman, their bodily comportment and attitudes fall along gendered lines, and in turn, others perceive and interact with persons according to expectations informed by such a division. However, there is a tension between the way that a person thinks and feels herself to be a woman, and the way that social structures, cultural norms and expectations define what it means to be a member of a gendered group. Historically, gender has been understood as the socially constructed side of sex, which was gender's biological, factual counterpart. The

sex/gender distinction was useful because it severed the connection between biology and identity, and gender as a social construct could be more fluid and negotiable. Post-structuralists and queer theorists have shown us the ways in which both gender *and* sex are social constructs and at the same time exposed dangerously normative assumptions imbedded in a worldview that divides the world into the masculine and feminine to the exclusion of other ways of living in the world and self-identifying.<sup>75</sup> It is clear that ‘woman’ can denote both a social group and a way of being (identity), but the relationship between one’s membership in social groups, one’s identity and one’s way of life is complex. As we will see, it can be possible to belong to the social group *women* without necessarily identifying as a woman, and conversely, to identify as a woman without belonging to the social group.

One model of a social group is offered by Cudd, who argues that a social group is defined in terms of external social constraints on behavior. Cudd prefers an externalist account of group membership grounded in institutionally structured constraints on actions, including legal rights, obligations and burdens, stereotypical expectations, economic resources, rules, norms and classification systems (2006, 50). Group membership is determined by “objective facts about the world including how others perceive and behave towards that person” (36). The perception of group membership by others can, in some instances, cause members of a group to self-identify with that group, but such identification is neither a necessary nor a sufficient condition of membership.

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<sup>75</sup> Post-structuralist queer theory emerged as a compendium to the work of Michel Foucault [*Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison* (1977), *History of Sexuality*, v.1 (1978)] and is taken up most notably in philosophy by Judith Butler *Gender Trouble*; *Bodies that Matter: on the discursive limits of sex* (1993) and *Undoing Gender* (2004) as well as by feminist philosophers more recently. See Naomi Schor, ed. (1995) *More Gender Trouble: feminism meets queer theory*.

Rather, externally imposed social constraints are necessary and in some cases can be sufficient for membership in a social group for an externalist account. For example, a female-to-male transsexual is part of the social group “men” not because he self-identifies as a man, but because people treat him like a man.<sup>76</sup>

Incentives to act in certain ways are examples of external constraints that structure group membership. Women have incentives to act in ways that are acceptably feminine, the shunning of which may result in social sanction. These incentives come from a variety of sources and affect behavior in a variety of ways. Marketing strategies might influence the economic behavior of women, educational practices might inform women’s career choices, and interpersonal relationships can reinforce traditional feminine family and social roles. Recall Alcoff’s critique of consent-based definitions of violence: they “manufacture acquiescence and name it consent” after the fact.<sup>77</sup> This is an example of the how the social structuring at work behind our actions might be masking dangerous and oppressive norms for behavior. Cudd’s “outside-in” explanation of a social group retains a strong hold on the “outside”: even though individuals may begin to identify with groups within which social constraints have placed them, their group membership, as externally constrained, exists at some distance from who they are or want to become.

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<sup>76</sup> As we will see, and as will be put into relief when we examine Young’s conception of group identity, for Cudd, priority is given to these social forces. Not only does she focus on the ways that institutions and practices constrain the behavior of individuals so they act like members of the group the practices carve out, but who one is is heavily determined by how one is seen by others. In the end, I will prefer an explanation of group membership and identity that appreciates the external forces at work in identity and group membership, but that also appreciates the feelings, motivations and actions of individuals, or, if you will, the more *internal* aspects of identity and group membership. This conception of identity and group membership will be grounded in existential phenomenology which sees both the external and internal aspects of identity and membership as mutually *constituting* each other.

<sup>77</sup> See Chapter 1, Section 2.

Young (1990) agrees that social groups are formed through “external” social forces, such as cultural forms, social practices and shared ways of life. However, Young adds that groups are defined *primarily* by a sense of identity. She writes,

Though sometimes objective attributes are a necessary condition for classifying oneself or others as belonging to a certain social group, it is identification with a certain social status, the common history that a social status produces, and a self-identification that define the group as a group (1990, 44).

Young’s position mediates between thinking about women as a group based on social structures that define them as such, including biological features taken to be socially meaningful, and thinking about women as a group through a voluntaristic or contractual model where one freely chooses one’s group membership. Young’s position mediates because while she recognizes the way that social structures inform who we are, she also affirms that individuals live in and through social structures in different ways. We cannot just choose what groups we belong to because we find ourselves already situated in groups all the time. We are born into traditions and cultures, we are ushered into religious and gendered groups through our education, and these groups provide us with forms of life that we then take up or wrestle with in our own ways. So, for Young, group membership is not a question of being determined from the outside, or wholly determining who or what one is from the inside, but rather, the individual and the group are part of a process of *constituting* the subject. *Constitution*, distinct from determinism and conditioning, is a hallmark of the phenomenological method employed by Young to discuss identity, gender, oppression and politics. It refers to the creation of meanings that influence the way we live our lives and see the world. Dermot Moran (2000) writes, “Constitution is a universal feature of conscious life; all meanings are constituted in and

by consciousness. Everything experiencable (sic) in both the natural and cultural world is constituted” (166). This means that gender is a set of meanings that influence the way that we live our lives, and therefore helps to constitute who we are, but as a set of meanings gender is itself constituted by our actions and inactions as well as by social and cultural practices through which persons express themselves. So, what it means to be a woman is not just about external constraints and identification as a woman by others, as Cudd would have it, but it is also about individuals’ self-identification as women, we all have a part in the constitution of social practices.

In later writing, Young (2005a) wrestles again with the tension between gender as a social structure and gendered identities. She affirms that gender, as a category, is a social structure, and as such does not describe a subjective attitude. She writes, “What we call categories of gender, race, ethnicity, etc., are shorthand for a set of structures that position persons. [...] They are not properly theorized as general group identities that add together to constitute individual identities” (18). For her, gender as a social structure is the confluence of the sexual division of labor, normative heterosexuality, and gendered hierarchies of power, and the unintended and unforeseen effects of these structures (20-22). As a social structure that precedes us and which is out of our control, gender is in fact ill-suited for thinking about a person’s identity as a woman. This would tread dangerously close to claiming that identities are socially *determined*, rather than socially constituted. So, in her later work, Young argues for a linked, yet alternative conception

of the *lived body* that better approaches the way that we experience and live through gender as a social structure.<sup>78</sup>

I will take up the idea of *lived body* in relation to identity further in the following section, but in brief, the concept of the lived body grounds the structural concept of gender and the process of self-identification in the way that we are embodied. Young writes, “The lived body is a unified idea of a physical body acting and experiencing in a specific sociocultural context; it is body-in-situation,” and further, “*situation* is the way that the facts of embodiment, social and physical environment, appear in light of the

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<sup>78</sup> In this piece, Young is addressing work by Torril Moi in which Moi argues that because gender operates at the institutional and structural level, we should forgo using ‘gender’ in our social and political analyses. Moi prefers the concept of the ‘lived body’ because it is grounded in experience. Young argues that we can keep gender as a way of theorizing about social structures, but understand that it is inappropriate for talking about identity. This position is a development of Young’s (1994) earlier position that gender is best understood as *seriality*. Borrowing from Sartre’s writings on group formation in *The Critique of Dialectical Reason*, Young argues in this early piece that we can avoid some of the problems of essentializing what ‘woman’ is if we understand women as a social group originating from external forces. She defines a ‘series’ as “a social collective whose members are unified passively by the objects around which their actions are oriented or by the objectified results of the material effects of the actions of others” (724). A series is differentiated from a group on the grounds that within a group, all the members are consciously taking up a common project and exist in a “unified relation with one another” (ibid.) The “collective otherness” of being serialized is, on her account, experienced as a constraint on behavior, because members of a series feel their grouping as given or natural (726). While she (and Sartre) recognize that serialization can lead to series members identifying with one other on the model of a “group,” the original association as a series carries with it social constraints and necessities not felt by members of groups, because group members get to choose their association and projects. I see the later discussion of gender as a social structure different from lived body as identity as a development of this earlier position on seriality because in both pieces, she identifies that gender is in some sense “beyond” who we are because it is external to us, but is at the same time at work in who we take ourselves to be. In the earlier piece she argues for gender as seriality because it allows for an understanding of gender as a “vast, multifaceted, layered, complex and overlapping” set of social structures and objects, and yet it allows that *women* are individuals who are positioned within those structures and objects. The idea of ‘lived body’ that Young endorses from Moi helps explain how individual women’s identities are uniquely constituted given the external structures that serialize women.

projects one has” (16). We are corralled into groups because of the kinds of bodies we have, the social meanings our bodies carry, and the possibilities open to us are shaped by these structures. But at the same time, we are not reducible to our bodies. We can manipulate them, challenge the meanings attached to them, and we can always relate to the possibilities opened to us in different ways. So, what it means to be a woman for any particular woman is the way that she lives out the set of possibilities open to her because of the kind of body she has and the meaning(s) attached to that body.

What is at stake here in the debate over the jurisdiction of gender is how it is that individuals can still have control over and create meaning for their lives—freedom—yet live under and within social structures that constitute so much of who they are and how they act. The success of Young’s existential-phenomenological account is a product of its refusal to see this situation *as* a dilemma. The dilemma is posed such that if we are in any way determined by our social and historical location, then we are not free to create meaning for ourselves and associate with others in any way other than social norms prescribe. And likewise, if we are radically free to determine who we are and ways of life for ourselves, then social positioning becomes meaningless. The existentialist tradition out of which the concept of lived body emerges refuses to see this as a real dilemma; rather, we are given possibilities for ourselves and our lives because we have a history and culture, and the attitudes we take to these possibilities, how we live them out and negotiate them within social structures and with others is how we constitute ourselves. So, we are not radically free to pursue any imaginable possibility, because our lives are in fact structured by certain biological, historical and social facts. We have an *ontological* or *existential* freedom through the possibilities that are opened to us and

attitudes we take towards them. In fact, to believe that the facts of our existence—what Beauvoir calls *immanence*—determine us in any strong sense is to deny the freedom we do have to create new and different meanings for our lives, *transcendence*.

While all human life is situated as both immanence and transcendence, the situation for women, according to Beauvoir is “peculiar.” She writes,

What peculiarly signalizes the situation of woman is that she—a free and autonomous being like all human creatures—nevertheless finds herself living in a world where men compel her to assume the status of the Other. [...] The drama of woman lies in this conflict between the fundamental aspirations of every subject (ego)—who always regards the self as essential—and the compulsions of a situation in which she is inessential (1952, xxxv).

Woman for Beauvoir is Other to man, who is autonomous and self-determining by fiat of social status; and as Other, women’s lives are circumscribed because they are rendered economically and socially dependent on men under social structures and practices. What is at stake here is more than just economic and social dependence on men, but the ways in which what it means to be a woman in society (femininity) is at odds with our fundamentally *human* existential situation. The virtue of the existentialist conception of human life is that it places all of us in the same boat, so to speak. We are all transcendent and immanent; we are all situated by certain biological, historical and social facts. But the social facticity of women includes, over and above this, the fact that certain ways of being are closed off to them—that they are Other than the human situation. The possibilities open to us in turn inform how we view the world: as a set of projects in which I can exercise my freedom or as series of immovable obstacles. The social world,

in this way, becomes actively antagonistic to the projects and freedom of women by the way that the very ground of possibility is threatened.<sup>79</sup>

In the conclusion to *The Second Sex*, in which Beauvoir examines the social structures and behavior patterns that produce the “otherness” of women in society, she writes,

The intervention of others in her destiny is fundamental: if this action took a different direction, it would produce a quite different result. Woman is not by her hormones or by mysterious instincts, but by the manner in which her body and her relation to the world are modified through the action of others than herself. . . . [W]oman could not be other than what she was made (725).

Social processes and practices, such as the sexual division of labor, normative heterosexuality and gendered hierarchies of power confine women to certain social roles and behaviors. In this way, gender is experienced as a *facticity*; to be a woman is to be confined and shaped by social practices, to be handed a self that is created for you, instead of granting you the fundamental freedom of self-creation.

It may seem at this point that the situation of women is doomed, but recall my claim that the virtue of existentialism is that although we are all situated differently, we are all still situated—both immanence *and* transcendence. While the social mobility of women is limited, and the dictates of femininity might be more confining than those of masculinity, and women find themselves dependent on men in many ways, the only way

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<sup>79</sup> In *The Ethics of Ambiguity* (1948), Beauvoir devotes significant space to discussing the “fundamental failure” of human existence. The failure results from the inevitable attempt to be pure transcendence or pure immanence, to believe oneself completely free or resign oneself to determinism. So, in a way, *everyone’s* lives are frustrated. The “othering” of woman in western society is different in kind and in scope from this ontological failure. Whereas ontological failure opens up the possibility for freedom through human choice to take responsibility for oneself and one’s actions, the situation of women is such that they in some sense do not recognize the ways in which they are free, because they are not given the chance to take up meaningful projects.

to *lose* one's freedom, to never have alternative possibilities, is to die.<sup>80</sup> As long as we are living and engaging in the world, we are engaging in projects that are only possible with transcendence. This is not, however, a reason to dismiss the effects of oppression on women and their projects. While we are always in the process of constituting ourselves, we are always at risk that certain beliefs or ways of life, by conscious choice or the intervention of others, become ossified and reified. Certain social practices, like the sexual division of labor, confine women to certain spaces and certain occupations, while the "public" realm of masculinity is open and rife with possibilities to pursue.<sup>81</sup> Social norms for behavior dictate how persons can associate with, behave towards and relate to others. For women, this typically means restricting girls and women to the company of other girls and women, and encouraging women to relate to men as guardians.<sup>82</sup> The structuring of women's lives effectively gives women guidelines for how they will see the world in light of who they are allowed to be. Women thus enact the femininity prescribed to them.<sup>83</sup>

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<sup>80</sup> I am grateful to Michael Monahan and David Leichter for pointing this fact out to me more than a few times.

<sup>81</sup> The restriction on women's possibilities that is essential to the understanding of oppression will also be essential to understanding what sexualized violence is and what kinds of effects it has on women's lives. I explore this most fully in Chapter 5 in my discussion of moral disintegration as a fixing or stasis of subjectivity.

<sup>82</sup> See Claudia Card on the rape "protection racket" in Section 1 of this Chapter.

<sup>83</sup> Gender does also work to circumscribe possibilities for men, and in some ways this can be oppressive. I have in mind particularly understandings of masculinity that excise emotion and care in the name of strength and objectivity. I would, however, follow Beauvoir and Young's suggestions here that the situation of women is qualitatively different from that of men, not only because women's lives are more circumscribed by possibilities, but that the possibilities that *are* open to women are often those that are seen as secondary in personal or social importance. It is also interesting to note the "feminization" of other male identities, such as Black men and gay men. This shows the fluidity of the ways identities are taken up by individuals and affirmed by others, but also how central the concept of gender is to our thinking about social arrangements.

### 3. Embodiment and Objectification

Although subjective identification with the social group *women* will result in increased association between women as a social group, the first (in temporal order) way that women become women is based on the kinds of bodies they have. We raise biological/physiological females to be women and we raise biological/physiological males to be men.<sup>84</sup> Even though these elisions have been disrupted in academic circles, and some social movements have worked to expose the illusion of sex/gender alignment, it is nevertheless a fact of the social world that the kinds of bodies we have situate us socially, through the way that our bodies are interpreted.

Think of the way we talk about bodies, for instance. When we say “our bodies...” there is some “we” that is taking ownership of something “other” than the proprietary “we.” The reality is that we *are* bodies, not that we *have* them. To say that we are bodies is not to say that we are reducible to biological facts by some sort of materialist reductionism. For, the insights of existentialism still hold: embodiment sets up the possibilities we have, but the attitude we take to these possibilities are not determined for us. This section explores the ways in which the attitudes towards embodiment can be specifically feminine through the influence of social structures that constitute women.

While philosophers generally have not been kind to bodies, and have been especially unkind to women’s bodies, philosophical explorations of embodiment have

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<sup>84</sup> It is notable that in cases of inter-sexed children, parents are encouraged to “decide” what sex, and therefore what gender, their child will be. Even if sex-modification is not surgically performed, parents are encouraged to decide what ‘gender’ to raise a child.

found a welcoming home in existential phenomenology.<sup>85</sup> In *Phenomenology of Perception* (1958), Maurice Merleau-Ponty posits a “living relation” between the subject, body and world, and calls this living relation *body image*. As a living relation, body image is dynamic, and so changes over time and space through the influence of the world and others, and through self-reflection. He writes, “My body appears to me as an attitude, directed towards certain existing or possible tasks. And indeed, spatiality is not, like that of external objects of ‘spatial sensations,’ a spatiality of position but a spatiality of situation” (114). Just as our possibilities and projects are made possible by our situations, the way that our bodies comport to those possibilities and projects is constituted by our situation as well, which includes the social and cultural meanings that attach to our bodies. As Elizabeth Grosz (1995) writes, “bodies are incomplete, they require social triggering, ordering and long-term administration” (104). So our bodies are unintelligible to us and to others outside of the situation that informs how to move, interact and engage in projects that constitute our selves. Sandra Bartky (2009) notes that while classical phenomenology has resurrected the body to us for philosophical exploration, it has limited itself to addressing embodiment in the universal sense, while

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<sup>85</sup> In general, the tendency towards mind-body dualism has vilified the body, whose limitations hinder the intellectual activity of the mind. And historically, the sphere of the mind has been associated with masculinity, and women either reduced to or identified with the body. Cf. Susan Bordo (2003) *Unbearable Weight: feminism, Western culture, and the body*, Louise M. Antony and Charlotte E. Witt, eds., (2001) *A Mind of One's Own: feminist essays on reason and objectivity*, and Margaret Atherton (1994) *Women Philosophers of the Early Modern Period*.

the ways that the living-relation of body image takes on masculine and feminine qualities has remained under-explored.<sup>86</sup>

Young (2005b) takes up this challenge and argues that the common mark of feminine body image is that women experience their bodies as a hindrance to their projects, rather than as a medium for pursuing them (34). Women are thus more conscious of their bodies as they live and act, because the living-relation between the body, subject and world described by Merleau-Ponty breaks down when embodiment “gets in the way” of projects. As Young describes it, “We feel as though we must have our attention directed upon our bodies to make sure they are doing what we wish them to do, rather than paying attention to what we want to do through them” (ibid). Instead of projecting herself into the world through her projects and goals, the woman’s focus is on her body and the way that it limits or inhibits her projects. Young describes three modalities of feminine bodily comportment that are a result of the social and historical situation of women: ambiguous transcendence, inhibited intentionality and discontinuous unity in contrast with masculine body image that pushes towards transcendence intentionally and with a unified perception of subject, body and world (1995b, 35).

While the body is always experienced in some sense as a passivity—it can be seen, touched, manipulated—active engagement in the world requires that we surpass this immanence towards transcendence. Woman, however, remains mired in immanence, because she directs attention to her body as a thing—a passive, immanent object as she acts—she, as Young describes, “lives her body as a burden” (1995b, 35). Young’s

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<sup>86</sup> Given this criticism, I assume Bartky is referring to the work of Edmund Husserl, Martin Heidegger, Jean-Paul Sartre and Maurice Merleau-Ponty as ‘classical phenomenology.’

examples are stereotypically “girly” ways of performing physical tasks, such as throwing and running. Ambiguous transcendence manifests in throwing, for instance, when one uses only the part of the body immediately connected to the action, such as throwing only with the arm, and not stepping the body into the throw, which would generate more power. “Throwing like a girl” is to throw poorly, because the mechanics of throwing require using the whole body towards the task. Part of “throwing like a girl” is also present in the way that intentions are enacted through the body. The intention is to get a ball from A to B, and engaging in any kind of throwing exhibits this intention; however, women’s intention is often inhibited. So, while women commit themselves to the task of throwing the ball, they do not fully commit, and hold back movement in a circuitous or contradictory way (1995b, 37). As she describes it, “When the woman enters a task with inhibited intentionality, she projects the possibilities of that task—thus projects an ‘I can’—but projects them merely as possibilities of ‘someone,’ and not truly *her* possibilities, and thus projects an ‘I cannot’” (1995b, 37). The lived body unifies the subject, body and world, but when one becomes body-conscious and locates action in only part of the body to the exclusion of committing entirely to an action, that unity breaks down. This discontinuous unity brings the “object-ness” and passivity of the body to light when projects and tasks are frustrated.

There is a fundamental contradiction in feminine bodily comportment—woman experiences her body and thus herself as both subject and object at the same time with respect to the same end (Young 1995b, 38). But why is it that *feminine* bodily comportment occurs this way, while we are all embodied and thus both immanence and transcendence? Young argues that these modes of comporting oneself in the world are a

product of women seeing and thinking of themselves as objects, fragile objects at that, which stand in the way of their subjectivity.

Bartky argues that women begin to think and see themselves as objects because they come to see themselves through the “male gaze.” The male gaze is a socio-cultural interpretation of what Sartre calls “the look of the other,” which, in having been seen by another, makes one aware of one’s immanence (Bartky 2009, 42-43). To be sure, many women have experienced the male gaze directly, when another’s eyes “drift” from her face to her chest in conversation, or when she enters a room and she gets the “up and down” look. Whatever project she might be engaged in, however she might be engaging in the world, she is made aware that she is an object for the other, in the shadow of the subjectivity of the other. Interestingly, one can feel the male gaze without directly experiencing it, because it can be institutionalized and systematized in models of behavior and interaction. In this way, social structures embody the “male gaze” by promoting women to think of themselves as objects when women engage with those structures.

Martha Nussbaum (1995) argues that not all forms or instances of objectification are morally problematic, and certain kinds of objectifying remarks or actions do not have the *effect* of objectifying. She finds seven ways of thinking about objectification: instrumentality, denial of autonomy, inertness, fungibility, violability, ownership and denial of subjectivity. Objectification is to treat another (adult) human being in one or more of these ways (257). However, treating someone in one of these ways is not *necessarily* objectification, because we must also consider the circumstances in which an interaction takes place. She offers the following hypothetical example: “W, a woman, is

going out of town for an important interview. M, an acquaintance, says to her, “You don’t really need to go. You can just send them some pictures” (271). Nussbaum says that this is “almost certain[ly]” an offensive and objectifying remark, but only if M is “not a close friend of W.” It is clear that this sort of remark includes a question of W’s autonomy, supposes her inertness (as if who she is can be “captured” in a picture) and may suppose some sort of fungibility (if any attractive woman would do). But Nussbaum includes that if there is, for instance, a “deeply understood mutual respect” between W and M, then it would be hasty to say that this sort of comment is objectifying. Nussbaum assumes that if there is reciprocal equality between persons that is understood by both, then the remark is not an instance of objectification, and is therefore just a harmless joke.<sup>87</sup>

Her judgment that we withhold judgment based on the intimacy of M and W is curious, because she notes that instances of sexual objectification derive from gendered erotic socialization: that men are socialized to desire to dominate women, and women are taught to desire domination. These desires are further exacerbated by asymmetrical relations of social power (268-9). If objectification is the result of social systems that disempower women vis-à-vis men, and particular actions and remarks must be read through the context in which they occur, and this context *includes* the social systems at

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<sup>87</sup> Nussbaum argues that some forms of ‘objectification’ are compatible with equality and consent. This is an example of an objectifying remark that is compatible with the equality of persons for her, and therefore does not have the effect of objectifying. In her discussion of objectification in sexual relationships, she argues that if persons mutually consent to giving up their autonomy in the pursuit of a mutual goal of sexual satisfaction, then this is not objectification. I agree that this is not an instance of objectification, but I do not agree with the reason why. In the existentialist framework, for instance, one does not have to “give up” one’s freedom in order to engage in shared projects, rather, we conceive of shared projects and pursue them jointly.

work, then it seems to follow that comments such as this, coming from any man to any woman, regardless of friendship or intimacy, is an instance of the way that social systems encourage the objectification of women, and are therefore objectifying. The reinforcement that women are objects for men occurs whether it is W's colleague, boss, friend or brother. The difference in relationship status only indicates that *this person* might not see her as an object, but not that she is not an object for others, generally.

Bartky argues that instances of this kind of sexual objectification, where women are identified with their sexuality, become oppressive when it is extended to every area of women's experience.<sup>88</sup> As she sees it, objectification is a kind of perception that "splits a person into parts" and prioritizes one part of them over another. Whereas the lived-body in Merleau-Ponty worked to unify the subject, body and world, the objectifying perception of women fragments the self. This works on a psychological level because objectifying perception becomes compulsive, and as we have seen, women begin to see themselves through the male gaze. In this way, the male gaze "stands revealed not only as a way of perceiving, but as a way of maintaining dominance as well" (Bartky 2009, 108). Seen structurally, objectification can take on many forms. Obvious instances of gawking, voyeurism and cat-calling sexually objectify women. But less obvious examples, such as women encouraging each other's body-consciousness, have the same effect, because they are made possible by the same social structures that rely on and reinforce the objectification of women.

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<sup>88</sup> Bartky is careful here to argue that it is only when sexual objectification is *extended to all* areas of one's experience that it becomes oppressive. In the wake of Catherine MacKinnon and Andrea Dworkin's work on sexual objectification, feminists have been careful to carve out spaces for sexual objectification in healthy sexual relationships. In fact, this is what Nussbaum tries to do, by relying on consent to ward off objectification.

#### 4. Conclusion

This discussion of embodiment and objectification helps to explain how women are grouped based on the kinds of bodies they have, when those bodies take many different shapes and forms. Part of what it creates the female or feminine body, and makes such bodies intelligible to us *as* female or feminine, are those social structures that regulate how women move in the world, present themselves to others and engage in the projects through which they exercise their freedom. The existential-phenomenological framework allows that we may understand *violence* as one among those social structures that create women *qua* women. Tying violence to the other forces and faces of oppression generally allows us to see particular acts of violence *systematically*, while also illuminating the *systemic* effects of violence on individuals. This framework opens up the possibility that we understand violence beyond its physical manifestations. Because embodiment structures our relationships with others, we can understand why violence is typically defined in physical terms, but we can also understand now that it need not be physical, or that the physicality of violence is not a sufficient explanation of what violence is or what it does to persons.

## CHAPTER 4: SEXUALIZED VIOLENCE AS A SOCIAL AND MORAL PRACTICE

Drawing on my arguments in Chapter 3 concerning the relationship between violence and oppression, the meaning of one's membership in the social group 'women', and the role of embodiment in the constitution of feminine vulnerability, in this chapter I forward a definition and explanation of *sexualized violence*. Because violence is a force of oppression generally, and is thus used to maintain the oppression of many social groups, there can be *racialized* violence and *class-based* violence, among others.<sup>89</sup> There is a primary, ontological relationship between violence and oppression, but the various social structures that combine to oppress various groups interact with violence differently, leading to a different *kind* of violence. Because of the ways violence cooperates with the sexual division of labor, normative heterosexuality and gendered hierarchies of power, sexualized violence is a social practice that 1) limits the physical, social or economic mobility of women *qua* women, 2) produces or reproduces stereotypes of female vulnerability and weakness in relation to male empowerment and aggression, and 3) objectifies women by identifying them as sexual objects for others, and diminishing their subjectivity.

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<sup>89</sup> I leave as an open question for now whether violence against men, when it takes on typical characteristics of sexualized violence against women, is sexualized violence. I am inclined to think that it is, because forms of violence, such as rape or intimate partner violence, are manifestations of gendered vulnerabilities that are not necessarily tied to sex or to the intent of the perpetrator. However, I do not want to place all of the meaning of these acts in the gendered social structures for fear that we lose the notion that individuals enact these structures, and in so doing, help to constitute them. I have a different concern for thinking about violence directed at homosexual, transgendered and transsexual persons as sexualized violence. I believe that it would operate alongside sexualized violence, like racialized violence does, as a manifestation of the oppressive heterosexist norms. But, as I allude to in a footnote to Section 2 of this chapter, gender is so embedded in our social thinking that Blackness and queerness often take on feminized meanings. In any case, I believe the intricacy of these questions necessitates alternative, and deeper analyses than can be presented here.

Section 1 of this chapter explains the connection between social and moral practices, in order to facilitate seeing sexualized violence as a moral practice. Section 2 explains how sexualized violence limits the physical, social and economic mobility of women *qua* women, through sociologist Ann Goetting's (1999) description of Emily, a victim of intimate partner violence. Section 3 further explores the stereotypes of weakness and vulnerability imbedded in and reinforced by sexualized violence, by invoking philosopher Susan Brison's (2002) own description of her sexual assault, attempted murder, and the aftermath of these. Section 4 draws on a national news-making case of sexual harassment at the University of Colorado-Boulder to argue that the sexual objectification of women through sexual harassment belongs under sexualized violence, as well. While I use particular cases in service of particular points of explanation, because each of them is systematically related as an instance of sexualized violence, they each also illustrate *multiple* parts of the description of sexualized violence above. And finally, Section 5 explores victim blaming as a social and moral practice that also reveals how sexualized violence is itself a moral practice that conditions our agency and responsibility.

### 1. Moral Practices

Understanding sexualized violence through oppression, and recognizing that oppression names an intricate matrix of social systems, practices and norms, we can also see that sexualized violence is a social practice that creates, prescribes and reinforces women's oppression. Sexualized violence, along with being a social practice, is also a moral practice. Margaret Walker (2007) argues that morality is located in practices of

responsibility that “implement shared understandings about who gets to do what to whom and who is supposed to do what for whom” (16). We share certain expectations about how people should interact with each other based on their social location and context, and what the rewards and penalties are for failing to live up to those understandings. As a practice, morality is not something that we just theorize about and then put into action, but it is a practice that we engage in when we live out our responsibilities to and for others. Walker argues that practices of responsibility define the scope of our agency, they affirm who we are as individuals and as a culture, they show us what we care about and they show us where moral authority rests (17). This is key to understanding why the social definitions of violence examined in Chapter 1 were limited in moral scope. Moral practices are not immune from the social and political structures that otherwise inform the ways that we are. There is a fluidity between the dictates of political/legal rules, social norms and moral responsibilities such that we cannot easily identify certain practices of responsibility as definitively moral ones or exclusively social ones. This also means that moral, social and political *authority* is fluid as well: political authority can come down as moral authority, and moral authority may find support and institutionalization in political rule. To divorce intentions, actions and effects from the way that they are socially constituted is to limit our understanding of where they come from, the meanings they carry with them, and the meanings they reproduce.

Practices of responsibility delimit our agency as individuals by assigning to us roles to play given our social positions. There is a reciprocal relationship between our social positions that assign responsibility and the way that living out responsibilities affirm, refine or challenge those social positions. Walker writes,

Assignments of responsibility are a form of moral address but some are addressed as peers, others as superiors or subordinates. [...] If moral orders are often, in fact, complex networks of different positions, people need to understand who they are, and where they are, in these orders, to see what in particular they are responsible for, and to whom (106).

So, our responsibilities to others, and our understandings of others' responsibilities to us are a product of cultural formation, and go hand-in-hand with our formation into certain social, i.e., gendered, racialized, class-based, roles. We learn by the way that our responsibilities put us in relation to others what our social positions are, and we can only really understand what those responsibilities entail when we interrogate our social positioning. In this way, morality is a practice and not primarily a theoretical exercise. This is because figuring out the moral dimensions of our lives requires engagement with the world that both structures and makes manifest to us what our moral responsibilities are. Learning the extension and limits of our responsibilities also informs us of the scope and value of our agency in certain contexts. For example, learning that the scope of one's moral responsibilities extend to caretaking and domestic work, or learning that the primary virtues of one's social position are kindness and grace, inform a view of one's moral life that is limited to the home and specific family roles, and that deference and appearance ought to be cultivated. But we learn the scope of our responsibilities and agency by pushing the boundaries of these practices, and incurring reprimand for doing so. Confrontational women, or women who choose careers or lives that pull them away from their families, even if they do not have one, are condemned for violating our shared understandings about whose responsibilities are whose and why. Likewise, men who prioritize domestic work over public life or who take on a traditionally feminine demeanor suffer social stigmatization, because they are certainly not "real" men.

Unfortunately, mapping our responsibilities like this is never as easy as it seems. There is no one set of characteristics that defines moral, social and political femininity in all cases, and these cases will be ever-more complicated by the intersection of gender with race, class, ethnicity, religion, sexuality and so forth. But we can examine the ways we are taught to view our responsibilities in relation to those of others, and the ways that social praise and blame enforce the scope and limits of our agency.

There are multiple benefits to thinking about sexualized violence as a *moral* practice as well as a social one. We will be able to see the ways that sexualized violence affects women *morally*, that is, how it affects their sense of self, their agency, and their ability to form and maintain morally important relationships. In seeing this, we will put ourselves in a better position to understand how sexualized violence is part of the matrix of social practices that defines what it means to be a woman in our society, both externally and internally.<sup>90</sup> We will also be able to divorce the meaning of particular instances of sexualized violence from the intentions of agents, and focus on what victimization does, and continues to do to victims. We will also be able to see, by focusing on the moral norms at work, the connections between different forms of violence against women, such as rape, intimate partner violence and sexual harassment. In what follows, I explain my definition of sexualized violence by drawing on particular cases of violence against women, and in the end, I will draw these cases together as the moral practice of sexualized violence .

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<sup>90</sup> See Chapter 3 for the discussion of external grouping by social forces and internal grouping by choice or behavior. As I argue in that chapter, neither of these ways of thinking about group membership is adequate, and I prefer an existential-phenomenological explanation of group membership acknowledges the role that social forces play, how they shape our intentions and choices, but how we also have a hand in how those social meanings are constituted and function.

2. Sexualized violence limits the physical, social or economic mobility of women *qua* women

In this section, I invoke the narrative of Emily<sup>91</sup> to show how sexualized violence—in this case intimate partner violence—limits the mobility of women *as* women. When I say that sexualized violence limits women’s mobility, I mean this in a number of ways. As I have noted before, women who are victimized by sexualized violence might also have lower workplace performance, limiting their economic mobility. An abusive partner might prohibit a woman from working outside the home. These economic setbacks accumulate over time, and actually make women more vulnerable to violence. Sexualized violence limits the mobility of all women by putting women always “on guard” for potential predators. Recall Ann Cudd’s argument in Chapter 3 that women suffer from the constant threat of violence, and Iris Marion Young’s argument that violence is a “social given” that everyone knows will happen. Women incorporate these facts into their daily lives in how they dress, and importantly, where they go when and with whom. There are safe and unsafe places for women, as well as safe and unsafe people. Women must chart various courses through their lives in order to be “on the safe side.” In the following narrative, we will see the way that sexualized violence, in the forms of emotional and physical abuse, limit the mobility of women.

Emily grew up in a small western Kentucky town, the daughter of a plant manager and a school teacher. Emily describes her family and community as rooted in

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<sup>91</sup> This case is described by Ann Goetting (1999) in *Getting Out: Life stories of women who left abusive men*. This book is a compilation of stories of women who “got out” of abusive relationships. Due to strict laws protecting victims of domestic abuse/intimate partner violence, the author changed the names and left out many identifying details of the story.

the “Southern Baptist tradition of conventional gender roles” (Goetting 1999, 106). Emily began dating at fourteen, and she reports never being without at least one boyfriend. Her first long-term relationship was with Frank, who grew up in the same town. Their relationship extended through high school and into college, where Emily excelled academically and Frank did not. Mid-way through their four-year relationship, she reports that Frank became arrogant and abusive: “When arguments arose out of Frank’s insistence on doing things his way, he would call Emily stupid and, sometimes, a whore. A few times he struck and pushed her” (108). Emily reports that she would work to smooth things over with Frank, and when he became aggressive again, she would begin relationships with other men until Frank would come around.

Emily ended her relationship with Frank for good after she began working as a dispatcher for the city police department. There, she began dating Peter, a police sergeant with a troubled background. Peter’s parents gave him to an orphanage when he was eleven, and he worked his way through the foster care system until he was old enough to join the Navy. After serving in Vietnam, Peter became a police officer. Peter and Emily married a year after they began dating, and she reports that their marriage was relatively conflict-free for the first three years. Emily entered the police academy herself, where she graduated near the top of her class.

After Emily’s graduation from the academy, she reports that Peter began to withdraw from her: “He quit taking her out, and lost interest in her sexually. He did as he wished, making few if any concessions for her” (110). The two maintained separate banking accounts because Peter believed that Emily was not capable of managing money.

The two had been living in Peter's house since they were married, and he insisted that she keep all of her belongings in the spare bedrooms.

As Emily describes it, the marriage "broke" after the birth of their son, Scott. She writes,

I was sure of myself. I knew what I was doing; I am the world's most devoted mother. I remember one time ... I was fixing [Scott's] breakfast one morning, and you know, I had been doing it for however long he had been on solid foods ... and [Peter] came in and said "You're not doing it right. That's not the way he likes it." [Peter] had never fixed his cereal before and I was doing it every day and he was eating it. And I was like, "Excuse me, you know he is eating it every day, you know, and did he tell you this? He doesn't talk, you know" (110).

Incidents like these occurred with some frequency, usually surrounding Emily's domestic work. She writes further,

[Peter's] work was always more important than me and his friends knew it. It was his work, then his fishing, then his hobbies—anything himself—then Scott, then me. He made it so hard. He never made love to me. He always put me down ... So I ended up going out on him (111).

Emily began a relationship with Mark, another police officer. He encouraged her to quit her job as a police officer, in order to avoid the department's nepotism rule once they were married. However, Emily was hesitant to follow-through on her divorce from Peter, given his troubled background and the fact that they had a child together. They began marriage counseling, and they reached a compromise that Peter would share their bank accounts, allow her space to keep her things in their bedroom, and they would spend time alone together at least once a month. Peter followed through on giving Emily space for her things in their bedroom, but continued to spend most of his time at work and kept their banking accounts separate. She writes,

Everything I did was wrong no matter what I did, and I kept trying to please him. I laid in bed every night and thought, "Oh my gosh, what

are all the things I didn't do that day that maybe would make him happy?" (111).

After some time, Emily decided to finalize her divorce from Peter, and suggested to Mark, whom she had still been seeing, that they take a break from their relationship while the process was finished. Mark did not agree to the temporary separation, and Emily ended the relationship for good.

Four months after ending her relationship with Mark, and still married to Peter, Emily began another relationship with a colleague, Kane, who was also married, but going through a divorce. When Kane's wife, Rebecca, called the police to her house on charges that Kane hit her, Emily stepped in and called an old friend in the state police and told him that Rebecca's allegations were false. Three months into her relationship with Kane, Emily checked herself into a local psychiatric center because she began having suicidal thoughts. She reports that her time at the center gave her temporary strength to deal with her marriage and guilt over her relationship with Kane. Over the next seven months, Kane began to sexually abuse and rape Emily on a consistent basis. After a particularly violent outburst, Kane apologized to Emily, and their relationship calmed down for a few weeks. Almost a year into their relationship, Emily found out through co-workers that Kane had been dating other women. Emily left Kane after he threatened to leave her if she did not help him in a scheme that would "violate every fiber of her morality" (115). Emily reports that she channeled anger arising from this incident with Kane into getting revenge: she tried to help Kane's ex-wife Rebecca get custody of their children, and to get Kane fired from his police job.

After her relationship with Kane ended, Emily tried once more to fix her marriage with Peter, a "whole-hearted, 100 percent, nobody-else-involved last attempt," that was

ultimately unsuccessful. Emily managed to keep her extra-marital relationships from Peter until she was called to testify at Rebecca's custody hearing against Kane. Peter was sympathetic at first—Emily later found out that he too had extra-marital affairs—but he soon became distant and evasive, telling Emily that he would “deal with her when [Rebecca's custody hearing] is over” signaling to Emily that they would continue living on his terms.

In Emily's reflection on the series of abusive relationships described here, she suggests that her desire to constantly be in relationships with men stems from her traditional Southern Baptist upbringing. She describes this desire rooted in “the tradition of conventional gender roles that dictates a woman's need for the romantic devotion at all times of a man. A woman without a man is viewed as not whole, and any man is considered better than no man at all” (105). This cultural message was received by Emily through the interaction between her parents, as she remembers admiring her mother for her ability to forgive her father. Connected to this, while Emily's father was supportive of her eventual divorce from Peter, her mother resisted it, and was unable to see that beyond Peter's ability to financially support Emily and their son, the relationship was unhealthy for Emily. After the divorce, Emily's mother repeatedly invited Peter over for family gatherings and holidays.

This aspect of Emily's background—rooted in traditional gender roles—helps to explain (not justify) Emily's desire for male companionship. From her first relationship (Frank) through her extra-marital affairs (Mark, Kane) and her desire to fix what may have been an unfixable relationship (Peter), we see Emily's view of herself caught up in the affection of men. Indeed, she was faithful in her marriage to Peter when he was

attentive and affectionate, and her relationships with the other men began to fail when affection and sexual intimacy waned.

Emily's story highlights the subtle ways that abuse occurs. Most of her relationships involved battery, sexual abuse and rape, but the control she felt men had over her life stems from psychological manipulation that occurred everyday in subtle and overt ways. For example, Peter's insistence that they not share financial accounts, and his requirement that she could not keep her things in their bedroom can be read as Peter's attempts to mark off *his* space from hers. Because her job was less lucrative, this meant that she did not have the resources that he did. And because his spaces were the biggest and nicest—a *master* bedroom, for example—she was relegated to the less desirable, and considerably more inconvenient, spaces of their home. She describes her relationships with both Frank and Mark as “on their terms,” meaning that the time they did and did not spend together, what they did together, including their sexual interactions, was not under her control. With Frank, she says that their time together had to fit around his recreational schedule. Mark had encouraged her to leave her position at the police department before one of them was forced to leave under the department's nepotism rule. Kane bribed Emily into participating in illegal schemes—for instance, altering receipts so that he could get reimbursed by the police department—with attention and affection.

Emily's case is a good example of sexualized violence because it brings to light how multiple social and moral practices are at work in Emily's life. There is her Southern Baptist upbringing, which she describes as leaving her feeling inferior to men. There is also her mother's encouragement of her abusive marriage to Peter, which reinforced Emily's belief that her identity was tied to her relationship status, no matter

the quality of relationship she had. These subtle psychological manipulations primed Emily to feel disempowered in relation to men, and they help explain her series of abusive relationships. This powerlessness limited Emily's mobility in the ways discussed at the front of this section. Emily's economic mobility was limited because the same traditional gender roles that enforced and reinforced her belief that she was only as good as any man that would have her also included the belief that men's work was more important than women's. Mark encouraged Emily to quit her job in the police department, in case they got married and one of them would have to quit. Peter challenged Emily's competence not only in the workplace, but also at home. Such challenges would affect her self-esteem and confidence in many areas of her life, and no doubt would affect her job performance. So we can assume that Emily not only suffers from the gendered wage gap, but also the particular cultural and religious messages that stifled her belief and confidence in her own independence and value as a person, which further affect her long-term economic prosperity.

Peter's control of his shared home with Emily is a unique manifestation of the way that gendered power structures limit the physical mobility of women. I read Peter's control over their finances and his home as attempts on his part to control Emily, and thereby devalue her. While we do not learn enough about Peter to understand why, I suspect that Emily's success in the police academy could be seen as a challenge to the masculine authority and success that is *his* birthright. This example points to the restriction of women's mobility more generally. As discussed above, women's lives are structured around safe routes, safe spaces and safe people. While the focus of this particular narrative is the emotional and psychological violence Emily endured, she also

discusses the many times the many men she was in relationships with beat and raped her. Susan Brison (2002) cites studies discussed in *The Female Fear: The Social Cost of Rape* (1991) which show that fifty percent of women never use public transportation because they fear rape, and women are eight times more likely to avoid walking in their own neighborhoods at night (18).

So we learn from Emily's narrative that particular relationships can be part of the systematic limitation of women's economic, physical and social mobility, as we see with Peter's control over their home and Mark's request for her to quit her job with the police department. We also see that these are made possible and reinforced by dominant cultural norms that devalue and disempower women and their contributions. And again, that oppressive norms become part of women's self-conception, and the particular relationships women may have that are also informed by these norms become "proof" that the norms are justified. Intimate partner violence, psychological abuse and manipulation, and the intersection of these with oppressive norms and physical violence are *sexualized violence* because they are part of the matrix of social practices that reinforces the oppression of women by limiting who women can be, where they can go, with whom and at what cost.

### 3. Sexualized violence produces or reproduces stereotypes of female vulnerability and weakness in relation to male empowerment and aggression

Intimate partner violence, such as we see above in Emily's narrative, is made possible and is reinforced by the particular cultural stereotypes of female vulnerability and weakness that stands in contrast male empowerment and aggression. For philosopher Susan Brison, this vulnerability was made manifest beyond her rape and attempted

murder, into her recovery, healing, and relationships with others. She found her vulnerability at odds with her need to take and have control over her life in the aftermath of her assault, a vulnerability that was also reinforced by the reactions of others to her experiences.

At 10:30 a.m. on July 4, 1990, Brison set out for a walk along a country road in a village outside of Grenoble, France. By noon, she was lying in a ravine set off from the road, as she puts it, “struggling to stay alive” (2002, 2). She had been grabbed from behind by a stranger and thrown into the bushes on the side of the road. She struggled with her attacker, and recalls bargaining with him that she would do whatever he wanted, if he spared her life. Her attacker strangled her, and while she was going in and out of consciousness, he raped her. Brison regained consciousness for long enough to see her assailant lunge towards her with a rock in his hand, before he smashed it against her forehead.

After her assailant left, Brison climbed out of the ravine back to the road where she had previously been walking. A local farmer found her, and then called the police and an ambulance. She was taken to the hospital where she underwent neurological tests, x-rays, blood tests and gynecological exams. Her trachea had been fractured, which made breathing and talking difficult, and she sustained a head injury, both of which kept her in the hospital for eleven days.

According to Brison, she was “spared the insult” that she argues is common for most rape victims of not being believed or even blamed for the attack. She did find, however, that these would still be issues in the criminal and civil trials that were to come. During the eight-hour deposition she gave to the French police while still hospitalized,

she remembered being on the verge of giving up her struggle to live when the image of her husband's face, and thoughts of his future pain struck her. She paused in the deposition and asked the officer taking the deposition if she ought to include this in her official statement. She reports that the officer encouraged her to include the image of her husband in her deposition, because her assailant had claimed that she had provoked the attack.

When the deposition was over, the police officer asked her to read what had been prepared and sign the transcript to verify its accuracy. She reports noticing that the prepared transcript began with the phrase "*Comme je suis sportive ...*" ("Since I am athletic ..."), which was added by the deposing officer in order to explain why she was out for a walk that day. Brison claims not to have made this claim, and has said that she was too weak and tired to protest its inclusion in her deposition. In a trial two and a half years after the assault, Brison's assailant was tried and convicted for rape and attempted murder.

Brison recounts that one of the most difficult aspects of her assault was figuring out what and how to tell people who needed to know what had happened. She writes,

Although fears for my safety may have initially explained why I wanted to remain anonymous, [after] my assailant had been apprehended ... I still didn't want people to know that I had been sexually assaulted. I don't know whether this was because I could still hardly believe it myself, because keeping this information confidential was one of the few ways I could feel in control of my life, or because, in spite of my conviction that I had done nothing wrong, I felt ashamed (3).

When telling others about her attack, she would say that she was the victim of an attempted murder, and when they would ask what provoked the murder, she would tell them that it began as a sexual assault.

Brison writes that her unwillingness to describe herself as a victim of sexual assault at first, coupled with others' greater comfort in viewing her as a victim of attempted murder and not as a victim of sexual assault only, contributed to what she calls feelings of "unreality." A victims' assistance coordinator explained to Brison that she, herself, had never been the victim of assault, and that Brison would benefit from the experience of being assaulted by learning "not to be so trusting of people and to take basic safety precautions like not going out alone late at night" (9). In a conversation, one of Brison's friends pointed out to her that the benefit to having gone through this experience was that the odds of being attacked again were now significantly lower.<sup>92</sup> These two responses—the "lessons learned" response and "gambler's fallacy" (10)—are attempts by others to understand why Brison herself became a victim of these things, but as Brison notes, they are also attempts by these others to integrate the reality of sexualized violence, the fact of women's vulnerability, into their worldviews without thereby admitting their own particular vulnerability. Both of these responses try to posit an ideal of *control* in response to the *fact* of women's vulnerability. The first assumes that if women controlled their environments (also an example of limiting women's mobility) then they would be less vulnerable to violence. The second seeks to find control in the face of chance and vulnerability by fallaciously believing the "odds" that they can be protected by their membership in a statistical pool, when in fact, future events have no correlation to past ones. But the sentiment at the heart of these attempts to come to terms with Brison's experience is important: that sexualized violence, in this case rape, exposes women as vulnerable and weak, while at the same time conditioning them

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<sup>92</sup> This kind of advice, while unhelpful to victims recovering from violence, also accords illogical prescriptive power to statistics.

to be vulnerable and weak through the entangled web of disempowering norms of femininity. Brison explains the interplay of vulnerability and control well:

I wished I could blame myself for what had happened so that I would feel less vulnerable, more in control of my life. Those who haven't been sexually violated may have difficulty understanding why women who survive assault often blame themselves, and may wrongly attribute it to a sex-linked trait of masochism or lack of self-esteem. They don't know that it can be less painful to believe that you did something blameworthy than it is to think that you live in a world where you can be attacked at any time, in any place, simply because you are a woman (13).

Brison's experience of rape forced her, her loved ones and acquaintances to confront the vulnerability of women, and continued conversations in search of healing required regaining control over the multiple aspects of her and their lives they felt was lost in recognizing that vulnerability. She describes her life after the assault, in the "aftermath," as paradoxical, because although she began to feel more physically empowered by learning to fight back, recognizing that she had to always be ready to fight back was a constant reminder of her vulnerability. So, the focus on "preventing" sexualized violence seems to have a deleterious effect on women's lives, because they are constantly reminded that they *lack* control, and are weak and vulnerable.

There are other aspects of Brison's narrative that are instructive on how sexualized violence creates and reinforces stereotypes of feminine vulnerability and weakness. When Brison reviewed her deposition, she noticed that the deposing officer had included the line "Comme je suis sportive..." at the start, in order to explain why Brison was out walking alone. The *need* for such an explanation is a recognition that women, and Brison in particular, need a *reason* to be out alone, a reason that somehow counteracts the appropriate fear women ought to have under the constant threat of sexualized violence. That is, an explanation for why Brison would expose her

vulnerability and weakness. One of the important aspects of Brison's narrative is the way that the responses (or failed responses) of others contributed to her healing (or didn't). We saw two examples above of others' attempts to "explain away" her experience of sexualized violence because, perhaps, they were too afraid of their own vulnerability and weakness. She writes, "They would have preferred me to just 'buck up,' as one friend urged me to do. But it is essential to talk about it, again and again. It's a way of remastering the trauma, although it can be retraumatizing when people refuse to listen" (16). She highlights here that the way we respond to victims of sexualized violence is part of what that violence means to them and what it will (continue to) do to them.<sup>93</sup> This adds a layer to the vulnerability and weakness victims' experience. Not only are women made aware of their physical and social vulnerability through sexualized violence, but as we all are, women are also vulnerable to the responses of others, who may help or hinder their healing and recovery. In this we see that rape is a form of sexualized violence because it is made possible by oppressive norms and practices that make women vulnerable and weak, while capitalizing on that vulnerability and weakness. And intersecting this, we also see that victims are particularly weak and vulnerable to the responses of others in the aftermath of sexualized violence.

#### 4. Sexualized violence objectifies women by identifying them as sexual objects for others, and diminishing their subjectivity

In addition to limiting women's mobility and creating and reinforcing stereotypes of feminine vulnerability and weakness, sexualized violence also objectifies women by

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<sup>93</sup> Our response to victims of sexualized violence is the subject of Chapter 6, where I argue that we have a moral obligation to be advocates for victims.

identifying them as sexual objects. Sexual objectification in this sense identifies the process whereby women come to be seen as sexual objects for men, at the expense of their subjectivity and agency. By ‘sexual objects’ I do not only mean objects for men’s sexuality to act upon, but also, in a broader and less literal sense, as diminished subjects and agents vis-à-vis men.<sup>94</sup> We can see this at work in the examples above. Because her life could only be an accessory to a man’s, Emily’s own desires, projects and goals were always secondary (or tertiary) to those of the men in her life. As such, her life seemed to be more like an object orbiting around these men, than a subject engaging in life with them. Brison is objectified in two senses. She becomes a sexual object for her attacker, but I hesitate to leave the explanation there. As I mentioned in Chapter 1, rape is not just, or even primarily, about sexuality and sexual gratification, but it is the maintenance of power over women in a patriarchal society.<sup>95</sup> In this way, her subjectivity—her ability to make plans and projects for her own life—is called into question, both in the immediate sense that she was prevented from going on with her day, but also in the aftermath, when she found that the recognition of this vulnerability frustrated her ability to envision plans and projects for her future (15). What follows is another example of the objectification of

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<sup>94</sup> I find warrant for this broadened claim in my argument that there is an ontological relationship between violence and oppression, which is manifested through different power structures depending on the means of identifying groups. So sexualized violence is the way that women experience oppression, and because one of the primary and historical relationships between women and men has been sexual, this violence tends to manifest through sexuality.

<sup>95</sup> See Susan Brownmiller (1975) *Against Our Will*. Brownmiller’s thesis is that rape is away that *all* men maintain power over *all* women. I think it is the best explanation for why rape occurs, but I am suspicious of the essentializing claim contained in the explanation. I do not think, however, that we must accept the claim to accept the explanation.

women that occurs with sexual harassment.<sup>96</sup> This example is meant to make two points. First, that sexual objectification is not only harmful to women's subjectivity and inner-life, but it makes them physically and socially vulnerable, and thus reinforces the previous descriptions of sexualized violence. And second, to show how sexual harassment, which is not typically thought alongside rape and intimate partner violence as a form of violence, is indeed part of the matrix of social practices we can identify as sexualized violence.

In 2002 and 2003, Lisa Simpson and Anne Gilmore, students at the University of Colorado-Boulder, filed lawsuits against the University under Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972, the law which governs sex and gender discrimination in education. While Title IX is most commonly known as the law that governs the distribution of federal funds in educational institutions, it also allows that schools can be sued for knowingly allowing sexual harassment to take place. Simpson and Gilmore claimed that they were sexually assaulted by football players and team recruits at a party sponsored by the football program. Simpson alleges that she passed out at this party and woke up to find two football recruits removing her clothing; and that she was assaulted by numerous recruits and football players throughout the evening. After reporting the incident to the University, the football players were cited with code of conduct violations under University policy. Because the recruits were not students at the time, the University had no jurisdiction over their conduct.

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<sup>96</sup> Compiled from Ann Bartow, "Title IX Sexual Harassment Case against the U. of Colorado Reinstated," on *Feminist Law Professors*, <http://feministlawprofs.law.sc.edu>; Erik Brady, "Colorado scandal could hit home to other colleges" *USAToday*, May 26, 2006; and Libby Sander, "U. of Colorado at Boulder Settles Lawsuit Over Alleged Rapes at Football Recruiting Party for \$2.85 Million," *titleix.info.com*. Accessed 1/31/11.

To prove their claim against the University in court, the women would have to show that the University knew about and allowed the hostile environment that led to their sexual assaults. This claim rested on two facts. First, between 1995 and the time of their claim, nine women had filed complaints to the University about sexual assault related to the football program and its recruits.<sup>97</sup> Second, the football program routinely recruited players with alcohol-fueled parties and the expectation of sex with female students.

While University officials have argued that it is unreasonable for Title IX to require the University to supervise student activities to prevent hostile educational environments for women, the women have argued that there is a *systematic* failure on the part of the University to protect its female students from what they know to be a dangerous recruiting practice. In fact, after reports of sexual assault in 1997, Boulder County district attorney Mary Keenan consulted with University officials, informing them of her suspicions that the football program was enticing recruits with promises of alcohol and sex, and informed them that this practice had to end. This happened again in 2001, and Keenan again informed the University that she believed the football program was acting in violation of federal law.

In March 2005, a federal judge dismissed the women's lawsuit against the University of Colorado on grounds that they could not prove the University should be held responsible. In response to this ruling, an amicus brief filed by lawyers for the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) argued that the University should be held responsible for the assaults because the University knew of a "pattern of sexual assault

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<sup>97</sup> There is some confusion over this—Simpson asserts that the University had known about assaults since at least the fall of 1995, while the University only started receiving reports about assaults in 1997. It is likely that Simpson is referring to assaults that were not reported through official channels at the University.

and harassment in the football program and acted with deliberate indifference to the ongoing culture of hostility and abuse of women.”<sup>98</sup> On appeal, the Tenth Circuit ruled unanimously that the University “had an official policy of showing high-school football recruits a ‘good time’,”<sup>99</sup> and the University agreed to a \$2.85 million settlement with the two women. In addition, the football coach, University president and nine of the ten top administrators in the University resigned or were fired once it came to public view that the University did know about and was in a position to prevent the hostile culture for women.

Sexual harassment was prohibited as sex discrimination first in Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964. Sexual harassment includes “unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, and other verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature ... when submission to or rejection of this conduct explicitly or implicitly affects an individual's employment, unreasonably interferes with an individual's work performance or creates an intimidating, hostile or offensive work environment.”<sup>100</sup> The legal understanding of sexual harassment was expanded by Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972 to include the conduct and effect described above in educational settings. The claim made by Simpson and Gilmore targeted the hostile educational environment created by the football program’s recruiting practices and the University’s delinquency in responding to complaints from women students and concerns from the district attorney. They argued that the University, by knowingly allowing the sexually hostile environment to continue, was in violation of its legal responsibility to protect its

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<sup>98</sup> Quoted in Bartow, “Title IX Sexual Harassment Case Against The U of Colorado Reinstated.”

<sup>99</sup> Quoted in Sander, “U. of Colorado Settles Lawsuit.”

<sup>100</sup> <http://www.eeoc.gov/facts/fs-sex.html>. Accessed 1/31/11.

students. And as Simpson and Gilmore claimed in their lawsuit, the University's failure to protect its students by addressing this environment made them liable for the assaults that were made possible and acceptable by the hostile environment they promoted.

One of the interesting aspects of this case is that we see the connection between the practices of institutions (that is, policies or procedures that exceed individuals' actions) and physical violence. Simpson and Gilmore charge that the environment—the sets of expectations and norms they were made to live under—made their assaults possible. In this we can see the two senses of objectification I mention above at work.

First, the football program used the promise of sex with women—and therefore, used the women—to encourage football recruits to sign with the University. In doing so, these women become merely sexual objects for the gratification of men. It is hard to say, even, that they are reduced to their sexuality, if sexuality includes one's own sexual desires and interests, because these do not matter to the practice, nor to the players and recruits engaging in the practice. Rather, the practice necessitates that they are more like commodities, or things, used to barter for the commitment of the football recruits.

Second, we can tie these particular practices to the University's tacit acceptance of the football program's practice, through the University's failure to respond to and address known incidents of assault and harassment. This reveals the University's more general devaluation of women's projects and goals, for if the University was truly interested in their women students, they would discourage a practice that objectifies and harms women in their community. These practices are systematic and institutional problems that encourage individuals to be violent, with real effects on other individuals and on women students as a whole. Like Emily, the environment in which these women lived and were

educated made them likely victims. But we can understand the experiences of these women only when we see how individual experiences and actions, throughout the years, are *systematically* related. So, sexual harassment, and the violent behavior it might make possible, are forms of sexualized violence because they objectify women, not only by making the sexual objects for men, but also by devaluing them as *subjects* through the devaluation of their projects, goals and contributions to our communities.

## 5. Victim Blaming

Part of this new way of thinking about violence against women is also to take account of the way that violence affects women *morally*. In Section 1 above I invoked the work of Margaret Walker to argue that social practices are also moral practices, because they delimit the scope of our agency and our responsibilities to others. In her words, they “implement shared understandings about who gets to do what to whom and who is supposed to do what for whom” (16). If sexualized violence creates, capitalizes on and reinforces the vulnerability of women to men, it sets up a moral standard for how men are allowed to relate to women. In another vein, we have also seen that the flip side of this vulnerability is the insistence that women could prevent violence if they controlled their environment and movements, and limited their company. This places the control over whether violence happens in the hands of potential victims, rather than potential perpetrators. Feminists have been calling out this line of thinking as ‘victim blaming,’ a practice that places at least part of the blame for victimization on the victim herself. Victim blaming reveals more ways that sexualized violence is a *moral* practice, over and above being just a social practice.

Victims incur moral *blame* because it is believed that they could have prevented the wrong from occurring. Responsibility may be assigned to victims due to their actions, their mannerisms, their appearance or their history. For instance, it is common for victims of rape to be partially blamed for the violence done to them because of the way that they dressed, the amount of alcohol or other substances they consumed, flirtatious behavior, not resisting or fighting back enough, or even on account of a promiscuous sexual history, or for having a sexual history at all. For instance, a student at Carleton University in Canada sued the University on grounds that they failed to have adequate security measures in the building where she was assaulted. A University spokesperson responded to the student's lawsuit saying that the University is not to blame, and that she should have kept a proper lookout for her own safety.<sup>101</sup> Similarly, Cassandra Hernandez, a former US Air Force airman reported that three fellow airmen raped her after a party. According to Hernandez, she was intimidated into not testifying against her colleagues. The Air Force then filed suit against Hernandez for engaging in illegally consuming alcohol underage, and for engaging in "indecent acts."<sup>102</sup> As a practice of responsibility, victim blaming teaches women that they are responsible for protecting themselves from violence, even though the threat of violence may be ubiquitous. Women's being socially and physically limited to safe spaces and people reinforces that they are vulnerable and weak (yet they are forced to take responsibility for that vulnerability and weakness) on the basis of their sexuality. In this way, victim

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<sup>101</sup><http://www.ottawacitizen.com/news/Carleton+University+assault+victim+settle+lawsuit/1893802/story.html>. Date accessed: 9/13/09.

<sup>102</sup> <http://www.kvue.com/news/state/stories/080107kvueairforce-eh.d0a50cd9.html>. Date accessed: 9/13/09;  
<http://www.cbsnews.com/stories/2007/08/28/earlyshow/contributors/tracysmith/main3212398.shtml>. Accessed 1/31/11.

blaming is not just a practice that disempowers women, but is itself a form of sexualized violence. In addition to the *social* practices that limit the mobility of women, produce and reinforce stereotypes of feminine vulnerability and objectification, victim blaming shows us that there are *moral* practices at work in the oppression of women.

An extended moral evaluation of sexualized violence follows in Chapter 5, but it is important to note a peculiarity about victim blaming as a moral practice of responsibilities. For Walker, moral practices are “healthy” when their terms are truly mutually understood, which requires that they are *transparent* or mutually intelligible, that is, when they are understandable by the parties they affect and are who are engaged in them. The intelligibility of the understandings that gird these practices must be “widely shared among us” and “for the most part true of us” (252). If we subject victim blaming to the scrutiny proposed here, it will most certainly fail. For, if we interrogate the conception of women’s agency that underlies it, we find a contradiction. On the one hand, women are simply vulnerable and weak given the kinds of bodies they have and the social positioning of women vis-à-vis men. These would be biological and social facts about women’s existence. On the other hand, women are responsible—that is, they are to blame—for harm that befalls them—because they could and should prevent harm from coming to them. This requires that women have some sort of radical freedom to act despite these biological and social facts. On this, Marilyn Nissim-Sabat (2009) writes, “The victim blaming stance posits either a decontextualized, abstract, and thus dehumanized notion of human freedom—agency as atomized willing: ‘Just say no!’, or an insuperable determinism as denial of human freedom” (112). Either women are victims *simpliciter* and this is out of their control, or they are responsible for their

victimization. Both of these cannot be true in the way that they are meant to be. If women's physical and social vulnerability vis-à-vis men is outside of their control, then they ought not be blamed or held responsible for what befalls them. For Walker, these practices of responsibility show us what we believe about human agency, regardless of what we may claim about it. Victim blaming rhetoric and its vehement opposition in feminist discourses show us that women's agency is a special case for us. On the one hand, social structures continually reinforce stereotypes of women's passivity and vulnerability, and structure social incentives and constraints for women to live out these stereotypes. On the other hand, we educate women about violence prevention, about how to use the body as a weapon, about what is and is not safe, in the end, reinforcing that women *can be* responsible for such things.<sup>103</sup>

From a moral-psychological standpoint, the blame that victims encounter turns inward on the self, and victims begin to feel shame. As a moral emotion, shame has an

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<sup>103</sup> In response to the many websites and programs designed to inform women about how they can prevent rape, the blog <http://aaaargh.tumblr.com/> posted a series of "Sexual Assault Prevention Tips Guaranteed to Work." These tips include: "Don't put drugs in women's drinks. When you see a woman walking by herself, leave her alone. If you pull over to help a woman whose car has broken down, remember not to rape her. If you are in a lift and a woman gets in, don't rape her. When you encounter a woman who is asleep, the safest course of action is to not rape her. Never creep into a woman's home through an unlocked door or window, or spring out at her from between parked cars, or rape her. USE THE BUDDY SYSTEM! If it is inconvenient for you to stop yourself from raping women, ask a trusted friend to accompany you when lurking in shadows. Carry a rape whistle. If you find that you are about to rape a woman, you can hand the whistle to your buddy, so s/he can blow it to call for help. Give your buddy a revolver, so that when indifferent passers-by either ignore the rape whistle, or gather round to enjoy the spectacle, s/he can pistol-whip you." This post is obviously meant to be humorous, but it reveals the same contradiction about women's agency present in the discussion of victim blaming here. "Rape prevention" is women's responsibility, not the responsibility of perpetrators.

historical association with women, which is rooted in the discouragement of female anger and hostility. On this, Jennifer Manion (2003) writes,

This socially defined vision of femininity discourages girls and women from expressing hostility openly, encouraging instead an internalization of anger and anxiety—a ‘turning against the self’ marked by punitive self-censure and blame—during times of frustration or threat. There is ... exceedingly fertile ground for feelings of shame when the individual regards her subjective stance as violating certain standards or norms, especially those concerning the maintenance of interpersonal relationships (24).

When women are victimized, it would be appropriate by most standards to be angry at a perpetrator, or frustrated with the circumstances that led to victimization. But the social censure of women’s anger encourages women to turn that anger inwards, to feel ashamed for something that might be out of their control. The practical consequences of this are many, including compounding psychological trauma, but feelings of shame over anger directed towards a perpetrator could influence whether or not a victim reports instances of sexualized violence. Shame might also be seen as evidence *for* victim blaming, for if the victim feels ashamed, surely she did something wrong.

Women’s agency seen through the lens of victim blaming is evidence of what Claudia Card has called a “moral gray zone.”<sup>104</sup> The concept of a gray zone has been utilized to understand moral wrongdoing under situations of oppression or systematic violence, such as war. Though my analysis is limited to the victimization of women assuming no wrongdoing on their part, the concept is useful here to illuminate the vision of agency at work under system of oppression. Card argues that “grayness” points to a lack of clarity about the degree of an agent’s responsibility (2002, 225). In the case of victim blaming, it is typically *both* the victim and the perpetrator’s agency that is imbued

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<sup>104</sup> See the initial discussion of this in Chapter 1, Section 2.

with grayness. Typical references to a victim's dress, previous sexual history, flirtatious behavior, etc., present the agency of the perpetrator as compromised by the character or actions of the victim, while confusing women's actions and behavior with willingness or consent. When both feminine and masculine stereotypes, along with the social and moral practices of responsibility that reinforce them, constitute what kind of agency one has and how one is able to exercise it, *human* agency becomes gray.<sup>105</sup>

Victim blaming as a moral practice of responsibilities is certainly common and is, as we have seen, connected to the oppression of women more generally. As such, victim blaming could be considered a form of sexualized violence along with rigidly enforced gendering or sexualization, such as beauty pageants.<sup>106</sup> But victim blaming rests on a contradiction and oversight. It paints women as helplessly vulnerable to violence while encouraging women to live out associated stereotypes of passivity and weakness, and at the same time finds them responsible for the consequences of these socially structured ways of being. The oversight of victim blaming is that women's (and men's) agency in the context of oppression is not so easy to pin down, and while we may want to assert that agency or subjectivity can never be truly compromised, we must understand the way(s) that agency and subjectivity are constituted by the moral practices of responsibility that show us our place in the world, what we are allowed to do, with and

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<sup>105</sup> The "grayness" of agency further reinforces the critique of consent-based definitions of sexual violence presented here. If consent is tied to agency, and agency is not black-and-white, yes-or-no, then relying on (a lack of) consent to determine cases of sexualized violence is a misrepresentation of the phenomena of sexualized violence.

<sup>106</sup> Feminist literature frequently refers to victim blaming as the "second rape" of victims; see Joyce Williams and Karen Holmes, *The Second Assault: Rape and public attitudes* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1981); and Lee Madigan and Nancy Gamble, *The Second Rape: Society's continued betrayal of the victim* (New York: Lexington Press, 1991).

for whom, and what others may do to us. In this way, victim blaming and sexualized violence are practices of responsibility that map out for us what our responsibilities are, who we are responsible to, and who is and is not responsible to and for us. As a social practice, violence and the threat of violence are parts of the social positioning of women that reinforce their vulnerability and powerlessness, social positions which are then taken up through stereotypically feminine social demeanors and roles.

Victim blaming is one way of seeing the way that sexualized violence sets up moral norms and relationships between people, norms which make possible the vulnerability of women to men, and which in turn finds women responsible for victimization that results from that vulnerability. It serves this function, but it can also be considered a form of sexualized violence itself, if we understand how being blamed for one's victimization, in fact, being blamed for *who* one is, is also a form of violence in service of the oppression of women.

## 6. Conclusion

In this Chapter, I have defined 'sexualized violence' as a moral and social practice that 1) limits the physical, social or economic mobility of women *qua* women, 2) produces or reproduces stereotypes of female vulnerability and weakness in relation to male empowerment and aggression, and 3) objectifies women by identifying them as sexual objects for others, and diminishing their subjectivity. This definition picks out the ways that discrete and particular actions, between discrete and particular people are connected to the actions of others and social and moral practices. I have demonstrated

this connection, in particular, through the practice of victim blaming, and the moral assumptions that support that practice.

One of the most significant hurdles for this definition of sexualized violence is distinguishing this way of thinking from the legal categories of sexual violence that tend to dominate our conceptual schemas. I have already noted how problematic the legal definitions of rape, sexual assault and related concepts are in Chapter 1. These categories limit our thinking because we take them for granted and try to figure out which experiences fit in which categories, rather than attending to the experience itself. Elizabeth Anderson (2006) has argued that this is particularly true of our thinking about sexual harassment. This emerges in the University of Colorado case, when the University pushed back on the legal proceedings, on the grounds that a school cannot reasonably be held responsible for the conduct of all of its students. Larry Pozner, a lawyer for the University, said, “The life of every university student would change under this new legal standard. What it means is that all universities are now charged with monitoring student activities, on and off campus, official and unofficial, to a degree that we have not seen before.”<sup>107</sup> To be sure, the individual football players and recruits are personally responsible for the sexual assaults that occurred, but how do we think through collective responsibility of this magnitude? Who, at the end of the day, is responsible for monitoring an environment and how do we decide when that environment becomes toxic for an individual or a group? These are the tough questions that spark the University’s response, but these assume the usefulness of the legal categories and concepts, and force

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<sup>107</sup> Quoted in Libby Sander, “U. of Colorado at Boulder Settles Lawsuit Over Alleged Rapes at Football Recruiting Party for \$2.85 Million” at *titleix.info.com*. Accessed 1/31/11.

the experience of the women to fit into them when they might not. Margaret Crouch (2009) has argued that constructing the phenomenon around legal categories and remedies causes us to miss important experiences of sexual harassment more generally. Because sexual harassment has been criminalized in educational and workplace settings, we miss that harassment also occurs in public places and limits women's freedom of movement (141). Gawking, cat-calling and stalking may all be forms of sexual discrimination because it alters women's conceptions of their safety and welcomeness in public places, but they are missed as such because they do not occur in the market place.<sup>108</sup> We see from these legal concerns that there is a disjunct between the way that women experience the phenomena of sex discrimination and the legal categories and remedies at their disposal to understand those phenomena. This concern about sexual harassment fitting into the definition of sexualized violence echoes the discussion from Chapter 1 about "man-made" legal categories not capturing the complexity of women's experiences. I quoted Kelly and Radford (1996) on this:

This is a consequence of attempting to locate feminist definitions based on women's experiences into man-made legal categories. Basically they just don't fit. Legal definitions are drawn from dichotomies: lawful against unlawful; crime and no crime; innocence and guilt; the good polarized against the bad. Women's experiences generally, and even more so in relation to violence, are much more complex (68).

We must think beyond the dichotomies that produce categories like these, and begin to see how all of experiences described above are part of a complex web of norms and practices that serve the oppression of women. The legal categories are one example of

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<sup>108</sup> This resonates with a series of narratives I present in Chapter 6, in which women commonly use the refrain "nothing really happened" to describe experiences of violence that aren't in the category of forcible rape, because the public discourse about violence against women is hyper-focused on rape, and in particular, forcible rape involving penetration.

the way our thinking about violence against women is built on false dichotomies. That violence is necessarily physical, an assumption criticized in Chapter 1 is another. Dismantling that particular assumption allows us to see forms of harassment, psychological violence and pernicious moral norms alongside rape and intimate partner abuse as forces in the oppression of women.

Having introduced the way that sexualized violence affects women's moral lives here, in the next chapter, I connect sexualized violence as a moral practice to the discussion of moral integrity in Chapter 2, to show how sexualized violence is a form of moral *disintegration*.

## CHAPTER 5: SEXUALIZED VIOLENCE AND MORAL DISINTEGRATION

In this chapter, I argue that sexualized violence, because of its grounding in social processes and practices, is best understood as the *disintegration* of the self, in keeping with the relational and existential models of integrity described in Chapter 2. In Section 1, I explore the common description of psychological trauma through what I refer to as the ‘logic of shattering.’ This logic understands the trauma victim as a shattered self, whose social vitality is threatened, and whose worldview is shattered by new, inconsistent beliefs about the world and the victim’s place in it. In Section 2, I draw on the narratives of sexualized violence in Chapter 4 to show that this shattering can also be understood as moral *disintegration*, the loss of integrity. And finally, in Section 3, I challenge the logic of shattering and its ontological commitments in order to argue that sexualized violence results in an existential trauma that is better understood as a disabling of the capacities for authentic selfhood, and is thereby a form of moral disintegration. I argue that ‘moral disintegration’ is preferable to the logic of shattering because it does not assume that the self is a “thing” that can be either whole or shattered, and because disintegration leaves open a more hopeful path for victims if they do not have the impossible task of putting shattered pieces back together.

### 1. The Shattered Self, Shattered Worldview and Social Death

As I explored in Chapters 1 and 3, trauma-centered explanations of violence tend to retroactively define traumatic events by the effect they have on victims. Victims suffering from the cardinal symptoms of PTSD—hyperarousal and the dialectical oscillation between intrusion and constriction—are said to have been traumatized, and

medicalized treatment addresses symptoms as much as it tries to come to terms with the traumatic event. The experience of the PTSD sufferer is what psychologists and philosophers identify as the “shattered self.”<sup>109</sup> Generally, shattered selfhood refers to the way that traumatic events alter or dismantle one’s previously held beliefs about oneself or one’s identity. The sense of self that accompanies one in the world is broken or lost, and the victim of trauma suffers not only any physical or psychic harm that she may have endured, but also the harm of losing her sense of who she is. Susan Brison (2002) writes, “When the trauma is of a human origin and is intentionally inflicted, it not only shatters one’s fundamental assumptions about the world and one’s safety in it, but also severs the sustaining connection between the self and the rest of humanity” (40). Brison is sensitive to the fact that the self claimed to be shattered can be described in various ways, and that this description determines what we will identify as its destruction. She argues that three popular descriptions of selfhood—the embodied self, the narrative self and the autonomous self—can all accommodate the “shattered self” view of trauma and violence. She writes,

I was no longer the same person I had been before the assault, and one of the ways in which I seemed changed was that I had a different relationship to my body. My body was now perceived as an enemy, having betrayed my newfound trust and interest in it, and as a site of increased vulnerability (44).<sup>110</sup>

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<sup>109</sup> For discussions of the “shattered self” philosophy and psychology, see Brison (2002) *Aftermath: Violence and the Remaking of the Self*; Lynne Arnault (2003) “Cruelty, Horror and the Will to Redemption;” Laurence Miller (1993) *Psychotherapy of the brain-injured patient: reclaiming the shattered self*; Theodore A. McConnell (1971) *The Shattered Self: the psychological and religious search for selfhood*; and Richard Ulman and Doris Brothers (1988) *The Shattered Self: A psychoanalytic study of trauma*.

<sup>110</sup> The newfound trust and interest Brison speaks of is her relationship to her body when she and her partner decided to try and conceive a child. This decision occurred six months prior to her assault, rape and attempted murder.

If a philosophical account of selfhood includes embodiment—not just the physical body and the meanings imposed upon them, but the body as living relation between self and world—sexualized violence can alter one’s relationship to the body, and thus, one’s sense of who one is. Dovetailing this as the aftermath of violence or trauma, there are also peculiar bodily and non-bodily experiences reported by victims of violence and trauma. Victims discuss feeling outside of their bodies or going somewhere else during their rape, for instance, or as was Brison’s case, feeling more tied to her body and its vulnerability than ever before because of her attack. The important point about the embodied self here is that our bodies situate us in the world, and how our bodies are perceived or how we perceive (through) our bodies helps constitute the self. As something that is also fundamentally an activity and not just a fact about us, embodied selves might be or feel unduly limited in movement, social space or appearance as a result of violence. This manifests in victims confining themselves to their homes or other safe spaces or altering their appearance to be less “attractive.” *How* one was and appeared in the world is no longer possible, and radical changes or revolutions in embodiment (in a variety of senses) are necessary to go on.

The second description of selfhood offered by Brison is the self-as-narrative, which encompasses both Lockean-style memory theories of personal identity and postmodern narrative views of selfhood. A theory of selfhood or personal identity grounded in memory requires that for one to be who one is, one must have memories of one’s past. That is, who I am is a product of my past and my memory of it, which keeps the past tethered to the present. If I were to lose my memory of my past, I would cease to

be me.<sup>111</sup> But for the trauma victim, the problem is with the kinds of memories she has. PTSD is instructive here again. Because traumatic memories have somatic quality and lack narrative context, victims experience memories of past traumatic events as though they are the present. The narrative context of past memories separates them from each other, and present experiences as we remember the past. Without this, the past “intrudes” on the present. Brison describes this as “the scattered shards of disrupted memory” from which victims must remake themselves (49). The problem for selfhood on the narrative model is twofold. First, we know that traumatic events can alter or diminish cognitive capacities such that memories of the past are lost or changed. Losing one’s past is tantamount to losing oneself for memory-based theories of selfhood. Second, the narrative context we impose on our past allows us to live in the present, while making possible future planning and imagination. But the conditions upon which anyone can tell a story that makes sense of who they have been, who they are, and who they are becoming *include* that the victim have the appropriate language and words to capture her experiences, and an audience to receive her narrative. We saw in Chapters 1 and 3 how there can be a disconnect with familiar ways of talking about sexualized violence and the experience of it, especially when the victim tries to assimilate her experience into available legal categories. The experience was often underdetermined by the definitions available, leaving the victim without a way to make sense of her experience. This linguistic problem is met with a more social issue encountered when victims describe their experiences to others. Of her own experience, Brison writes,

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<sup>111</sup> A well-known case of extreme memory loss is that of Clive Wearing, a British man who is unable to form new memories, and so is stuck in a 5-10 second long “loop” of the present. His wife, Deborah Wearing, chronicles the condition and its effects on them in *Forever Today: a memoir of love and amnesia* (London: Corgi Press, 2005).

Where the facts would appear to be incontrovertible, denial takes the shape of attempts to explain the assault in ways that leave the observer's worldview unscathed ... One friend, succumbing to the gambler's fallacy, pointed out that my having had such extraordinary bad luck meant that the odds of my being attacked again were now quite slim (9-10).

Even if a victim finds words appropriate to describe her experience, those might not be words others are willing to hear. It is not that Brison's family and friends denied her experience, but they, themselves, had to tell a story that could explain away the very real threat of violence. We see here that even when the victim is believed—which is sadly not true for all victims of sexualized violence—others' disbelief in the reality of violence threatens the victim's ability to have her narrative received by others. If a victim's narrative is not received by others, or is retold in language the victim does not intend, this could result in the victim feeling or believing that she and her experiences have become a mere fiction.

When traumatic re-experiences lack the narrative context of one's past, or when one's experiences are denied by others, the victim may be left with two (or more) versions of herself. Brison writes, "Whereas traumatic memories (especially perceptual and emotional flashbacks) feel as though they are passively endured, narratives are the result of certain obvious choices (e.g., how much to tell to whom, in what order, etc.)" (44). There is the passive, vulnerable self that has suffered sexualized violence, and there is the self that faces every day, making choices and exercising agency. Judith Herman (2002) explains that during times of constriction (as opposed to intrusion) the trauma survivor is experiencing an alteration of consciousness; in effect, she dissociates from herself. Victims may spontaneously dissociate, or they find the relief of dissociation in alcohol abuse or narcotics (43-44).

Thus, on the narrative view of selfhood, the self can be shattered in a number of related ways: the victim may lose her memories, or her memories may be altered by her traumatic experience; she may not find the words to craft a sense-making narrative of her experiences, or the narrative she does construct may be denied by others. In all of these cases, there is no one person that the victim is, but she may live out different versions of herself at different times.

The problem posed by the shattering of selfhood on the narrative model leads to the last model of selfhood discussed by Brison: the autonomous self. The passivity of enduring violence or trauma is met with the expectation that one is a moral and political agent, that one makes choices for oneself and that one takes responsibility for those choices. For Brison, not only was her autonomy (and threats to it) revealed in the aftermath of trauma, but the *relational* nature of autonomy came to the fore. The loss of control and vulnerability made present in a traumatic experience and heightened in PTSD can result in the victim feeling like she has lost the willful, active part of who she was.<sup>112</sup> In instances of physical violence, the victim loses control of her body, and in many cases of sexualized violence, the perpetrator uses the victim's body for his or her own ends. In cases of emotional or psychological abuse, it may be that the abuser commandeers the victim's entire worldview, and the ability to imagine possibilities for one's life is circumscribed. If we are always at risk of losing self-control, corporeal and social movement and memory, we are always at risk of losing *ourselves*. What studying the aftermath of trauma teaches us, argues Brison, is that who we are, and our autonomy (or

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<sup>112</sup> With PTSD, the trauma survivor may react involuntarily, in ways that were once under voluntary control. She loses control of her memory (intrusion) and her body (hypervigilance, constriction), and this inability to direct herself is morally problematic for the victim.

freedom) is always in relation to others. It's not just that we are vulnerable to others, but we desire connection with others, and we fear being alienated by them (61). This desire and connected fear, present in all of our experiences, is heightened by trauma and its aftermath. Trauma victims, desperately wanting to connect with others, pull away for fear that they will be hurt again, a fear grounded in the knowledge that the world is unsafe for them.<sup>113</sup> Brison's experience and research reveal that it is precisely these connections with others that help victims of sexualized violence heal, or at least, endure.

She writes,

It is not sufficient for mastering the trauma to construct a narrative of it: one must (physically, publicly) say or write (or paint or film) the narrative and others must see or hear it in order for one's survival as an autonomous self to be complete (62).

Making sense of our experiences—including traumatic ones—and making ourselves is an intersubjective project. We negotiate the terms we use to describe our experiences so that they are intelligible not only to us, but also to others. We tell others about traumatic experiences, in particular, perhaps to warn them of certain dangers, but more so to engage in the act of telling the story ourselves, rather than passively enduring the experiences, over and over again, alone. In the quote above, Brison explains that narratives, the telling of choices that were made, help the trauma victim regain a sense of autonomy in relation to a traumatic event.<sup>114</sup> In addition to the activity of sharing one's experiences with others, empathic relations with others help trauma victims reconnect with their former

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<sup>113</sup> See Herman (2002) Chapter 3, "Disconnection."

<sup>114</sup> The role of narrative retellings in healing from traumatic events is explored in the next chapter. There I use Brison's work and Hilde Lindemann Nelson's (2001) *Damaged Identities, Narrative Repair* to argue that the act of retelling the narrative of a traumatic event puts trauma and agency (in the *act* of retelling) in the same space, enabling the victim to recognize her own agency.

selves, according to Brison (83). If one feels that one's former self is lost, or that she is so radically different that she cannot relate to her former self, empathizing with a concrete other who has endured similar experiences can help the trauma victim relate to the experience of trauma, even if she is not ready to relate to her own trauma.

The way that victims seek and withdraw from others shows that trauma can shatter the autonomous self. A victim can lose control of her emotions, or memory, or will, which is tantamount to losing one's autonomy. If autonomy is truly relational, as Brison argues and her experience shows, the tendency to withdraw from others and from the social world is a symptom of the shattered autonomous self.<sup>115</sup> If one cannot relate to one's past, and traumatic experiences intrude on the present, planning and hope for the future are compromised (53).

Claudia Card (1996, 2002, 2003) explores this *relational* aspect of selfhood highlighted in traumatic experience and its aftermath.<sup>116</sup> Card is amenable to understanding violence not only in terms of its physical effects, but through the way(s) that different forms of violence affect one's relationships, social and economic mobility, and sense of security. She has connected common forms of violence against women to genocide and terrorism, not only by their likeness in brutality or intention, but in the

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<sup>115</sup> This tendency to withdraw from others is also a move in the direction of the atomistic understanding of selfhood necessary for the individualist, inward-looking conceptions of integrity reviewed in Chapter 2.

<sup>116</sup> I am drawing from Card's analysis concerning international conflicts and contexts. Her exploration of "social death" applies also to individuals suffering from trauma or sexualized violence. As I argued in previous chapters, women are a group in American society, and as such, all suffer the threat of violence that sustains their oppression. So the concept of social death as it applies to cultural groups can apply to women as a group in our society. Also, social death as an effect of genocide has implications not only for our conception of the group, but it is a condition that is faced and lived out by individuals. Likewise, individual victims of sexualized violence live out the cultural losses described by Card in individual ways.

effects they have on victims. By drawing out the similarities between women facing the threat of rape on a daily basis and the constant fear of terrorism, for instance, she reveals the various ways that individual acts of violence against women are connected systematically and provides a more social framework for understanding what it means to be a victim of sexualized violence.

She argues that analyses of large-scale, systematic forms of violence often overlook the loss of *social vitality* in favor of counting victims by physical harm or death. Social vitality, she writes, “exists through relationships, contemporary and intergenerational, that create an identity and that gives [sic] meaning to a life” (2003, 63). Being socially alive, I take it, is to be a person, a self, in relationships with others, living and working in social spaces with others, participating in social systems and practices, all of which help to constitute *who* one is. To cut an individual off from these meaning-constituting activities is to initiate social death, even if one is still alive. The importance of focusing an analysis on social vitality and social death, she argues, is that it “takes the focus off individual choice, individual goals, individual careers, and body counts, and puts it on relationships that create community and set the context that gives meaning to choices and goals” (ibid).

Given what psychologists have taught us about trauma and its aftermath, we can see two ways in which social vitality is threatened. It could be that an individual is physically separated from the social sources of meaning Card identifies as important to social vitality. If an individual is separated from her family and friends, or is prevented by force or convention from having a public life outside of the home, the opportunities to

find herself in relation to others or to envision possibilities for her future are limited.<sup>117</sup>

And oftentimes, the one or the group enforcing this social isolation gets to tell the whole story about who or what that individual is. This is why, Herman argues, domestic/intimate partner violence is akin to political imprisonment, the subjugation of women in prostitution or pornography, and religious cults (76-78). She writes,

Political captivity is generally recognized, whereas the domestic captivity of women and children is often unseen. ... In domestic captivity, physical barriers to escape are rare, [however], ... Children are rendered captive by their condition of dependency. Women are rendered captive by economic, psychological, and legal subordination, as well as by physical force (74).

Described in this way, the connection between intimate partner violence and, say, political imprisonment, becomes clear. The victim is physically cut off from others and society by the systematic closing off of real opportunities to “get out.” What makes something a real opportunity is that it is not only physically possible—of course many victims of intimate partner violence can just walk away—but also that economic, psychological and legal support systems are in place for victims. If Herman is right and women are subordinated *within* those systems that they need for support, then “walking away” is not a real option for many women. This might be difficult for many to see, because it challenges understandings of choice that focus on individuals’ desires, beliefs and will. It reveals that choices, indeed autonomy, are supported and encouraged by others, and are therefore relational.

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<sup>117</sup> In support of this, Herman writes, “Prolonged captivity undermines or destroys the ordinary sense of a relatively safe sphere of initiative, in which there is some tolerance for trial and error” (91). Initiative, trial and error are all essential to future planning. Initiative is a projecting of oneself into the future, through certain projects or goals. And the ability to see experiences, projects or goals as trials and/or errors depends on the belief that one will have a future in which those trials will become useful and errors learned from.

This leads to the second way of thinking through threats to social vitality. Recall Marilyn Frye's heuristic of the birdcage to explain the way oppression worked on groups. The bird is locked in not by the individual wires of the birdcage, but by the *system* of wires held together. If we focus too myopically on specific instances of discrimination against women, we lose sight of how those instances are really patterns produced by institutions and social structures. When we shift our thinking yet again to the bird instead of the cage, we see that are there physical barriers to the bird flying away, and also that if the bird has lived in such a cage all of its life, it might not have developed the capacities to fly away. Muscles atrophy, fear takes over, and even if the wires are deconstructed, the bird remains where it is. Again, Herman explains, many forms of sexualized violence have this same effect on women. Focusing on constriction, one of the cardinal symptoms of PTSD, she writes,

This narrowing applies to every aspect of life—to relationships, activities, thoughts, memories, emotions, and even sensations. And while this constriction is adaptive in captivity, it also leads to a kind of atrophy in the psychological capacities that have been suppressed and to the overdevelopment of a solitary inner life (87).

So we see that there are parallels between *being* captive and *feeling* captive, and between *physical* demobilization and *psychological* demobilization. In these cases, what we find is that the capacities for healing from trauma, and those that are central to social vitality, lose their potency. So, along with the loss of external opportunities like social mobility and relationships with others, the victim incurs the internal loss of necessary psychological capacities.<sup>118</sup> It is not just the psychological capacities that allow for

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<sup>118</sup> This is reminiscent of the arguments presented in Chapter 1 concerning the psychological nature of violence. According to those arguments, violence was not just physical—not just tied to force or aggression—but could be or is primarily psychological.

outward expression and relation to others, but those capacities necessary for self-knowledge and self-identity are also at stake. One's body-image, images of others, overarching values and ideals all help constitute an identity, but, as Herman describes, these "have been invaded and systematically broken down" (93).<sup>119</sup>

A third, complementary way of thinking about the loss of social vitality in the aftermath of violence and trauma is in terms of the loss of *meaning* and group *identity* that occurs when generations are lost or left behind.<sup>120</sup> Following the argument in Chapters 3 and 4 that sexualized violence is what it is because of the social context that produces women and gendered balances of power and vulnerability, sexualized violence defines what it means to be a woman and part of that definition is violability, and the vulnerability that makes violence possible and acceptable. In addition to the way that violence structures the meaning of 'woman,' there is an interesting generational conflict that emerges between women in light of the historical specificity of the meaning of certain kinds of violence. In the case of violence against women, our understanding of what it is and what it means (why it is morally and/or politically problematic for victims) has developed as the role(s) of women in the family and society have changed. As we

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Card's analysis presumes that violence is social, that is, there is a social meaning to violence that physical force or psychological harm does not capture.

<sup>119</sup> De-individuation is paramount to de-humanization. The example she cites here is of totalitarian control in concentration camps, where a prisoner's name is replaced with a non-human designation like a number.

<sup>120</sup> I do not intend to make a strong distinction between individual identity, discussed above, and group identity here. Individuals are constituted by their group identities, but individuals can also alter or reject certain meanings associated with group identity.

Card's intention here is to discuss the inter-generational meaning that is lost as a result of genocide, when an entire generation is lost or separated. While that is not the case with sexualized violence against women in the U.S. (there may be international contexts where sexualized violence against women does result in the loss of generations of women), the insight that inter-generational connections between members of a group is important to social vitality is still important.

saw with the emergence of the concept of domestic violence in the 1970s, and sexual harassment following that, there exist generational differences in the way that women understand each other's experiences. Sexual harassment, which is heavily regulated and litigated today, is something our mothers simply endured, while for them domestic violence is something that their mothers simply endured as they fought to bring it to public consciousness. So, the moral and political weight of solidarity is compromised by cultural and generational conflicts of understanding. Generational fissures in what it means to be a woman are not, in themselves, a bad thing. But we can imagine how enfranchising one generation of women might seem like a rejection of the way of life for a previous generation. Animosity, resentment or envy get in the way of a real "women's movement" against social practices of violence and frustrate potential relationships between women that can be a source of healing from violence. Because identity and social vitality are *historical*, and any individual's connection to her past will also include particular others in her past, generational fissures in what it means to be a woman and what kinds of lives are or ought to be open to women is damaging to social vitality and identity.

These three ways of thinking about the shattered self through social death highlight the interrelatedness of physical harm, psychological trauma and sociality. When we speak of the 'shattered self,' we are speaking about the victim's sense of autonomy, her embodiment, her ongoing life-narrative, while at the same time recognizing that this trauma runs to the very core of who one is and who one could be, to those capacities necessary for a sense of self at all, or to the ability to relate to others in healthy, productive and healing ways. We are also speaking to the real limitations faced

or felt by victims in terms of their social mobility and relative sense of comfort and safety in the world. We are ultimately speaking about the victim's shattered bond to others and the social world. The shattering of the self in these ways poses a challenge for moral theorizing because the conditions for moral agency and (as we will continue to see) moral integrity through authenticity, are compromised. This analysis also exposes the ways in which autonomy, selfhood, sociality and embodiment are related such that a threat to any of these aspects of personhood is a threat to them all.

However, recent feminist theorists have argued that the concept of the "shattered self," though it may be useful, is limited in its ability to explain the aftermath of violence or trauma.<sup>121</sup> Karyn Freedman (2006, 2008) explains that the "shattered self" refers to the effect of trauma or violence on one's beliefs about oneself, or on one's sense of self. She further claims that, in addition to new beliefs about oneself or a new sense of self (or altered old beliefs), the victim may experience an entire paradigm shift in her beliefs about the world. This is not merely a psychological or emotional problem, Freedman argues, but also an *epistemic* one. The rape survivor may now believe that the world is unsafe for her, or the victim of intimate partner violence may believe that men are not to be trusted. If the new, traumatically-informed belief conflicts with beliefs that structure an individual's worldview, her worldview may be shattered. For Freedman, the distinction between the shattered self and the shattered worldview is useful in order to see

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<sup>121</sup> See Karyn Freedman, "Traumatic Blocking and Brandom's Oversight," (2007) and "The Epistemological Significance of Psychic Trauma," (2006); and Lynne Arnault, "Cruelty, Horror and the Will to Redemption" (2008).

these new beliefs *as* beliefs rather than merely emotional reactions.<sup>122</sup> For the purpose of this project, highlighting the epistemic effects of sexualized violence adds to our philosophical understanding of victimization. Beyond physical injury and psychological trauma (and social harm) victims also find that the way they *think* is different, and the beliefs they have about the world are changed. The importance of our epistemic relationship to the world ought not to be understated here; the world is not just there for us to investigate and report on, but rather, the way we investigate, the questions that we ask and what we allow ourselves to see and believe are all intentional processes that show the world to us in different ways. When a victim reports that she or the world will never be the same, she makes a strong epistemological and ontological claim about the world.<sup>123</sup>

Freedman argues that this shift in thinking and being comes from victims being “privy to a hitherto unknown and . . . typically censored picture of the world,” that the world is unsafe for women *because they are women* (2006, 108). This “alternative worldview” is striking for many, because, as both Freedman and Brison argue, many of us face every day in the belief that the world is fundamentally fair and just.<sup>124</sup> Beliefs such as this are fundamental to how we live in the world, see ourselves and relate to

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<sup>122</sup> Freedman does not denigrate the epistemic status of emotions, but rather recognizes that for traditional epistemology, which informs much of our thinking about justification, testimony and believability, appeal to emotion is not sufficient.

<sup>123</sup> Freedman believes that we should understand claims like “the world can never be the same” metaphorically, not as literal ontological claims. Her preferred epistemology argues for methods of justification that rely on experience, internal states of knowers, coherence between beliefs and reliability of beliefs. Also, recall my brief discussion of phenomenology and constitution in Chapter 3. This is an *ontological* claim because who we are, our experiences and our actual relations to others affect and are effects of the world in which we live.

<sup>124</sup> Freedman discusses this in terms of the “just world philosophy” and Brison calls this the “myth of our own immunity.” See Freedman (2006, 112); Brison, 9.

others. Suddenly believing that one is unsafe in one's world is more cognitively jarring, for instance, than learning that Pluto is no longer a planet. Pluto's planet-hood has little to no effect on one's daily life (except, perhaps, if one is an astronomer or cosmologist); it does not change one's relationship to one's body, it does not change the terms of one's relationships with others and it does not disrupt a coherent view of the world. New traumatically-informed beliefs cannot be assimilated into the same worldview that maintains the world is fundamentally fair and just easily, and so when presented with such a belief, the tendency is towards denial.

Denying that the world is fundamentally unsafe for women because they are women is a tricky epistemological problem. On the one hand, the experience of women who are victims of sexualized violence tells a different story. On the other hand, there are numerous counter-examples that nullify the universality of the claim. That one-in-four college age women will be the victims of an attempted or completed rape says two things: that one of those four women will be victims of violence and that three of them will not.<sup>125</sup> Not all nor most women are direct victims of sexualized violence, but many are. The epistemological problem becomes how to deal with the nebulous *many*. But this is not just a philosophical or epistemological question. The inability to justify one's traumatically-informed beliefs is part of the aftermath of violence. The cognitive dissonance that results from non-integratable beliefs is psychologically discomforting, and denying the new belief that the world is unsafe is an easier solution than reconciling a new worldview with the old one. Denying traumatically-informed beliefs, because they are part of the experience of violence, is, in a way, denying the experience of violence.

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<sup>125</sup> See statistics quoted in the Introduction.

Recall Brison's experience of telling others about her rape and attempted murder. Her friends and family, though supportive of her, had to re-tell her story in a way that left their own worldviews unscathed. The re-telling might be that the world is not unsafe for women, but that women make mistakes that get them into trouble. This prevents victims' experiences from infringing on the re-teller's safe worldview. But more often than not, the move to protect oneself from the reality of sexualized violence results in denying the experiences of victims and victim blaming.

Freedman argues that in order to validate the experiences of victims and their new traumatically-informed beliefs, we must open up that "hitherto unknown" and "typically censored" worldview where the reality of sexualized violence against women is central. The problem is, as she casts it: "Because sexual violence against women is a social secret, however, [the alternative worldview] appears groundless—and this is further compounded by the fact that evidence for it comes to us from unconventional sources" (2006, 114). The problem is one of justification: how is the belief that the world is unsafe for women justified? Freedman argues that we must turn to non-traditional sources for evidence and justification in order to validate traumatic beliefs. We must rely on statistics, as flawed as they might be, and we must be willing to accept the experiences of victims through their testimony and narratives, even if they are non-authoritative. The point of this epistemic exercise is to recognize that the victim's worldview has been shattered; as Freedman describes it, trauma "tears apart her picture of the world," and new beliefs emerging from her experience of sexualized violence appear to others unfounded (2006, 108). Again, it seems as though the victim is "losing touch" with herself and her world.

At issue here is the need for victims and others to establish credibility in the victim's worldview. Why should someone who has not experienced sexualized violence believe the victim's claim that the world is unsafe for her because she is a woman? In scientific contexts, credibility is presumed to be located in the integrity of the method used to form new beliefs about the world. But in claims drawn from particular, non-repeatable, first-person experiences, believability winds up resting on the identity of the person making claims that disrupt an otherwise placid worldview.<sup>126</sup> There are cognitive as well as social barriers to this kind of credibility for victims. Freedman writes, "Although the facts about sexual violence against women provide the evidence for the kinds of beliefs that arise in the aftermath of sexual violence, there are factors both internal and external to the survivor that undermine her ability to see herself as a reliable indicator of these facts" (2008, 5). The disruption in memory that is characteristic of Post-traumatic Stress Disorder, and which disrupts the victim's "narrative self," undermines the accuracy of the victim's testimony. If certain memories are blocked, which is also common with PTSD, or if the somatic nature of traumatic re-experiencing disables the victim from cognitively and emotionally processing such memories, the victim is not a reliable authority on her own life.<sup>127</sup> Beyond these cognitive and psychological concerns, the reality of sexualized violence remains what Freedman calls a 'social secret,' primarily because the public, much like Brison's family and friends,

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<sup>126</sup> On the connection between identity, credibility and testimony, see Linda Alcoff and Elizabeth Potter, eds. (1993) *Feminist Epistemologies*, and Alison Jaggar and Susan Bordo eds. (1990) *Gender/Body/Knowledge*.

<sup>127</sup> On this, Freedman quotes psychologist Ruth Leys: "From the beginning trauma was understood as an experience that immersed the victim in the traumatic scene so profoundly that it precluded the kind of specular distance necessary for cognitive knowledge of what had happened" (2008, 7).

refuse to let that belief taint their worldview. So, even if women have access to their traumatic memories, and even if they have cognitively and emotionally related to those experiences, there are still social barriers to victims feeling that they are credible sources of knowledge.<sup>128</sup>

Freedman develops the distinction between the shattered self and the shattered worldview not because she finds them truly distinct in any way, but rather to show that victims who suddenly believe the world is unsafe for them or who refuse to trust certain others may be justified in those beliefs, where justification takes non-conventional routes. Developing the theory of the shattered worldview in all of its cognitive and epistemological dimensions adds to our understanding of the aftermath of sexualized violence. To be sure, victims find themselves permanently altered by such experiences, but they also find the world they inhabit to be a very different place. Their connection to their old world has been shattered. To the interconnectedness of embodiment, identity autonomy and sociality in trauma is added epistemic constraints on what victims believe about themselves and their world. The importance of adding this epistemic element to the “shattered self” understanding of trauma is that it explains how difficult it will be for victims to heal or move on from traumatic events. It is not just about coming to terms with something that has happened to oneself, but about entering an entirely new way of life, new relations to others and a new understanding of the world, grounded in the belief that the world is unsafe. If this belief, or the behaviors and relationships it incites cannot be dismantled or at least tempered, the victim is left with only one way of relating to the

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<sup>128</sup> Compounding this issue of social barriers to victim’s credibility, there is also a long history of women’s epistemological oppression. Cf., the volumes on feminist epistemology referenced above.

world: as a victim in a world that is unsafe for her. In the next section, I will connect this shattering of selfhood and worldview to the discussion of integrity to explain the moral significance of these claims.

## 2. Disintegration

In this section, I use the examples of rape, intimate partner violence and sexual harassment from Chapter 4, as well as an example of date rape introduced here, to connect sexualized violence to integrity-as-authenticity.<sup>129</sup> After a brief review of integrity-as-authenticity, we will see that a lack of integrity or authenticity (disintegration) is compatible with the logic of shattering discussed above. In the next section, I argue that moral disintegration is a better way to understand the aftermath of sexualized violence for victims than is the shattered self and shattered worldview.

In Chapter 2 I argued that moral integrity is a relational, social virtue that requires existential authenticity. All models of integrity examined there—from the inward-looking, deliberative models to the relational models offered by the feminist philosophers—were attempting to solve the problem that as moral agents, we strive towards autonomy but are vulnerable to the demands and actions of others. The traditional models found integrity closer to autonomy, where the interference of others on one's deliberative processes or commitments was a violation of one's integrity. The

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<sup>129</sup> This new case is compiled from local and national news coverage: Clarence Mabin, "Banned words debated in sex assault case," *Lincoln Journal Star*, July 17, 2007; Mabin, "Rape' a loaded word, judge says," *Lincoln Journal Star*, October 3, 2007; Mabin, "Jurors saw witnesses differently," *Lincoln Journal Star*, November 12, 2006; Paul Hammell "Two say 'cleansing of court language goes too far'" Omaha.com, June 7, 2007; Margery Gibbs, "Appeals court upholds court's word ban," *USA Today*; Anna Jo Bratton, "Judge tosses lawsuit over word 'rape'," *USA Today*. The story can also be followed on blog: [feministphilosophers.wordpress.com](http://feministphilosophers.wordpress.com).

feminist, relational models highlighted that moral responsibility requires attending to our own and others' vulnerability. The latter set of models also highlighted that as persons, we are always at work in developing as moral agents. For Calhoun, integrity was found in taking up one's place in the co-deliberative processes about values that we share and live by. For Babbitt, integrity concerned paths of development that allowed for the belief in oneself as an individual, with dignity and autonomy. And for Walker, integrity was being reliably responsible with others, but that reliability was grounded in our ability to be differently reliable in different contexts with different others. They share a commitment to the moral development of agents, and a belief that our responsibilities to others are never really met, but they are projects that express our moral agency. I argued there that locating integrity within the autonomy/vulnerability tension was problematic because that approach assumes that there *is* a tension between the two. Existentialism doesn't find a tension between autonomy and vulnerability, such that we could focus our lives towards one and away from the other, rather, that we are free and that we are vulnerable is the human condition. In light of this, I offered an existentialist interpretation of integrity as *authenticity*. Authenticity requires first attending to the human condition as both freedom and facticity. This means that to be human is to be free and also bound by the biological, historical and social situation in which we find ourselves. Our freedom, which is exercised through projects of self-definition arise only out of this factic background of our lives, and facticity becomes meaningful for us through our projects. So, in the human condition, freedom and facticity are symbiotic.

However, as Sartre and Beauvoir point out, much of our lives can be focused on trying to escape our freedom and the responsibility for ourselves and others that it entails.

Our attempts to escape the dynamism and ambiguity of freedom manifest in attempts to create static, fixed identities and ways of life. Recall again the waiter in the café who gave up the possibilities for being *himself* by playing the role of the waiter he thought he was supposed to play. Escaping freedom may manifest in defining oneself by certain inherited values or by inhabiting a role or character to escape the anguish of the responsibility to constantly create oneself. It may be a refusal to engage authentically with others—as freedoms themselves—or an inability to authentically relate to a situation that gives rise to one’s possibilities. *These* are failures of integrity, of authenticity, because they all amount to neglecting our responsibilities to ourselves and others.

Victims of violence, as we have seen in Sections 1 and 2 here, seem inauthentic and lacking in integrity in these same ways. Following the presentation of the case of Tory Bowen, the rest of this section is a reinterpretation of the logic of the shattered self and worldview through the lens of integrity-as-authenticity in order to argue that the aftermath of violence can be understood in terms of moral *disintegration*, through authenticity and inauthenticity.

On October 30, 2004, Victoria Bowen (then 21-years-old) met Pamir Safi (then 31-years-old) at Brothers Bar in downtown Lincoln, Nebraska. Bowen was dressed as the character Jessica Rabbit from *Who Framed Roger Rabbit?* for a costume contest the bar was holding. Over the course of the evening, Bowen consumed four alcoholic drinks, both prior to and after meeting Safi midway through the evening. After the bar closed at 1 a.m., Bowen left with Safi. According to Safi, the two had sex shortly after returning to his home from the bar, then they both fell asleep around 2 a.m. Around 7 a.m., Safi woke, and attempted to have sex with Bowen again. She asked him to stop, and he did.

Bowen claims she fell asleep with her clothes on, and when she woke at 7 a.m., they had been removed. She asked Safi to take her home, which he did. Later that day, Bowen asked a friend to take her to the hospital, where Bowen told the medical staff that she had been sexually assaulted. The medical staff contacted the Sheriff's department, which later found and arrested Safi.

This case, like many others, rests on the testimony of the parties involved. Safi admits to having sex with Bowen, but says that it was consensual. Bowen claims to have fallen asleep clothed, and when she awoke to Safi attempting sex at 7 a.m., her clothes had been removed. What is perhaps most interesting about this particular case is not what happened the night the two met, but the subsequent legal battle fought by Bowen against Safi.

Safi's first trial for 1<sup>st</sup> degree sexual assault took place in October and November 2006, two years after the alleged assault. The trial included testimony from police, medical professionals who examined Bowen at the hospital, Safi, Bowen's friends and Bowen herself. In addition to these witnesses, the prosecution was allowed to include the testimony of two women who had accused Safi of sexual assault in the three years prior to the October 2004 incident with Bowen. Neither of the two prior accusations resulted in trials for Safi, one was reported two weeks after the alleged assault and the district attorney declined to file charges, and the other, which took place inside military barracks, was dismissed by a military court. The accusations were structurally similar to Bowen's: they each involved women who had consumed "excessive" amounts of alcohol and who claimed they had gone to sleep clothed but awoke unclothed to Safi having sex with them.

The jury of twelve was composed of seven women and five men. They were instructed to find Safi guilty if the prosecution proved “beyond a reasonable doubt” that Safi had non-consensual sex with Bowen. They were also instructed in how and when to admit the testimony of the two women with prior accusations of sexual assault against Safi into their deliberation. Judge Chevront had ordered the testimony admissible in January 2007 in order “to show Safi’s plan to have sexual relations with a person who was incapable of resisting or appraising the nature of her conduct.”<sup>130</sup> In their closing arguments to the jury, the defense attorneys interpreted this order from the judge as an order not to use the incidents to make judgments about Safi’s character or as evidence of his guilt in Bowen’s case against him.

In addition to allowing this testimony, the judge also made an unprecedented move in granting a motion from the defense to bar Bowen and the other witnesses from using the words ‘rape,’ ‘sexual assault,’ ‘victim,’ ‘assailant,’ and ‘sexual assault kit.’ Chevront granted the motion on the grounds that the terms are prejudicial, and using them would prevent Safi from receiving a fair trial. The judge ordered all descriptions of what took place between Safi and Bowen to be described as ‘sex’ or ‘sexual intercourse.’

After one and a half days of deliberation the jury was deadlocked at seven (including five of the seven women on the jury) voting for a guilty verdict and five for acquittal. According to jurors Milt Foreman, Chuck Morrison, Lindsay Pickering and Judy Quade-Anderson, the judge’s order regarding the testimony meant to establish Safi’s plan to sexually assault Bowen was disregarded, though these jurors admitted the distinction between “establishing a plan” on the one hand and “judgments about

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<sup>130</sup> Mabin, “Jurors saw witnesses differently.”

character” was subtle and difficult. Morrison told reporters that he, along with the other four jurors who favored acquittal, was bothered by three portions of Bowen’s testimony. First, the prosecution’s case rested on the fact that Bowen was too intoxicated to consent, and that Safi had known this. But Bowen told the nurse at the hospital that she and Bowen first had sex around 2 a.m., a point on which Safi agreed. According to these jurors, if Bowen was too intoxicated to consent, it would have been impossible for her to recognize and remember the time.<sup>131</sup> Second, Bowen testified that she feared for her safety, and left the apartment five to ten minutes after she woke. The defense submitted evidence, including cell phone records, which supported Safi’s claim that they lay in bed together for roughly an hour before he took her home. Third, Bowen testified that she told Safi to drop her off a few blocks from her home, because she did not want him to know where she lived. She later testified (her testimony lasted twelve hours) that Safi had taken her to her home. For many jurors, these discrepancies in Bowen’s testimony weakened her credibility, causing them to doubt the case presented by the prosecution. Chevront declared a mistrial.

After this first trial, juror Mitt Foreman was quoted, “I prayed they’d try this guy again. Not guilty didn’t mean we didn’t think he did it. ‘Not guilty’ says that the state didn’t prove its case.”<sup>132</sup> Bowen claims that part of the reason for this was her inability to communicate her experience to the jury. She says the word-ban’s effect on her testimony was “huge ... I had to pause and think, re-navigate ... Jurors won’t find me credible

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<sup>131</sup> I thank Nancy Snow for pointing out that there is a non sequitur in the jurors’ reasoning here. Their reasoning is as follows: 1) Being too intoxicated to consent is cognitive impairment; 2) If one is too cognitively impaired to give consent then one is also, a fortiori, 3) too cognitively impaired to recognize and remember features of one’s surroundings, e.g., time. However, 3 does not follow from 2.

<sup>132</sup> Quoted in Mabin, “Jurors saw witnesses differently.”

because I'm pausing to find the words."<sup>133</sup> In effect, forcing Bowen to use terms not germane to her experience during the twelve-hour testimony created a gulf between the experience that she had, and the case that was being tried against Safi.

In the months leading up to Safi's retrial in July 2007, the trial, specifically Cheuvront's banning of the word 'rape' made national headlines. *The New York Times*, *USA Today* and online news magazines picked up the story after Cheuvront rejected a motion to reconsider the ruling barring the prosecution's use or incitement of testimony that included the banned words. According to Cheuvront, the word 'rape' signifies a vicious, violent sexual assault. The prosecutors were making their case against Safi on the grounds that Bowen could not consent because of intoxication, and *not* claiming that Safi viciously or violently assaulted Bowen.<sup>134</sup> He said, "because of the nature of this particular case, this court concludes that the use of the possible inflammatory term 'rape' is unduly prejudicial and unnecessary."<sup>135</sup> According to Atty. Clarence Mock from Safi's defense team, "it is a legal conclusion for a witness to say, 'I was raped' or 'sexually assaulted.' That's for a jury to decide."<sup>136</sup>

In an effort to keep the testimony and trial impartial, Cheuvront ordered the prosecution, Bowen and the prosecution's witnesses to sign an affidavit indicating their agreement not to use the banned words during the trial. The prosecution had also filed a motion with Cheuvront to ban the use of the terms 'sex' and 'sexual intercourse' because

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<sup>133</sup> Quoted in Mabin, "Banned words debated in sex assault case."

<sup>134</sup> This points to an interesting facet of the Federal Bureau of Investigation's definition of rape. For the FBI and all agencies reporting to or through them, 'rape' only describes forcible sex without the consent of a female (see Chapter 1). Excising viciousness or violence from their prosecution, they are, in fact, departing from the reigning legal definition of 'rape.' This definition is examined in Chapters 1 and 3.

<sup>135</sup> Quoted in Mabin, "'Rape' a loaded word, judge says."

<sup>136</sup> Quoted in Hammel, "Two say 'cleansing' of court language goes too far."

they connote the consent of both parties.<sup>137</sup> The motion was denied. In the meantime, women's advocacy groups organized national protests. The Chicago-based, grass-roots organization PAVE (Promoting Awareness, Victim Empowerment) and the local Rape Victim Advocacy Program organized the "Call it Rape" protest, during which protestors stood silently with black scarves covering their mouths, and holding signs that said "RAPE." In addition to the local and regional media, national news outlets such as "The Today Show" and *Time Magazine* picked up and covered the story. Bowen and the prosecutorial team refused to sign the affidavit on July 9, 2007, which further incited protests and media coverage. On July 12, 2007, in the middle of jury selection for Safi's retrial, Chevront declared a mistrial. In a statement released to national media outlets Chevront said, "The inescapable conclusion from the petition promoting the rally is that Ms. Bowen and her friends hoped to intimidate this court and interfere with the selection of a fair and impartial jury."<sup>138</sup>

On September 11, 2007, Bowen and her attorneys filed a lawsuit against Chevront in U.S. District Court, arguing that by refusing to let Bowen use the terminology of her choice during her twelve-hour testimony in the first trial, he had violated her protected right to free speech. Her lawsuit against Chevront was dismissed on the grounds that she could not prove that her First Amendment rights had been violated.

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<sup>137</sup> In Chapters 1 and 3 I address conceptions of violence rooted in the violation of a victim's will or lack of consent to a particular act.

<sup>138</sup> Quoted at [cnn.com](http://cnn.com), 7/13/07. I also find the use of term 'friends' here interesting. Insinuating a level of intimacy or familiarity in this group of activists seems to me an attempt to undermine the objectivity of their claims, as well as an attempt to belittle their position.

One way that Bowen's case ties into the logic of shattering and disintegration is through Brison's discussion of the "embodied self." As described in Section 1, Brison argued that one way of understanding the shattered self was in terms of embodiment. Her experience of sexual assault and attempted murder left her feeling more tied to her body, and made her acutely aware of the ways in which she is, and always was, vulnerable to violence. She writes that she lost her trust in her body to fulfill her projects and so felt disconnected from it when she had previously felt it seamlessly integrated into her projects. She felt that her body betrayed her, and betrayed her lack of control over the way her body was seen and used. As we saw in Chapters 3 and 4, sexualized violence—which includes rape, intimate partner violence and sexual harassment—is a social practice that in part constitutes the meaning of women's bodies, and therefore, the meaning of woman itself. Recall Elizabeth Grosz's claim quoted in that chapter that our bodies are "incomplete" and to be completed (if this is possible), they require social intervention and administration. Her point is that the *meaning* associated with our bodies and ultimately ourselves is socially constituted. As a social practice, sexualized violence constitutes women's bodies as vulnerable, and because women become identified with their bodies, as violable. This is the social triggering and long-term administration that Grosz speaks of. Bowen's case illustrates this. Nearly all of the news sources reporting on Safi's rape trials included the information that Bowen went to the party where she met Safi dressed provocatively, as Jessica Rabbit. For many, the way she presented herself, her body, *determined* the experience she had. Because she was dressed in a sexually provocative manner, she was looking for sex, and could therefore not be raped. This is an example of women being identified with their bodies in pernicious ways. While it is true

that our bodies help to determine the field of possibilities for us—I cannot fly, for instance—to be identified with one’s body is to be *reduced* to it. It did not matter what Bowen wanted, but how others perceived the presentation of her body did.

Sexualized violence stalls what Maurice Merleau-Ponty calls the “living relation” between the subject and the world. As a *living* relation, embodiment is dynamic. But as we have seen over and over again, women’s bodies are defined by gendered social practices, like sexualized violence, to *be* only one kind of thing. This closing off of possibilities for one’s life is experienced as the body “getting in the way” of one’s projects, like the way that Brison’s body betrayed her sense of security in the world and limited her social movement. As Iris Marion Young (2005b) wrote, “We feel as though we must have our attention directed upon our bodies to make sure they are doing what we wish them to do, rather than paying attention to what we want to do through them” (34). There are three ways in which integrity-as-authenticity is compromised here. For one thing, the specific social meanings attached to women’s bodies delimit the range of possibilities for women’s lives. Being identified with their biology, women are thus allowed to be mothers and nurturers, and beyond that little else without social repercussions. And second, as our examples point out, women being identified with their bodies forces women’s conscious attention to their bodies. Seeing their bodies through the social meanings given to them results in seeing the inadequacies of the body. When conscious attention remains on the body rather than engaging the body through one’s projects, the dynamism of the living relation between self and world that is embodiment is stalled. Finally, we can see the way that objectification comes full-circle. Nussbaum argued fungibility is a type of objectification: that as objects, women are substitutable.

This fungibility denies *individuality*, which as both Williams and Babbitt explain (in Chapter 2), is essential to integrity. On the existential model, fungibility and substitutability are also threats to authenticity, as a denial of the injunction to create ever-new ways of relating to others and the world through the unique projects we take up.

The narrative self is shattered in the aftermath of sexualized violence in a number of ways. One of the more striking ways to understand the narrative breakdown of the self was through intrusion, a cardinal symptom of PTSD. As described above and elsewhere, traumatic memories, lacking narrative context, intrude on the present somatically, and are thus re-experiences, rather than memories. Traumatic memories disrupt the ongoing narrative of one's life in two ways. First, because they resist being woven into the ongoing narrative of one's life, they stand apart as alien to the self, though they are very real and belong to one's identity. Also, and importantly, they can overwhelm the victim when re-experienced, trapping the victim in the past, unable to narrate the experience into the past. Traumatic memories/re-experiences are problematic on the integrity-as-authenticity model, because authenticity requires a certain comportment to one's past as part of one's situation. That comportment must recognize the role of the past in constituting who we are and what possibilities are open to us, but transcendence and freedom require that our projects are always projecting into the future. The victim of sexualized violence, because she is stuck in one place and time, loses the temporal relation to her past and her future that is necessary for authenticity, and thus integrity.

There is also a linguistic determinism that accompanies women affected by sexualized violence. This was especially true in Bowen's legal case against Safi, and was also a theme in Brison's attempts at connecting with loved ones over her experience of

sexual assault. Bowen was forced to use what she and her lawyers referred to as “unnaturally clinical language” in their testimony against Safi. The words ‘rape,’ ‘assault,’ ‘victim’ and ‘assailant’ were disallowed on the grounds that they presumed a legal judgment before one was made. She argued that the word-ban disabled her from communicating her experience to jurors. ‘Rape’ was the best description possible for her, and forcing her to use terminology inappropriate to her experience, she argued, threatened her credibility during her testimony. Similarly, Brison learned that she was not able to describe her experience to others in the terms appropriate to it. Her friends and family grew uncomfortable when she referred to her experience as a sexual assault, and rebranded it an attempted murder only. These linguistic limitations create a gulf between the experience the victim has, and the broader social world in which that experience isn’t allowed to be what it is. In Bowen’s case, the reason for this limitation was to presume the innocence of Safi, but as I have pointed out elsewhere, the term she was allowed to use—sexual intercourse—also emerges from a social world in which gendered power structures influence our understanding of what sex and sexuality are. They, too, are politically charged. Brison’s friends and family recast her experience as an attempted murder, and Brison herself began to do so, in order to spare everyone from confronting the reality that all women, including themselves, are vulnerable if sexualized violence is a social practice. But this took the path of denying the reality of Brison’s experience of rape. For both women, the ultimate effect was isolation. Unable to put one’s experiences into words, to understand them in dialogue with others, cuts victims off from the relationships that will ultimately be healing for them.

The problem for integrity here is twofold. On the one hand, women are being told what their experiences are and how they ought to understand them. They are forced to account for experiences that are not theirs in order to protect others from facing the reality of sexualized violence, or at least, from confronting the ways in which gendered power structures affect our lives so deeply. And on the other hand, their inability to communicate effectively with others about their experiences forces a separation between the person who is a victim of sexualized violence and the person one is with others. This is the loss of social vitality that Card argued was a product of being or feeling captive or isolated. While isolation is a typical feature of intimate partner violence, we see here how easy it is to affect isolation in the way that we interact and communicate with victims of sexualized violence. The tendency towards the isolation of victims is an important piece to understanding the nature of sexualized violence as disintegration. For the existential-phenomenological framework with which I have been working, sharing a world with others and negotiating the meaning of that shared world with those others is essential to selfhood. This is connected to Card's insight that meaning and identity are tied to social vitality, Herman's discussion of isolation and captivity, and Brison's emphasis on the role of others being available to hear the stories victims have to tell.

Another important way sexualized violence poses a challenge to integrity-as-authenticity is through the cultural messages that accompany, or are integral to, different forms of violence. Recall that for Emily, a woman's value was tied to the affection of men. This led her into a number of violent relationships that she thought were better than the alternative of being alone. She attributes these beliefs to the values she inherited from her southern Baptist parents. Believing that "any man is better than no man at all" put

Emily in situations where she was vulnerable to psychological manipulation. One of her partners did not allow her to share his bank account; at another time she was not allowed to keep any of her belongings in their bedroom. One encouraged her to leave her job and another persuaded her to act illegally on his behalf. If any man is better than no man, Emily's own desires, wants and plans for the future would always hinge on what the men in her life allowed her to do. The value of what it meant to be a woman, and indeed *all values*, were non-negotiable for Emily, because she would never be, by virtue of her gender, allowed to the table to negotiate the terms of her own life. In other words, she was stuck in a particular way of being and had no possibilities for any other kind of life. Emily's chances of being authentic, of having integrity, were diminished by the cultural messages she inherited about the value of women vis-à-vis men.

Sexual harassment, as we saw in the University of Colorado-Boulder case, has the same effect. The same values that are reproduced in patriarchal social systems make their way into educational and workplace settings. Women and women's contributions are devalued, and who they are allowed to be and what they are allowed to do is regulated by social sanction. For the women in the Colorado case, the football program's practice of using the promise of sex with female students as a recruiting tool and the University's complicity created a culture in which female students were little more than sex objects to lure in football players. As the case broke to national news, we were reminded of two similar cases, one in 2000 at the University of Alabama-Birmingham involving a 15-year old female student and one in 2001 at Oklahoma State.<sup>139</sup> What's at stake for the women affected by these hostile environments is that they must live and work in an environment

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<sup>139</sup> Brady, "Colorado scandal could hit home to other colleges."

that objectifies them, and discourages the pursuit of projects to create themselves in different ways. And moreover, they find themselves in sexually hostile environments where not only are various aspects of their lives circumscribed by gendered norms, but they are more liable to other forms of violence because of the culture that has been allowed to develop.

Brison argued that at the root of the problem in the aftermath of violence is the shattering of the autonomous self. It is obvious now that sexualized violence represents a loss of control over some aspect of one's life—one's body, one's way of life or one's environment—and this loss of control is surely a threat to autonomy. But it is not just control over oneself and one's life that is at stake; the victim lives under the threat of losing her memories, her connection to the past, her ability to plan for the future and her connection to others. All of these are integral to autonomy. However, seeing the aftermath of violence through the lens of integrity-as-authenticity poses an important challenge to the logic of "shattering"<sup>140</sup> so prevalent in trauma and violence studies. If we say that the self is "shattered," we presume that there is a thing that we identify as a "self" that undergoes some fundamental kind of change (trauma). On the existential-phenomenological model this is problematic, because all of our experiences, in some way, constitute who we are and who we can become. So what distinguishes an experience of sexualized violence from any other kind of experience?

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<sup>140</sup> In addition to Brison and Freedman, the logic of "shattering" is common to psychologists' understanding of trauma, and the rhetoric makes its way into philosophical thinking on violence. In addition to the "shattered worldview," Freedman describes the victim's picture of the world being "torn apart."

### 3. Existential Trauma: Creativity and Expressivity

I submit that what distinguishes sexualized violence from other experiences is that the disintegration of the self that is key to understanding what sexualized violence is, is a kind of existential trauma. Rather than thinking of the victim as a shattered self, I propose that we think of the victim as a frustrated subjectivity. Integrity-as-authenticity means that we must never be settled in who we are and the ways we fulfill our responsibilities to others. The living relation of embodiment is thwarted by sexualized violence, when victims feel betrayed by their bodies and become acutely aware of their bodies' failings. They no longer have the confidence to throw themselves into their projects, and their heightened sense of vulnerability makes them withdraw from social spaces. The dynamism of that living relation is frustrated by the victim's subjectivity being tied down into the limitations of the body *more so* than she is by being a human being. The narrative flow of a life that allows for an authentic relationship to one's past and the possibilities to which it gives rise is interrupted by the intrusion of traumatic memories. The linguistic tools necessary to make sense of one's experiences are often unavailable, so the victim lives in a gulf between her experiences and the social world that is unable to understand her. This gives rise to the victim's isolation or withdrawal from relationships and social life more generally. Because we make sense of our lives and create identities for ourselves in dialogue and contest with others, the victim is held back into a solitary, inner life. So, the experience of sexualized violence is *disintegrating* because it disables the victim from exercising her subjectivity by inhibiting the movement and adaptability necessary to live authentically.

On this understanding, sexualized violence and selfhood are thus always already normative. The frustration of the self that I have described as a hallmark of disintegration has moral effects. Recall that for Sartre and Beauvoir we are responsible for ourselves and others in order that we are all able to exercise our freedom, but that freedom also requires us to never assume we know who another is—or even who we ourselves are—what they/we need or how we should meet our responsibilities to ourselves and others. Authenticity, and thus integrity, is a constant and constantly unfulfilled activity. Because the self is not a thing to which we can attach properties, integrity is not a characteristic or a property, like a house is red or grass is green. It is something that we must constantly work at, and moreover, requires the recognition that there is no end state that we are working towards, but it is a constant project of becoming. The reason, I believe, that sexualized violence is a threat to the moral life of victims is because the same capacities that are necessary for selfhood are those that are necessary for moral life: creativity and expressivity.

Who each of us is—our identity—is constituted by our creative expression of the social forces at work on our lives. As we saw in Chapter 3, one of the primary categories of social differentiation is gender, and gender is informed by certain social practices, institutions and power structures. But each of us *lives out* gender in different ways, and some of us, by who we are, challenge the very idea of gender itself. When we take up, challenge, negotiate and live out gender, or more specific identities and roles like wife, or professor, we draw from received practices and values that are part of our situation and create out of these a project for ourselves. Where these intersect or diverge, we find unique ways to engage in the project of becoming ourselves. This is what enables us to

be dynamic and flexible, and in the language of morality, responsible to and for others. Beauvoir argues that ethics requires taking the risk that for every case, we must invent a new solution, because every woman, every wife and every professor (to use our present identifications) are woman, wife and professor in a unique way. Walker echoes this intuition, arguing that we must become differently reliable in our responsibilities to others, because the relationships we have with different others are unique, and what we do for some is not what we ought to do for others. Identity and individuality thus hinge on creativity, but as we have also seen, these are not “givens” for many in our society. Babbitt argued that individuality, which she defined as the possibility to make choices in light of our interest in our own dignity and autonomy, was not guaranteed for every member of society, but was a privilege for those who had access to paths of development which already affirmed them as individuals and not just members of a group. It is upon this belief that one can then creatively engage the meanings they find in the group identifications one has. The condition for the possibility of individuality and everything that rests upon it is moral imagination: the ability to imagine possibilities for a different kind of life and a different social order. Moral imagination is, again, a prerequisite for creativity. To be better moral agents, which is also to engage in projects to bring about a better social world, rests on our ability to envision alternative paths of development and ways of being from within our particular situation.

While I agree with Babbitt that moral imagination is key to moral development, I do not share her optimism that moral imagination can produce the radical disruption in our ways of life required for social justice. As we have seen in the examples from this chapter and the last, one of the main effects of sexualized violence is that the victim is

physically, psychologically or socially held back from having different possibilities to imagine. There are, for many victims, restricted possibilities for ways to be and live. Where isolation runs so deep as to atrophy the psychological mechanisms that enable sociality, we also see a diminishing of the possibility for imagining new ways of living. Where moral imagination is lost, or if not lost, diminished, so is creativity. It is not just individuality that is at stake when creativity is compromised but our connection to others through our chosen and non-chosen identities as well. As Card argued of social death, violence that targets a specific group because of what that group represents is a threat to the possibility of authentically identifying oneself through that group. Because sexualized violence targets women because they are women, what it means to be a woman is bound up with being vulnerable to violence. History, and with it identity, are compromised when the groups with which we identify face social extinction.

Hand-in-hand with creativity is expressivity. By expressivity I mean a range of activities: being in conversation with others, having the space to pursue the projects one has creatively imagined and engaging in cultural and historical practices that help constitute one's identity. Furthermore, expressivity is intersubjective; to express oneself is not to scream into the wind, but to have another there to listen to, affirm and challenge oneself. Expressivity is *morally* important because our actions are an ongoing expression of how we have chosen to meet our responsibilities to ourselves and others, and we must have the ability and space to negotiate the terms of our relationships with others. Here, I draw on Calhoun's intuition explored in Chapter 2 that what it means to have integrity, to be moral, is to take up one's place in the co-deliberative process of determining the shared values by which we will live. By our actions, successes, and failures to be

responsible we find ourselves in that co-deliberative space with others. But again, the examples here have provided multiple examples of sexualized violence stripping victims of the language they need to express themselves, closing them off from the spaces they require to share with others and isolating them from the relationships that might provide these resources. In addition to this, cultural messages about women's place vis-à-vis men, and women's value and role in workplace and educational settings effectively close off opportunities for expressing oneself and pursuing authentic identity-constituting projects. Puritan norms that regulate the social acceptability of sex, sexuality and public conversation about them mute or hide conversations about sexualized violence, especially when those conversations are initiated by victims. Not having a say, by fiat of social norm, accepted value or language barrier disables victims from developing and growing as individuals, and it threatens their ability to negotiate the terms of moral relationships and responsibilities.

So, in addition to physical and/or psychological trauma, there is an existential trauma that is central to the nature of sexualized violence. The victim's subjectivity—selfhood—is frustrated, because where authentic selfhood is dynamic, the disintegrated self suffers entropy, a restriction and loss of movement and potency. This may occur physically, as when a victim is prevented from moving about in social spaces freely. It may also occur psychologically, as traumatic memories resist narrative assimilation and tie the victim down to certain past experiences. And in a fundamental way, this also occurs when the capacities for being a self at all—creativity and expressivity—are threatened. Since, for the existentialist, the self is a moralized subject, and because all of

our interactions with others have moral import, existential trauma is, at the same time, moral trauma.

#### 4. Conclusion

This chapter has explained the prevalent logic of trauma: the shattered self, and along with it, the shattered worldview and social death. The logic of shattering enables us to understand that traumatic experiences affect victims in ways that go beyond physical and psychological trauma. However, this logic assumes that we have a thing—a self—that is then shattered, and the task of recovery is to put the pieces back together. I am suspicious of this logic for two reasons. One, the existential-phenomenological theory of selfhood I have used to understand the complexity of sexualized violence and identity has no room for the self understood as a “thing” in this way, and, I suspect, many feminist theorists would resist the ontological commitments that come along with this view. Rather, the self is a flexible, dynamic and evolving *activity*, constantly envisioning and engaging in new projects. So, trauma is not about shattering—for there is *nothing* to shatter—as much as it is about entropy, the frustration of the capacities necessary for self-creating activity. I also fear that shattering is overly, though perhaps unintentionally, pessimistic. I have never succeeded in putting together a glass or lamp that has shattered, and I cannot imagine the possibility for putting together a *self* or *worldview* that has shattered. Alternatively, if we recast trauma as existential and the frustrating of capacities necessary for self-creative activity, healing, recovery or repair is a more hopeful task.

## CHAPTER 6: ETHICAL ADVOCACY

This chapter continues to tie together the concepts of violence and integrity discussed throughout the previous chapters. In doing this, we will see some philosophical and practical problems emerge. In particular, we will see that both for theorizing and for understanding our own and others' experiences of victimization, our language and conceptual schemas are inadequate. We will also see that part of the problem of addressing sexualized violence, and perhaps violence in general, is that the experience of violence blurs the boundaries between the personal and the social, and it requires interpersonal, communal and political response. And finally for this analysis, yet surely not for the problems that inspire it, we are left with a paradox of control: sexualized violence is an exposition and exploitation of women's *vulnerability* vis-à-vis men, and some of the most pernicious effects of violence and trauma are feelings of helplessness and lack of control over one's mind and body, so recovering, healing and just going on after violence must involve (re)gaining control over one's life. But as we have seen, the relational and existential model of selfhood forwarded here stresses the ways in which our lives and actions are connected to and dependent upon others. So, we must forge a path between the extreme vulnerability felt in the aftermath of violence on the one hand, and the fetishization of control on the other, i.e., a sense of empowerment that refuses the support of and connection to others integral to subjectivity. These remaining areas of concern are explored in Section 1. In Section 2, I argue that we can understand sexualized violence and the accompanying moral disintegration of selfhood as a loss of "voice," in the fully intersubjective and political sense of "having a say," in one's life.

This understanding of violence opens up *advocacy* as our moral response to victims of sexualized violence.

An ‘advocate’ is, literally, “one called in, or liable to be called upon, to defend or speak for,” from the Latin *vocare* which means “to call.”<sup>141</sup> The verb *vocare* is derived from the noun *vox*, or “voice.”<sup>142</sup> We are most familiar with advocacy in the legal system, when an individual (or group) cannot speak for herself and others are called in to advocate for her, sometimes in place of her and sometimes in conjunction with her.<sup>143</sup> I want to expand on this notion of advocacy and reach back to the term’s root in the word *voice*. Advocates use their voice where and when others cannot use theirs, but I want to suggest that advocacy ought to extend beyond lending our voices to others to include *cultivating* or *giving voice*. I lay out three related goals for advocacy as a response to a loss of voice: 1) lending our voices to victims, 2) developing a better language for thinking and speaking about sexualized violence, and 3) being others that help rehabilitate victims’ voices. Section 3 examines three possible ways of thinking about advocacy as our moral responsibility to others, one developed from care ethics by Sally Scholz (2008), one through the liberatory function of narrative retellings and counterstories offered by Hilde Lindemann Nelson (2001) and finally, Kelly Oliver’s (2001) theory that bearing witness to others is at the heart of subjectivity. Drawing on insights from these authors, I will argue that we have a moral responsibility to be advocates for victims of sexualized violence, and that we are charged to be *responsible* advocates.

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<sup>141</sup> Oxford English Dictionary Online, from Second Edition 1989.

<sup>142</sup> Thanks to Adam Williams, friend and Latin teacher for the lesson in Latin.

<sup>143</sup> Michael Monahan pointed out that in both German and Spanish the term for lawyer is the equivalent of advocate: *advokat* in German and *abogado* in Spanish.

## 1. Where We Have Been

Chapters 1, 3 and 4 explored the nature of sexualized violence as an expression of women's social and political vulnerability, a vulnerability that helps to constitute the meaning of 'woman' in our society. Individual acts of violence were connected to each other as instances of violence as a social practice that sets up the limits of women's (and men's) agency in concert with various other forces or faces of oppression: exploitation, marginalization, domination, etc. The ubiquity of violence in our society has been met with concern in academic, clinical and political circles, and a portion of that concern has been reviewed here. But these discourses, having produced competing theories of what violence is and what it does to persons, have struggled to understand the way that violence is systematic, and affects the lives of women systemically. Recall that part of my argument against traditional philosophical approaches to violence was that their reliance on force (and in a related way, aggression) stunted any attempt to understand acts of violence beyond their physical effects on victims. These encouraged the isolation of particular acts and particular agents from each other, and especially from the social and cultural systems that made such violence possible and acceptable. And these understandings also struggled to appreciate the deep psychological (and as I later argued, moral) effects of violence and the *threat* of violence, that is, the *systemic* effect that a culture of sexualized violence has on women's lives. Taking account of the way that rape and intimate partner violence were part of the same social structure also led to considering the way that what is usually taken as less harmful forms of sex discrimination—stalking and sexual harassment—are also part of this system. For this

reason, I offered the term *sexualized violence*, which I do not believe is burdened by ties to physical harm, the intentions of aggressors or the violation of consent. In the discussion of the particular narratives presented in Chapters 4 and 5, I showed that sexualized violence, rather than being grounded in physical injury, psychological trauma, or the violation of consent, is a frustration of the existential capacities necessary for integrity on the model of authenticity: creativity and expressivity. A creative and expressive subject is one who continues to grow and develop, define and redefine herself through her projects and her relationships with others. Her actions and interactions are an expression of her creative integration of the possibilities for her future and what she carries with her from her past. All the forms of sexualized violence (though in different ways and magnitudes) frustrate women's abilities to engage authentically with others and the world by defining beforehand what they can be, how they may live and what futures are open to them.

At both the level of theory and the level of experience (though not admitting a strict separation between the two), we encounter failures of our *language* and *concepts* to help explain women's experiences of sexualized violence and to theorize about it. Bringing attention to this problem is part of the goal of this dissertation. But what has been left unaddressed, however, is how these problems affect the way women experience sexualized violence, or the ways they try to understand these experiences. In Chapter 1, I brought attention to the work of sociologists Liz Kelly and Jill Radford (1996), who argued that the legal language of sexual violence results in *silencing* women's

experiences of sexualized violence.<sup>144</sup> Women's experiences are silenced because the legal system produces rigid categories into which one's experiences have to "fit" in order to be recognized and prosecuted. One of the most harmful legacies of this phenomenon has been the struggle to legally account for date rape and other forms of intimate partner violence. Recall the narrative of Tory Bowen in Chapter 5, whose 'provocative' outfit and alcohol consumption were used by Safi's defense to deflate Bowen's claim that she did not consent to intercourse with Safi. In this same vein, Brison noted that the fact that her attacker was a stranger, and that she had been outside exercising (not drinking or dressing provocatively, I assume) made the difference between people believing her and not believing her, and made the case against her attacker in her trial much more sound. Brison's rape easily fit our legal categories, while Bowen's did not, so much so that it became a question whether or not she could even *use* the word 'rape' in her trial.<sup>145</sup>

Kelly and Radford write,

Man-made law has been explicitly constructed to exclude from 'crimes against the person' all but extreme forms of sexual violence. [...] The law not only reflects but also constructs a very limited definition of sexual violence, and thereby plays a significant role in denying or trivializing women's experience of male sexual violence (19).

Outside of the extreme cases, or when we enter the gray areas of intent and consent,

Kelly and Radford found that women were unable to define, understand and communicate their experiences.

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<sup>144</sup> They do not use the term sexualized violence; they are discussing street harassment as a form of sexual harassment, and since it fits with my framework of sexualized violence, I will call it that here.

<sup>145</sup> I am assuming a similarity between the French and American legal systems on this point.

They present the following descriptions of “less severe” or “less serious” instances of sexualized violence that show how women struggle to identify intimate partner violence, especially in its more psychological forms, as well as harassment and stalking as forms of violence, even when they recognize the negative effects such violence has on their work performance, personal lives and sense of security:

I’ve been frequently harassed by kerb-crawlers. It happened even when I was pregnant. There were several instances about a fortnight ago, though *nothing really happened*. The assumptions men make—their arrogance. It makes me sick and angry. I don’t go out much alone now. I resent that enormously (23, emphasis added).

I was molested by a man who grabbed hold of me and pushed himself against me in the tube when it was crowded. I screamed as loudly as I could. He slapped my face, but then got off as we got to a station. I suppose I was lucky that *nothing actually happened* (25, emphasis added).

The men in the office are forever having a go—sort of half joke/half propositioning me. They know I don’t like it, but they never give up. *It’s nothing really*. I can handle it, or I have so far, but it pisses me off. I’m exhausted by the end of the day (26, emphasis added).

I’ve been attacked in the library—young white boys fooling around in a threatening and racist way. *Nothing’s actually happened to me*, but I’ve had to call the police to have them removed. It’s always distressing. It’s a good job I’ve got and I can’t afford to lose it (ibid, emphasis added).

I remember my first responses were dismissing it and disbelief. I nearly did it again today, because I’m still at the point where I think ‘*well, it’s not really violence*.’ Then I think ‘come on be straight with yourself.’ It did start out in minor ways with pushing and it wasn’t till near the end of the marriage that he got into things that you think of as being attacked. That went a long way before I thought *this* is violence—a hell of a long way (28, first set of italics are added).

I just laid on the bed and let him try, and of course he couldn’t keep his erection and he was getting really mad about that ... *so I wasn’t actually raped as such*, he didn’t—but I was as far as I was concerned (30, emphasis added).

In each of these descriptions, the woman struggles to account for the harm or injury suffered because she feels uncomfortable relying on the weight of the term ‘violence’ doing so for her. So, not only do we see that legal categories are not corresponding with the experiences of women, but this lack of correspondence, accompanied by a deference to the authority of these legal categories, disempowers women from identifying, understanding and communicating their experiences *for what they are*.<sup>146</sup> In this way, our philosophical and theoretical quarrels about what the term ‘violence’ means and whether certain acts or experiences are ones of sexual or sexualized violence are mirrored practically, in the real experiences of women every day. We are thus in need of *inclusive* vocabularies and conceptual schemata that can incorporate cases like Brison’s and Bowen’s, but also the experiences of harassment and intimate partner violence described above.

This leads to a second problem. An individual experiences sexualized violence, and the way she experiences violence is conditioned by her identity, the availability of means for understanding or making sense of her experience, and the support she has in the aftermath of violence. In this way, sexualized violence is a *unique* experience for each person. And indeed, as both Herman and Brison argued, the aftermath of violence tends towards isolation from others and the world. However, this uniqueness is not thoroughgoing. While only *I* can experience and live through sexualized violence directed at *me*, the way that I have come to understand it as such, and even how I have come to understand myself, is socially and politically mediated. So, this uniqueness to our experiences does not, therefore, result in an epistemology of provenance within the

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<sup>146</sup> On this, see Sandra Bartky (2005) “Battered Women, Intimidation and the Law.”

sphere of subjectivity.<sup>147</sup> In addition, instances of sexualized violence are systematically connected in the ways rehearsed throughout these chapters. Our responses to sexualized violence as a social and political phenomenon cannot just address individual instances, but must address violence at the social and political level.<sup>148</sup> This problem is related to the linguistic and conceptual problem described above, because it hones in on the distinction (and contention) between the personal and the political: what is “mine” about my experiences and how I rely on larger systems of language and meaning to make sense of my experiences, or to have experiences at all.<sup>149</sup> While the tendency in feminist theory has been, for good reason, to flood the would-be sacred realm of the personal with the political, bringing out many of the ways that the “private” sphere of life is an illusion, this tendency is also one towards *colonizing* the personal by the political.<sup>150</sup> By this I intend that we have become so good at identifying the ways that oppression works to structure the beliefs, desires and actions of individuals that we have generated an account of the political subject that neglects the subjectivity that comprises it. What we require, philosophically, is an account of personhood that can withstand the ways that social and

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<sup>147</sup> See Chapter 1, Conclusion. The phrase ‘epistemology of provenance’ is borrowed from Sonia Kruks (2001), and indicates an epistemological stance that isolates the individual knower from her epistemological and moral communities.

<sup>148</sup> Recall that this was part of the problem with the trauma-centered theories of violence, that in medicalizing violence, we treat patients with symptoms, not victims of larger structural injustices.

<sup>149</sup> The language of “having experiences at all” is not meant to introduce a radical sense of social construction (or deconstruction) here. Rather, I want to leave open room for understanding that there are aspects of our experiences, indeed, *how* we experience things, that are socially informed.

<sup>150</sup> This language is borrowed from Marilyn Nissim-Sabat (2009) *Neither Victim nor Survivor: Thinking towards a new humanity*, Chapter 8, and this diagnosis is adapted from her discussion of Naomi Morgenstern’s interpretation of Toni Morrison’s *Beloved*, about which Nissim-Sabat argues that analyses that subsume Sethe’s actions into a larger historical and political narrative about the effects of slavery miss that Sethe’s actions are also an exercise of her own subjectivity, an expression of her “inner life.”

political systems structure the self, but which do not *reduce* the self to these structures. This account will not be just philosophically productive, but will, I think, help us better understand that the suffering of victims of sexualized violence is deeply personal and necessarily political. Upon this understanding, we may then be able to develop comprehensive responses to the culture of sexualized violence that attend to the physical, psychological, moral and political needs of victims.

The third problem I want to address on the heels of this analysis emerges from the social genealogy of integrity offered in Chapter 2. Recall that I situated my existential account of integrity-as-authenticity in line with traditional and feminist accounts on the grounds that each was an attempt to understand, address or resolve a tension in moral theory between the moral ideal of autonomy and the fact of our vulnerability to others. The traditional models were described in that chapter as ‘self-protective,’ where the self being protected was our deliberative processes, character or commitments. Each of these models sought to preserve our autonomy against the demands that others may place on us.<sup>151</sup> The relational models, by emphasizing the ways that selfhood and morality are relational, tilted integrity towards respecting and cultivating our vulnerability towards others, arguing that the autonomy sought in the traditional models was not only impossible, but undesirable. The existential model of integrity I offered at the end of Chapter 2 recast the tension between vulnerability and autonomy not as a choice to be

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<sup>151</sup> Recall the distinction in focus between procedural and substantive autonomy theories here: even though preserving the integrity of one’s deliberative processes is not as important for substantive autonomy theorists, and considering the actual choices made is outside of bounds for procedural theorists, both camps are still preserving autonomy as something internal and self-determinative (Chapter 2).

made as we structure our moral theories, but as the *human condition* that we must take account of, without attempting to transcend.<sup>152</sup>

This tension between autonomy and vulnerability reaches its peak in the discussion of sexualized violence as moral disintegration in Chapter 5. As we saw in Chapters 1 and 3, and as is referenced above, sexualized violence exposes the ways that women are socially and political vulnerable in our society, and can be considered an exploitation and re-affirmation of this vulnerability. Sexualized violence is the dark side of our vulnerability to others, and its aftermath, as we saw in the discussion of Post-traumatic Stress Disorder, augments the lack of control felt by victims.<sup>153</sup> The more-or-less benign instances of vulnerability that are part of what it means to be human—relying on others for help, emotional and psychological support through everyday emotions, etc.—become for the victim sites where her (perceived) lack of control over her life is heightened. So victims represent for us our deepest moral fear, that all of the areas of our lives we think are under our control are only tenuously so, and at base, we are helplessly and hopelessly connected and vulnerable to others. This fear, I believe, structures our moral and political theories in such a way that we then fetishize control and mastery over our selves and our lives. This comes out in the traditional theories of

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<sup>152</sup> The charge that the accounts reviewed in Chapter 2 attempt to transcend the human condition is mostly directed at the traditional theories of integrity, because they dismiss important aspects of human life that tie us to others. My reticence to fully endorse some of the relational models of integrity is based on those models still taking a position on the tension between autonomy and vulnerability (choosing vulnerability) rather than refusing to see it as a problem, as I believe the existentialist model does.

<sup>153</sup> Recall that hyperarousal results from a reordering of the sympathetic nervous system such that the victim feels that her responses to external stimuli are outside of her control. In addition, victims feel the loss of control over their own minds because of the intrusion of traumatic memories and the compulsion towards constriction in what Herman called the ‘dialectical oscillation’ between the two.

integrity reviewed in Chapter 2, in their various attempts to draw deliberation, desire, action and character in from the field of intersubjective conditioning. If victims represent our worst fears, then integrity represents our greatest moral triumph—becoming the masters of our own lives. In that same chapter I argued that this kind of integrity is neither possible nor desirable, and that by refocusing on the responsibilities we have to others, the relational models bypassed the demand for self-control and mastery.

However, these relational models will still have to account for the place of control and mastery within our shared moral lives, especially for victims of sexualized violence. As Herman writes,

The first principle of recovery is the empowerment of the survivor. She must be the author and arbiter of her own recovery. Others may offer advice, support, assistance, affection and care, but not cure. [...] No intervention that takes power away from the survivor can possibly foster her recovery, no matter how much it appears to be in her immediate best interest (133).

A morally adequate and empowering view of recovery for victims will require a theory of the self that does not proffer an ideal of control and self-mastery that is unattainable and dangerous. Instead, a vision of recovery must be articulated that emphasizes the role of relationships in constituting our lives and moral responsibilities, and that balances our vulnerability with the necessary power and control over our lives we require.

## 2. Voice

In *Aftermath*, Brison tells of a recurring disability she faced in the years that followed her sexual assault and attempted murder. She suffered what a friend labeled “fractured speech” and she identifies as a “speech deficit”: she stuttered, stammered and was unable to form complete sentences. She writes,

After my assault, I frequently had trouble speaking. I lost my voice, literally, when I lost my ability to continue my life's narrative. [...] For about a year after the assault, I rarely, if ever, spoke in smoothly flowing sentences. I could sing, though, after about six months, and like aphasics who cannot say a word, but can still sing verse after verse, I never stumbled over the lyrics (114).

Brison ties her loss of speech to the shattering of her (narrative) self, which as I discussed in Chapter 5, can be affected by a fracture in the narrative structure of one's memories, a denial of one's experiences by others, or, importantly, an inability to find appropriate words to craft the narratives that make sense of one's experiences. For Brison, "losing her voice" meant not just losing the capacity for speech, but losing the words and concepts necessary to understand, communicate and interpret her experience. It also meant that her connections with others and the world were frustrated because the medium through which we relate to and empathize with others—language—was frustrated. More than just connections with others, a speech or communication deficit can also affect how we understand ourselves. Unable to find the adequate words to describe our experiences, we may settle on words or concepts that don't match up in the ways we think they should or carry meanings that we don't intend. Bowen's legal battle to use the word 'rape' in her trial is an example of this. 'Sexual intercourse' is one way to describe what happened between her and Safi, and neither of them deny that. But Bowen's experience is of 'rape.' And, in a similar vein, it highlights the kind of impact that Brison's family and friends' refusal to talk about her experience as a sexual assault can have. Brison's loss of voice is thus both literal and figurative. Her speech deficit prevented her from communicating, not just about her assault and attempted murder, but about everything,

and when she *could* communicate, she was prevented from doing so by social conventions of nicety.<sup>154</sup>

I submit that all the cases discussed throughout these chapters can be understood as a “loss of voice” in a number of related ways. Brison literally could not speak at times, and Bowen was unable to communicate in words and concepts adequate to describing her experience. But Emily, the victim of domestic abuse, was limited in the ways that she could express herself within the rigid and hostile value system in which she was raised and which led to her abusive relationships. And for the women who were assaulted by football players and recruits and the University of Colorado-Boulder, the

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<sup>154</sup> Although Brison doesn’t discuss it in the retelling of her narrative, it is possible that these episodes of speech deficit were caused by the blow(s) to the head she sustained during her attack. *Aphasia*, a language deficit resulting from lesions or disease in the language centers of the brain, can affect either an individual’s ability to speak (Broca’s Aphasia) or an individual’s ability to understand language (Wernicke’s Aphasia). See Wallace, “Aphasia,” in *Corsini Encyclopedia of Psychology and Behavioral Science*, 3<sup>rd</sup> Ed. While it was formerly believed that there were specific areas of the brain responsible for language processing and speech development, it is more commonly believed today that there are multiple neural pathways responsible for these expressive functions, and diagnosis is less and less dependent upon finding specific brain injuries in the commonly identified language centers of the brain. Regardless of this, it is important to note that aphasics do not suffer from disordered perception or cognition. So, trauma victims who suffer aphasia do not necessarily misperceive or have trouble thinking, they have difficult processing and producing words. See Antonio R. Damasio (1992) “Aphasia” in the *New England Journal of Medicine*. At this point in my research, I have not come across evidence that aphasia can result from psychological or other trauma without underlying physical causes, such as lesions or disease in the brain. However, I am not sure it is necessary to make the case for non-physical aphasia for it to be relevant to this discussion. I have not endorsed, rather I have tried to avoid, making a clear distinction between the physical and the psychological. Psychological trauma has physical manifestations and physical trauma has effects long after we can see and touch our wounds. If it is possible for what is commonly understood as “psychological trauma” to rewire neural processes to insulate traumatic memories, then I would assume it is at least possible for other “psychological” traumas to affect language comprehension and speech production. I am grateful to my friend Jane Krebs, SLP, for her help in navigating the literature on aphasia, and for her patience with my naïve questions about speech pathology.

culture of sexual objectification and violence circumscribed their social movement, their options and who and what they were allowed to be for that community. Furthermore, the authorities in their community, the individuals who make and sustain the practices of agency and responsibility (to borrow a phrase from Walker), endorsed the long-running practice of sexual victimization with their refusal to confront it. Their silence was an exercise of their voice, which set out the rules of the game and the importance of following those rules. These rules, which not only allowed but *encouraged* violence against female students, silenced any dissident voices about the relative value of women and men in the university community.<sup>155</sup>

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<sup>155</sup> A colleague suggested that this way of casting the problem is an overstatement of it, and that while we can make some general conclusions about the role and value of women to the university community from the football program's practices and the university's ill response to it, we cannot, therefore, conclude anything about the roles and value of men in the university community from this example. The motivation behind this concern is, I think, well-placed. We should be careful not to draw sweeping conclusions from individual examples, and because it wasn't "men" but "football players" that participated in this practice, we might be better off looking at the relative roles and values of women and football players in the university community. Further complicating this example is that the football program's practices were covered up and excused by a number of people within the university administration, some of them women. I maintain that this example can give us clues about the roles and value of women and men in the university community and society at large if, as I have been arguing throughout this dissertation, we see these not as individual, discrete incidents of harm against particular persons, but as part of a complex, evolving system of social practices which have as their primary purpose the oppression of women. To respond to the complication that women within the UC-B system were part of this practice, I do not ultimately think this is a problem for my analysis. There are a number of reasons why members of oppressed groups also become agents of oppression within their groups. One explanation, coming from psychology and reviewed briefly in Chapter 5, is that individuals who are or feel captive (which can result from a range of practices) oftentimes wind up identifying with the interests of their captor. Another way around this complication is to emphasize that the position of power held by the women who would have allowed and excused this practice insulated them from the way the practice affected women in relatively powerless positions, especially students. So, in the end, they were not participating in a practice that affected them negatively at all. This is part of the nature of systematic injustices and what makes them so insidious; individuals participate in practices that unjustly benefit some and harm

“Losing one’s voice,” then, is another way of understanding the moral disintegration that I argued was part of the nature of sexualized violence. In Chapters 4 and 5 I argued that sexualized violence works to undermine women’s capacities to create their selves, and to express themselves through their desires, their beliefs and their actions. Sexualized violence does this by determining in advance *what* women are and what they are allowed to become. Emily’s series of abusive relationships are instructive here. She was born and raised in a value system that tied who she was, what she could be, and ultimately her value or worth, to the approval of men. While it is true that who we are and what we are allowed to become is *always* conditioned by others—this is one of the few “truths” of existentialism—we can still take up better and worse ways of being in relation to and with others. As Sartre and Beauvoir insisted, for our relations with others to be ethical, they must always open up possible futures for ourselves and for others, rather than close them off. This is because we are charged with fostering the freedom of others within the existential framework. A restriction of possibilities, a closing off of future projects that create and express a self is a denial of freedom. We cannot have integrity, and others surely cannot, if freedom in this sense is compromised. The value system that informed Emily’s belief that she was only as good as the approval of whatever man with whom she found herself *closed off* possibilities for her to be anything other than an accessory to a man, while her mother’s insistence that “any man is better than no man at all” pushed Emily into various abusive relationships that further

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others, but the sum total of individuals’ responsibility for those harms and benefits does not equal the systematic effect such practices have on systems of value and power that underlie our culture. So, because some women are responsible for the harm that the football program’s recruiting practices had on other women does not mean that the gendered power structure is equalized in that community.

limited the possibilities for her future. Emily's hope for integrity on the model of authenticity is thwarted by her inability to play an active role in the creation of who she is and envisioning possibilities for herself. What we see here is that this "closing off," like the idea of "voice" I have been discussing, occurs in different ways at different levels. Some women are literally prevented from doing things by physical force or threat of physical force and violence, and others by fear of social sanctions, like the loss of respect from one's peers or co-workers, economic and other material loss, or fear that one may disappoint one's family and friends.<sup>156</sup> And if acting in and engaging with the world is part of how we express and create our selves, then limited social mobility has an existential impact. There is a reciprocal relationship between this broadened conception of voice and open future necessary for authenticity. Having a say allows us to choose the projects that will continue to give meaning to our lives, and in so doing, open up ever-new projects for authentic self-creation for ourselves and others. Having a voice and an open future are different ways of expressing what has been at stake in sexualized violence and in authenticity: freedom.

Susan Brison struggled to find the words to express herself, while Tory Bowen wasn't allowed to use the words she knew best communicated her experiences. The women at the University of Colorado-Boulder were silenced not only by the practice of sexual assault, but the community's refusal to acknowledge it. Emily was told what and who she could be, no more, no less. Each of these cases gives us part of the picture of moral disintegration that we need to understand sexualized violence, and together they help us to better understand that our response to sexualized violence must be multi-

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<sup>156</sup> Recall the discussion of "social threat situations" in Chapter 3 through Ann Cudd's *Analyzing Oppression*.

faceted and perhaps as dynamic as the subjectivity such a response is meant to repair. In the following section, I take up *advocacy* as a way of understanding such repair. This notion of advocacy must also resolve, recast or at least help us better understand the problems discussed in the first section of this chapter—that we lack an adequate language and conceptual schema for understanding sexualized violence, that any new language and conceptual schema must address that sexualized violence is both personal and cultural, and that this conceived response to sexualized violence navigates the difficult terrain of empowering victims and idolizing control and self-mastery.

### 3. Advocacy

We are most familiar with advocacy in professional contexts: lawyers advocate for clients, nurses advocate for patients and teachers advocate for students. These have in common a power differential with respect to the way resources (material and otherwise) are distributed, who has access to them, and who has a say in how they will be distributed in the future. Professional advocacy such as this involves the advocate's efforts to alter practices on behalf of clients or a group of clients, but that in addition to institutional forms of advocacy like these, advocates must *empower* clients.<sup>157</sup> Working on this understanding of advocacy, we can see that advocacy for victims of sexualized violence can come in various forms: medical professionals, lawyers and social workers most notably. In these professional roles, each has particular access to knowledge and resources that may be unavailable to the victim. But the affect of advocacy goes beyond the knowledge base and resources particular to the profession in which we find the

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<sup>157</sup> See Mark Ezell (2001) *Advocacy in the Human Services*, and E.H. McWhirter (1997) "Empowerment, social activism and counseling."

advocate. Advocates are also part of the nexus of relationships that the victim will rely on to “re-create the psychological faculties that were damaged or deformed by the traumatic experience” (Herman, 1992, 133). So, navigating the social practices and policies is accompanied by the work of empowering victims by validating their experiences (ibid, 133-4).

The form such validation and empowerment takes is determined by the scope of one’s professional role. But importantly, advocacy is not limited to its embodiment in certain professions. While she does not use the term “advocacy,” Walker (2006) discusses a community’s response to victims of moral wrongdoing in similar terms to those I have been using: validation, voice and vindication. The process of validating victim’s experiences, giving them a voice and vindicating them is what she calls “moral repair,” a process aimed at “restoring or stabilizing—and in some cases creating—the basic elements that sustain human beings in a recognizably moral relationship” (23). Walker argues that this task is the province of communities because it is communities—of greater and lesser scale and definition—that set the norms and standards of behavior, by punishing or otherwise sanctioning wrongdoing. So, the moral repair necessary in the wake of moral wrongdoing is a community challenge. In addition to this, I add that the analysis of sexualized violence, and even of moral integrity presented here, have been social and political, and as such is conditioned by all of our actions and inactions. In these ways, we are all in moral relationships with victims of violence, and failure to attend to the needs of victims—a failure to be an advocate, as I will argue—is to fail to be

morally responsible in this respect.<sup>158</sup> Broadening advocacy in both content and scope allows us to see that advocacy is not limited to the legal and professional contexts in which we are used to finding it, but this broadening opens up the space for advocacy as *our* moral response to victims of sexualized violence.<sup>159</sup>

As our moral response to sexualized violence, advocacy has three goals. The professional advocacy discussed above is one of them. In these cases, advocates lend their voices to others who are disempowered. Disempowerment in this sense may be a result of the loss of voice as it is discussed above, but could also be built into certain professions and professional roles. I am more concerned, however, with the remaining two goals of advocacy: developing an adequate language and concepts for thinking and talking about sexualized violence, and being others that help to cultivate and rehabilitate lost voices.

Having identified multiple ways our language and concepts fail to capture the experience of victims of sexualized violence, advocates must continue to develop and/or defend new ways of speaking about and new terms for understanding the various

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<sup>158</sup> At multiple points in this dissertation, I have pointed to the violation that victims often report in the aftermath of sexualized violence as a result of failures of the legal system to prosecute abusers and perpetrators, denial and victim blaming described as a form of violence itself. I think there is a place in the concepts I have developed here for these to be understood as violence accompanied by the right analysis. But I want to highlight here that Walker's insistence that communities take up the challenge of validating, giving voice to and vindicating victims lends credence to the view that a community's failure to meet the needs of victims is at least a moral wrongdoing.

<sup>159</sup> By this I do not intend the strict separation between the ethical and the political. It should be clear by now that I do not endorse a view of ethics, or politics for that matter, in isolation from other aspects of social life. Rather, I want to highlight that we can develop a broader understanding of advocacy that can structure our relationships with others.

experiences of victimization. There is power in the words we have, and the terms we have available to us are the medium through which we make sense of our lives.

I have attempted to intervene here with the term ‘sexualized violence’ because the term ‘sexual violence’ has come to describe only violent forms of sex acts (violence being the violation of consent), and beyond that, has been limited to describing *physical* manifestations of violence. As Kelly and Radford showed, women experience violence but are unable to identify it as such because of the conceptual restrictions of the terms available to them. The dangerous result, as we saw, is that “nothing really happens.” *Sexualized* violence, because it describes an experience of objectification and moral disintegration, is not derived from physical conceptions of violence. If we turn the debate away from conceptual restrictions that bind it to sex acts and physical violence, like with the concept of sexualized violence, we may develop a language that enables women to communicate the harm, violation and injury that they’ve experienced. As a concept, sexualized violence side-steps the debates about physicality and consent that plague contemporary discourse on violence against women. It describes a kind of experience and a way that oppression works on individuals, rather than attempting to decide in advance who did what to whom, what they intended and what these things mean *based on* these factors. We need a vocabulary that is flexible and dynamic because all experience is flexible and dynamic. I believe that identifying the harm in question as a moral and existential harm leaves open the possibility that a range of actions, interactions and experiences can result in this harm. Having an open and dynamic language allows individual women to be creative in the ways that they express their experiences and their

selves in the wake of sexualized violence, rather than channeling all cases into strict, stifling legal and ethical categories based on intent or consent, for example.

Another convention in our language about violence against women is the victim/survivor binary. Marilyn Nissim-Sabat (2009) argues that this binary is part of a “victim ideology” which sets up a sharp distinction between victims and survivors such that those who are victims are by their own choosing *remaining* victims, while survivors “move beyond,” “get over,” and “leave behind” victimization.<sup>160</sup> It posits that all victims, by choosing to remain victims and not choosing survivorship are responsible for their continued victimization. It also posits an ideological sense of survivorship, however, that sees survival as the goal for victims. This ideology, by insisting that victims “survive” sees survival as valuable when, in fact, as Nissim-Sabat writes, “Survival cannot, as such, be a value, for it is the precondition for the possibility of actualization of any and all values” (165). All victims of violence or oppression are, then, forever stunted: either they identify as victims of such things and suffer the consequences of “choosing” to remain victims, or they choose to leave behind victimization for survivorship, but to survive really only means to continue, it does not in itself mean to heal, repair or liberate the individual from oppression or violence. Nissim-Sabat argues that we need to leave behind the victim-survivor binary in order to understand the effects of violence and trauma on victims, but also to understand that there is a life beyond mere survival, a life of values, projects and relationships.

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<sup>160</sup> See Chapter 8 in *Neither Victim Nor Survivor*. “Victim ideology” my own way of describing Nissim-Sabat’s project, and the victim-survivor binary is only one of the forces that hold the ideology together.

Leaving behind this binary will also leave behind a pernicious distinction between agency and oppression that has emerged at various points in this dissertation. Because sexualized violence exploits and reinforces women's vulnerability, victims seem to lack agency, while survivors refuse to admit the effects of violence and oppression. As the authors reviewed in the next section will argue, agency and oppression are not necessarily opposed, and victims can still be persons and agents even within oppressive social structures and in the aftermath of violence. This is not just an academic issue, however. One of the inspirations for this project was a discussion with a colleague about childhood abuse where she repeated, "I am not a victim. Victims are the ones who die. I am a survivor." Nissim-Sabat recounts a similar experience listening to testimonies at Illinois Governor Ryan's hearings regarding the state's death penalty. A woman who believed her son to be wrongly executed by the state declared at the hearings, "I am not a victim, I'm a survivor" (164). Being a victim of oppression or violence is bad enough, but the sentiment expressed by these two women is that *identifying* as a victim is even worse; it signals an inability to move on, or worse, a choice not to. I think this binary plagues our discussions of violence against women because it dangerously associates victims with a complete loss of agency (or, paradoxically, a choice to refuse agency), and idealizes survivorship such that victimization and the trauma that an individual carries with them must be forgotten or left behind, rather than confronted, addressed and transformed. This language has split academic feminism into two camps: victim feminists and anti-victim feminists. Victim-feminists, dubbed so by the anti-victim feminists, focus too strongly on the myriad ways women are oppressed and violated within our society, and too little on the ways that women exercise agency. Elisabeth Badinter (2006) writes,

For the last thirty years, male domination has been tirelessly tracked down. It is being spotted everywhere: in institutions, in private or professional everyday life, in sexual relations or in the unconscious. Androcentrism is everywhere: all the more fearsome since it goes forth in disguise. It can mutate, just like certain viruses. As soon as you think you are done with it, it replicates itself in a different way (27).

The danger, argues Badinter, is that nothing is left for women that is theirs—our lives are male domination and androcentrism from top to bottom. Far from feminism being a cause under which women could unite, this leaves women with a sense that their agency and choices are a myth, buried deep within the social and political processes of violence and oppression. The idea of a survivor feminism,<sup>161</sup> emerges that attempts to appreciate the reality of such violence and oppression for many women, but which chooses to focus beyond these things, in the spaces where women do make legitimate choices everyday, and within which lives are planned and those plans are executed. I would locate this project in the legacy of “survivor feminism,” but I am reticent to accept that there are victim and survivor feminisms. This division obeys the binary logic that focusing on victimization is not focusing on survivorship, while focusing on survivorship diminishes the reality of sexualized violence. The more general point to be made here is that the terms of the debate we have inherited are not neutral, and they carry with them ideological presuppositions that lead us to stalemate.

Examples such as these point again to the need for advocacy to give voice to victims through developing a language adequate to victims’ experiences. Not being critical of the language and concepts we all share threatens the possibility of advocacy and victim’s recovery and healing. In addition we see that we must revisit the language

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<sup>161</sup> This term was coined by my colleague, Melissa Shew, for a paper I gave in 2009 at the Marquette Ethics and Political Philosophy Workshop.

and underlying logic of the victim-survivor binary. If the terms of the debate enclose victims within a limited space and limited options to be anything other than victims, then we have also closed off possibilities for liberation.

The last goal I set out for advocacy is to be the others with whom victims can communicate, where they can exercise their voice and test out ways of understanding their experiences. Victims need empowering relationships to heal, and empowering others within those relationships that validate and help victims understand their experiences of sexualized violence. Herman, quoted above, argues that relationships are essential to healing from psychological trauma. Relationships with others are also essential to healing from existential trauma like moral disintegration. Although our situation with others structures our vulnerabilities, those vulnerabilities and those others also show us what our possibilities are, that is, they show us who we are and who we can be. Without others willing us free, in Beauvoir's words, we cannot *be* free, because our freedom and identities are inexorably linked to one another. This means that we have a responsibility to be advocates for others, but also that we must cultivate ourselves as advocates in specific ways. In the next section, I flesh out the specific ways we must cultivate ourselves as advocates, drawing on insights from Sally Scholz, Hilde Lindemann Nelson and Kelly Oliver.

#### 4. Advocacy, Counterstories and Witnessing

Sally Scholz (2008) argues for an "ethics of advocacy" derived from the ethics of care, seeing advocacy as an integral part of being in caring relationships with others. Her ethics of advocacy is developed primarily as a response to domestic violence, where the

individuals needing advocacy suffer from a loss of control over various aspects of their lives. Given the model of sexualized violence I have been working with, it is not a stretch to extend such an ethics of advocacy to others' manifestations of such violence. In response to victimization, the advocate is called in to "facilitate the individual's ability for moral agency and decision making," by serving as a voice of support for the victim, by speaking on behalf of the victim, by empowering the victim, providing avenues for discussing the future, assisting the victim in finding appropriate resources in the wake of violence and by serving as a link to the community from which the victim may be isolated (48-9). To this description of advocacy offered by Scholz, I add that advocacy must ultimately seek to revitalize the diminished voice of the victim, so that the advocate is not always speaking for the victim. In doing all of these things, the advocate must navigate between advocacy and *control*. Because sexualized violence reinforces the *lack of control* women have over their lives, advocacy must be careful not to reinforce that same lack.<sup>162</sup> The benefit to drawing an ethics of advocacy from the ethics of care is that it is attentive to the particular needs of particular individuals, and focuses on what the advocate can do from where she is and what is appropriate to the relationship she shares with the victim. If I am a legal advocate for a woman I do not know, it is unreasonable to expect me to take her in when she leaves her abusive relationship, but it is not unreasonable to expect her close friend to do so. A concert or community of advocates, then, is necessary to respond to the diverse and evolving needs of victims. But all of our

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<sup>162</sup> This is also one of the important challenges for care-givers in the ethics of care. Caring must encourage the moral development and growth of individuals without therefore taking over their moral decision-making.

responses, argues Scholz, ought to be for the sake of individuals developing confidence in their moral agency and moral decision-making.

The ethics of advocacy faces similar challenges as its parent theory, care ethics. It has been argued that the ethics of care, although developed in feminist philosophy, is decidedly *anti-feminist* because it restricts our energies to responding to individuals rather than to responding to the political and social structures that make these individuals vulnerable to violence and frustrate their attempts to heal from violence. Scholz believes that an ethics of advocacy can serve this political function if we take as our starting point a more globalized or politicized ethics of care. Following Rita Manning's (1992) version of care ethics, Scholz argues that thinking about care within a web of reciprocal relationships that can be distant as well as local can make advocacy and care responsive to systematic injustices as well as individual needs. She describes this as "care in solidarity": seeing ourselves as caring advocates within a wider context of social practices and injustice.

Scholz's work here connecting care and advocacy is helpful for establishing the grounds for our responsibility to be advocates for others. As with the ethics of care, we have obligations to others because of the relationships to them, relationships that give us a unique perspective on needs that arise and how we can, and sometimes cannot, fulfill them. I think this insight from care ethics and developed by Scholz is complementary to the existentialist ethics discussed in this dissertation. The ground of responsibility is not what and who we choose for our lives, but rather, we find ourselves with others and in specific relationships that require us to work to cultivate our and their freedom.

We can link Scholz's discussion of advocacy to other functions advocates may serve through Brison's description of "narrative retellings." Like Scholz and in line with Herman, Brison identifies the involuntariness of trauma and resultant feelings of lost control as the path through which recovery must work. And, working from the PTSD model of violence and trauma, one of the primary ways such a loss of control is experienced is through the intrusion of traumatic memories. These traumatic memories are experienced involuntarily, and they are memories of extreme vulnerability and control by another or others. They are heightened reminders of the victim's vulnerability and powerlessness in relation to others. Re-telling traumatic memories, when they are available, can help victims gain more control over what Brison calls "the traces left by trauma" (71). Telling others about traumatic experiences replaces the involuntary recall of traumatic memories with a voluntary, purposeful retelling. She writes,

Narrative memory is not passively endured; rather, it is an act on the part of the narrator, a speech act that defuses traumatic memory, giving shape and a temporal order to the events recalled, establishing more control over their recalling, and helping the survivor to remake the self (71).

Imbedded in the act of retelling is also telling of one's experience *to another*. There are the literal others to whom the victim may address her narrative—a therapist, family and friends or legal authorities. But there are also imagined others to whom a narrative can be addressed; a narrative can be written in a journal, or transformed into poetry and artwork. Empathy from others can go a long way to victims' healing, but the real or figurative presence of an other can be the occasion for what Brison describes as the "externalizing" of the narrative which "temporarily split[s] the self into an active—narrating—subject and a more passive—described object. Even this can help resubjectify a self objectified by trauma" (73). As an *activity*, telling one's narrative is an exercise in

agency. Sexualized violence and other forms of psychological or existential trauma may leave the victim feeling completely objectified, indeed, this is the purpose of most forms of violence. Rather than reliving a traumatic experience or relationship passively over and over, the narrative retelling puts both trauma *and* agency—through the activity of narrating—in the same conceptual space. Those feelings of complete objectification must now contend with the fact that the victim is still a person, evidence through the *activity* of telling her own story, deciding what to tell and what to leave out, and what the best way to represent her experience will be. In this way that narrative retelling can help to resubjectify a self.

Narratives can also be liberatory in the absence of particular, traumatic events, such as in situations of emotional and psychological partner violence and sexual harassment. Hilde Lindemann Nelson (2001) argues that agency is connected to identity, which acts as a “lever that expands or contracts one’s ability to exercise moral agency” (xi). Our identities leverage agency because our own sense of what we can do and what others will permit us to do is conditioned by the group memberships that constitute our identity and which situate us in power relations with others.<sup>163</sup> Identity can be damaged, argues Nelson, when powerful social groups view and treat members of sub-groups as unworthy of moral respect or prevent them from taking up valuable social positions.

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<sup>163</sup> The way identity functions for Nelson is similar the way I have discussed it in Chapter 3. Nelson’s view is not motivated by the same existential phenomenology that mine is, but there are a couple differences that, on a more in depth analysis, I would challenge. First, I would supplement her analysis of group power relations with a more dynamic conception of the way groups are formed, groups are maintained and how groups relate to each other, even those who are formed or defined in opposition to another group. Second, I would challenge the “outside-in” conception of damaged identity/infiltrated consciousness she develops, opting for a more participatory model of constitution that has the ability to both recognize oppressive cultural narratives and which also retains a sense of subjectivity in spite of those narratives.

These moral and social prohibitions from members of the dominant group (or the social processes they enact) can infiltrate the sub-group member's consciousness such that she then sees herself as the dominant group sees her. So, even if there is no event that signals the loss of control characteristic of trauma, identity, selfhood and agency can be damaged by the infiltration of cultural narratives that condition and/or override the victim's own sense of herself. To challenge these dominant and damaging cultural narratives, Nelson proposes that *counterstories* can be liberatory for sub-groups because they can uproot and replace the dominant understandings that undermine the agency and moral worth of sub-group members. They aim to alter *both* the sub-group member's self-perception, and the perception of sub-group members by the dominant group. Nelson believes that the act of the counterstory repairs damaged identity because confronting and challenging a dominant narrative is a "purposive act of moral definition" (xiii). In addition to the act itself being reparative, the content of the counterstory, if it is successful in uprooting and replacing the dominant, destructive narrative is reparative of the social meaning associated with group identification.<sup>164</sup>

Taking Nelson's theory of counterstories together with Brison's understanding of narrative as an act that "resubjectifies" we can see that part of the harm of sexualized violence—objectification and the denial of agency or its expression—can be confronted and challenged with the activity of telling the story of who one is and what one has experienced. I think it is important to stress here that it is not just the content of the story

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<sup>164</sup> Nelson admits that not all counterstories are effective at doing this, and sets out the criteria for successful counterstories in Chapter 5 of *Damaged Identities*. For the purpose of this analysis, I will focus on the what the act of telling a counterstory means for subjectivity in conjunction with Brison's argument that narrative retellings can "resubjectify" an objectified person.

one tells—in fact, Brison argues that the demand for “truth” in one’s narratives can be deadening—but the *activity* of telling the story of who one is, even if it is not immediately recognized as such, is an expression of subjectivity and agency in the face of trauma and oppression. However, the conditions under which narratives can be formed, told and received by others are the same conditions—social conditions—that make oppression and sexualized violence possible and acceptable. So, advocates must work to bring about the conditions under which narratives and counterstories are possible and can be liberatory. Like narrative retellings and counterstories, advocacy must put violence and agency in the same space, to affirm the suffering that victims endure while also bearing witness to the subjectivity of the victim.

Having others to whom a victim can tell her story, and by whom that suffering and subjectivity can be witnessed is another condition for the liberatory narrative or counterstory. Being those others who bear witness will be another form of advocacy. Kelly Oliver (2001) argues that subjectivity is the product of a tension within this witnessing itself. On the one hand, there is the eye-witness who can report or testify to what he or she has seen. On the other hand, we can bear witness to something that is beyond sight or in her words, “beyond recognition” (16).<sup>165</sup> The latter, bearing witness, is opposed to the former, eye-witness testimony, because it a testimony not to the “truth” of what may be seen, but to what is beyond our field of vision, but not necessarily “untrue” because of that. We can understand the narratives and counterstories from victims as eye-witness testimonies of oppression and violence. And we can also understand the act of witnessing these testimonies as a form of eye-witness as well. But

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<sup>165</sup> This phrase “beyond recognition” is purposeful for Oliver to situate herself within the literature on the politics of recognition.

each of these is also a *bearing witness*. Victims bear witness to their own victimization in the act of testifying: “only by testifying, by witnessing objectification, can survivors reinscribe their subjectivity into situations that mutilated it to the point of annihilation,” and others bear witness to victims, their victimization and their subjectivity by being others to whom a victim addresses her testimony (99). For Oliver, without an addressee, there can be no witnessing, and thus, no subjectivity. Subjectivity, the sense of one’s agency, is at the same time a response-ability, being addressed by another and being able to respond (17, 90). Response-ability in this sense is the ground for responsibility in the more traditional moral sense. This establishes that subjectivity is necessarily dialogical, and so, subjectivity requires an encounter with an other who can address and witness a response. When subjectivity, as Oliver writes above, is mutilated to the point of annihilation, it is because the possibility of being an addressable and response-able other is mutilated. *Bearing witness* to another reinscribes subjectivity because it reconstitutes dialogue.

Given this, Oliver argues that we have a responsibility to witness. She writes,

We are obligated to witness beyond recognition, to testify and to listen to testimony—to encounter each other—because subjectivity and humanity are the result of witnessing. That is to say, subjectivity and humanity are the result of response-ability. That which precludes a response destroys a subjectivity and thereby humanity (90).

In this, Oliver also recognizes that our witnessing must take a certain form. Bearing witness to others in a way that closes off their response-ability, that does not open up possibilities for response, is irresponsible witnessing. The idea of witnessing here can serve as a guiding principle for advocacy, and one that is in line with Scholz’s ethics of advocacy. We are obligated to be persons to whom victims can testify, and with whom

they construct their narratives, but we have a further responsibility to do so in a way that opens up, rather than closes off, possibilities for response, that is, their subjectivity. This dovetails with the existential ethics discussed in Chapter 2; we have a responsibility to treat others as freedom, which means that our actions and interactions must always open up the future for them (and us) rather than close it off. This will also require, as Oliver notes, being aware and critical of the differences in power and authority in different social positions (108). Our social positions condition what we can eye-witness, what kind of testimony we can give, and how and for whom we can bear witness. So, advocacy, as a responsibility to responsible witnessing, carries a self-critical component, which calls us to be aware of the authority, authenticity and power of our own voices in relation with others.

I gather from these writers that in our relationships with others, and even more so in those with victims of sexualized violence, we must foster an attitudinal shift from focusing on regaining control and mastery over one's self and other aspects of one's life to recognizing that such control is not only impossible but dangerous. This is a condition for narratives and counterstories being liberatory because by the act of telling the story, neither the victim nor the advocate can believe that this is the end of the story, or even the only version of the story that will need to be told. Both Brison and Oliver insist that the demand for "truth" is deadening, it replaces the fluidity and dynamism of subjectivity with the stricture of historical accuracy. Moreover, narratives, counterstories and testimony are not really after the "truth" of what happened, but rather, the experience of victimization and the subjectivity that remains after it. The demand for truth is the

epistemological equivalent of the ethical demand for self-mastery, both misplaced if who we are and who we can become is connected to and dependent on others.

Dovetailing this, I add that the twin moral ideals of autonomy and control, along with the epistemic ideals of certainty and truth must be revised. The “reintegration” that advocacy seeks is not the integration of the self on the models of integrity that pathologized self-control and autonomy at the expense of our connectedness to others. Reintegration is the enabling of the capacities required for authentic self-hood: creativity and expressivity. Reintegration therefore, is enlivening the victim from her entropic ways of being in the world and in relationships with others, towards a more flexible, dynamic self and way of being. Tied to this is the inherent incompleteness of the narratives told, and the selves that are the characters and witnesses in those narratives. Experiences *ought to be* part of the on-going narrative of one’s life, and as we saw in the multiple discussion of PTSD here, that some experiences cannot be assimilated into a victim’s life story is disabling. As on-going and in constant, dynamic relation to the past and future, the narratives we tell of any particular experience will change—depending on the audience, coming to know different things about the world or even about ourselves. This requires also that we hold off on demanding the “truth” in these narratives. By “truth” I mean a complete, objective representation of any particular event. While I resisted sliding into an epistemology of provenance, this does not mean that we therefore have access to a “truth” in cases of sexualized violence, nor is this the only purpose of any narrative retelling.

Finally, I submit that advocacy—to be called on to speak for another, to give voice to another—is impossible if we think that the advocate’s voice can be a substitute

for the victim's. The views of violence, integrity and subjectivity I have endorsed here have been intersubjective and dialogical. That puts us *in constant relation* to others, but cannot put us in the place of another; so to speak for another is a denial of this, a monologue. Voice, the metaphor for agency and subjectivity that runs throughout this chapter, like subjectivity and agency, cannot be granted, it can only be encouraged. We can set up the conditions under which victims recognize their subjectivity in the wake of violence, but we cannot give it. To be responsible advocates we must thus recognize the incompleteness and in some sense, impossibility, of advocacy in this sense.

This may be one of the most difficult aspects of victimization for victims themselves. In response to the vulnerability exposed and reinforced by sexualized violence, the reasonable response is to piece together a self that resembles who one was before, a self that was not intimately aware of this vulnerability. This may be manifested in the victim's attempts to control others or her environment, or in declarations that she is not a victim but a survivor. But, as Brison writes,

Maybe the point is to learn how to relinquish control, to learn by going where we need to go, to replace the clenched, repetitive acting out with the generativity of working through. The former, though uncontrollable, is, paradoxically, obsessed with control, with the soothing, numbing, safety of the familiar. The latter is inventive, open to surprise, alive to improvisation. The former can instill the dangerous, even deadly, illusion of invincibility. The other can provide the foundation of trust on which a new life can be built, the steady bass continuo that liberates the other parts to improvise without fear (115).

Moral integrity as authenticity requires that we not settle, we not fix ourselves in a way that prohibits us from growing and expressing ourselves in ever new creative directions. This is precisely how sexualized violence morally undermines victims, by stunting their growth and limiting the possibilities for their future—physical, socially and morally

through the disabling of the capacities necessary for authenticity. Our responses to victims, whatever they may be, must not mirror the stultifying process of sexualized violence with idealizations of control and self-mastery. They must recognize the dynamic, creative potential of subjectivity and mirror that in dynamic and creative ways of being with and for others.

## 5. Conclusion

The aim in this chapter—and this dissertation—is to point to a way forward for theorists and victims. I imagine the link between these groups (and there are persons who are both) is through a robust understanding of advocacy. I have understood this project itself within the goals of advocacy I discuss here. As theorists we are not neutral and objective, nor are the tools of our trade; the language, concepts and resources we have at our disposal are constituted in a social matrix of power relations. Being responsible theorists means allowing our ideas and to be as flexible and dynamic as the world and subjects we theorize about and for. As Walker (2007) writes, “moral philosophizing is itself conduct and practice. Moral philosophers are morally responsible for it” (36). This means that we must be responsible advocates, developing ways of understanding victimization, being others to whom narratives can be told, and bearing witness to the subjectivity often obscured, but never erased, by victimization. It is to never think that we have the answer, or have even completely understood the problem. It is to attend to the world, not just the world of ideas, but the world of persons as we and they live our complex, dynamic lives.

## CONCLUSION

On January 20, 2011, U.S. Rep. Chris Smith (R-NJ), introduced House Resolution 3 (HR 3), to prohibit the use of federal funding for abortion procedures. A 1976 law prohibited the use of taxpayer money for abortions, except in cases of rape, incest and when pregnancy threatened the life of the woman. HR 3 went beyond this law, and as critics said, “redefined” rape. The resolution would have limited the use of federal funding to cases of ‘forcible rape’ only, excluding ‘statutory rape.’ According to Laurie Levenson, a former U.S. Attorney, this would also exclude cases of rape in which a woman was drugged, was given or consumed excessive amounts of alcohol, the rape of women with limited mental capacities, and many date rapes.<sup>166</sup>

A September 2007 article in *Cosmopolitan* magazine, “A New Kind of Rape,” by Laura Sessions Stepp, sparked controversy when Stepp, a *Washington Post* journalist, brought attention to the phenomenon of ‘gray rape.’ Gray rape, as she defined it, is “sex that falls somewhere between consent and denial and is even more confusing than date rape because often both parties are unsure of who wanted what.”<sup>167</sup> The controversy seemed to be spurred by the uncomfortable idea that as a culture, we don’t know what counts and does not count as rape. ‘Gray rape’ is argued to be a new kind of ‘date rape,’ which presupposes ‘date rape’ as a subcategory of ‘rape’ generally, or a different category than ‘forced rape.’ Linda Fairstein, former chief of the Sex Crimes Unit at the Manhattan district attorney’s office said, “Gray rape is not a new term and not a new experience. For journalists, it may be, but for those of us who had worked in advocacy or

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<sup>166</sup> See <http://motherjones.com/politics/2011/01/republican-plan-redefine-rape-abortion>. Accessed 4/15/11.

<sup>167</sup> See <http://www.cosmopolitan.com/sex-love/tips-moves/new-kind-of-date-rape>. Accessed 4/15/11.

law enforcement, this description of something being in a gray area has been around all the time.”<sup>168</sup>

Smith (and his fellow HR 3 supporters) and Stepp capitalize on the same ambiguities discussed in this dissertation. There is deference to understanding violence as physical, and in a similar way, deference to thinking about all sexualized violence through physical, forcible rape. Our working categories of ‘statutory rape,’ ‘date rape,’ and now ‘gray rape’ are measured against these strict legal understandings, and so ‘statutory rape,’ ‘date rape,’ and ‘gray rape’ become less serious or less severe forms of violence against women. The problem is heightened when we then try to think these alongside intimate partner violence, which is often psychological more than physical, and sexual harassment. The effect, as I have argued throughout this dissertation, is that the experiences of victims of all forms of violence are denigrated, and the victims themselves silenced. I have also argued, however, that thinking this way is myopic, and to invoke Marilyn Frye’s heuristic of the birdcage again, this kind of thinking disables us from taking in all of the wires of the birdcage: the relationship between these kinds of acts, social norms, practices that make them possible and acceptable, and the institutions through which we live our lives, all which create women as vulnerable to violence. I presume Smith’s concern with limiting what counts as rape in service of limiting federal funding for abortions is to decide, by law, who counts as a “real” victim, that is, who counts and deserves “our” money, and who does not. Stepp’s motivation for her article is more complicated, because she is also well-known for her book, *Unhooked: How Young Women Pursue Sex, Delay Love and Lose at Both*, which chronicles the losses for women

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<sup>168</sup> See <http://cityroom.blogs.nytimes.com/2007/10/15/gray-rape-a-new-form-of-date-rape/>. Accessed 4/15/11.

that come with the loosening of social regulation of their sexuality. In interviews following her article's publication in *Cosmopolitan*, Stepp has said that 'gray rape' is new category young women (and men) wrestle with because of new social rules (or a lack thereof) governing women's sexuality. She writes,

A generation ago, it was easier for men and women to understand what constituted rape because the social rules were clearer. Men were supposed to be the ones coming on to women, and women were said to be looking for relationships, not casual sex. But those boundaries and rules have been loosening up for decades, and now lots of women feel it's perfectly okay to go out looking for a hookup or to be the aggressor, which may turn out fine for them — unless the signals get mixed or misread.<sup>169</sup>

Stepp is right that the *meaning* of rape is tied to social norms and practices. But what is controversial about her piece is that her explanation gives priority to the change in social norms while de-emphasizing women's (and men's) expressions—"signals" in her words—of what they want, what they consent to, and what they do not. She fails, on my account, to appreciate that women can form their own desires, beliefs, and can engage in projects of self-creation under, and even through, these social norms and practices.

As I have argued here, sexualized violence is *systematic*, that is, particular acts of violence are systematically related to each other, and these acts are again systematically related to other social and moral practices that make women vulnerable to violence and that reinforce such vulnerability. Sexualized violence is also *systemic*, that is, it affects women's lives in many ways, not only physically and psychologically, but morally, socially and politically. In contrast to authentic selves who are dynamic and flexible, who create themselves through their projects that open up the future for themselves and others, victims of sexualized violence suffer from moral disintegration, from a frustration

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<sup>169</sup> <http://www.cosmopolitan.com/sex-love/tips-moves/new-kind-of-date-rape-2>. Accessed 4/15/11.

of the capacities necessary for authentic selfhood. I identified these capacities as creativity and expressivity because who we are and what we do ought to be a unique, creative expression of the possibilities open to us within the lives we share. When these capacities are threatened by a language that cannot fit one's experiences, or by others who refuse to receive those expressions, or by social norms that rigidly define who and what one can be, the possibility for authenticity is also threatened.

I said in the Introduction to this dissertation that a project such as this is haunted by the charge that feminism is creating victims by focusing on oppression and violence rather than how women exercise their agency in spite of these realities. Given the time spent here thinking about sexualized violence and moral disintegration, it would seem that the charge of the anti-victim feminists is warranted. However, I find hope through the existential model of selfhood because we always have the possibility to be *more than* victims. Our possibilities, though they may be circumscribed, limited and sanctioned, are still possibilities, and the "self-recovery of being" Sartre identifies as authenticity is one of those possibilities for us. Through our engagement with various social structures we help to constitute them. This—our role in constituting the social world—is why sexualized violence reinforces the vulnerability of women, yes, but it is also the root of our response to sexualized violence as advocates. Advocacy—being a voice for others and cultivating voice—is possible as our moral responsibility and is effective in moral reintegration because who we are, our agency and our subjectivity is conditional upon the agency and subjectivity of others. We can be the others who help cultivate voice, whose subjectivity and agency are the sites for victims' moral reintegration, for authenticity.

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