

Introduction

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This handbook starts from the premise that any purported solution to global problems is partial without critical and interdisciplinary feminist analysis. It is especially true for analyses of and solutions to problems of violence, justice and peace. Critical and intersectional feminist analyses enables innovative spaces to rethink multiple kinds of peace(s), justices, and violences, as well as other injuries, erasures, marginalisations, and their entanglements. Many such spaces are sidestepped by conventional peace research, and the questions they may raise, have been left unaddressed. Topics that mainstream peace research has sidelined, include for example, roles of masculinities and femininities in peace and war; the political economy of gender and militarism; intersectionality as a methodology to understand peace and violence; postcolonial and decolonial feminist perspectives; and the queering of peace and violence. Our purpose is to engage with multiple feminisms, diverse policy or activist interventions, and a multitude of theoretical, methodological and empirical contributions to the study of peace.

In this sense, we also aim to contribute to the visibility of critical feminist approaches to peace research, and to make them accessible to scholars, activists, and students interested in the subject. Handbooks on various topics in international and peace studies have proliferated in recent years and have partly replaced or complemented higher education textbooks (Sharoni, Welland, Steiner, and Pedersen, 2016; Ní Aoláin, Cahn, Haynes, and Valji, 2018; Richmond, Pogodda, and Ramović, 2016; Davies and True, 2019; MacGinty, 2013; Dietrich, Alvarez, Esteva, Ingruber, Koppensteiner and Echavarría Álvarez, 2011; Coles, Gray and Momsen, 2015). This handbook thus, joins a number of others, adding a much needed and complementary focus on critical feminist peace research. In our understanding, peace research aims at studying the world holistically, employing multiple methods, and encouraging conversations across academic disciplines and approaches in search for peace beyond the conventional peace/war dichotomy. Women (many of them feminists), were instrumental in establishing the academic field of peace studies and feminist

perspectives have contributed to this task in important ways, through theory as well as practice (Lyytikäinen, Yadav, Wibben, Jauhola, and Confortini, 2020; McLeod and O'Reilly, 2019). Given women and feminists' early and ongoing contributions to the field, it is surprising that feminist perspectives and methodologies have remained somewhat marginalised in the 'mainstream' of the field. We respond therefore, to the need for a new, critical feminist peace research agenda, which represents emerging, vibrant, and cutting-edge approaches that are already providing significant academic and political innovation (Wibben, Confortini, Roohi, Aharoni, Vastapuu, and Vaittinen, 2019). Our handbook captures this movement from the margins to the scholarly core.

As editors we take full responsibility for the omissions and commissions in this handbook, but it is important to explain our own interests and positionalities to undertake such an audacious and ambitious project. We are all part of the Feminist Peace Research Network, which includes more than 80 scholars and activists from around the world, all of whom are interested in emphasising feminist contributions to peace studies. Not only has this network highlighted for us, the increasing interest in this field, it is also solidifying and making visible to the wider academic, activist, and policy community, the value of feminist peace research and activism and its historical exclusion. The handbook charts the way forward, building on the existing network, and also expanding it, beyond its current composition. It re-imagines the field of peace studies by centering a plurality of perspectives, and by promoting dialogue between a variety of approaches, including some that have so far been neglected.

In sum, this multi-disciplinary handbook is guided by three objectives. First, we aim at showcasing the plurality of approaches and voices in critical feminist peace research and their potential for addressing issues related to peace, justice, and violence. This requires including contributions from activists and artists as well as researchers from academic institutions. Second, we provide a critique of conventional approaches in peace studies, especially when they have silenced and/or subjugated topics, methods, and theories. This entails shedding light on all types of biases, including colonial, regional, or gender biases, that have contributed to the veiling and erasures. The handbook pays specific attention to actors that are not traditionally considered as important in a political or security perspective, as well as to issues that have not yet received much attention in conventional understandings of peace (e.g. famines, intergenerationality, yoga, ethics of care, and biopolitics).

Third, this handbook advances an approach to peace that considers decolonial methods and postcolonial encounters from multiple and critical feminist perspectives.

Feminist Analysis and Critical Feminist Peace Research

We view critical feminist peace research as an expansive approach, which involves authors, scholars, and movements that may or may not identify with peace research or feminism, let alone international relations. For us, critical feminist peace research includes all research, thinking, and action that uses, implicitly or explicitly, feminist insights to understand and act upon the world in ways that foster peace *with* justice. However broadly conceived, these terms are themselves problematised by various chapters in this handbook. Our authors may have different conceptions of the field of peace studies, its canonical understandings, even its own self-identification (we use the phrases ‘peace studies’ and ‘peace research’ interchangeably and let the authors use them as they see fit). In addition, we use the term ‘approach’, rather than ‘field’ intentionally when referring to critical feminist peace research: defining a field means coming up with fences and boundaries (Confortini, 2017; Lykke, 2010). Of course, we know that traditional disciplinary boundaries have mattered: what has become peace studies/research, security studies, resistance studies, feminist international relations, feminist security studies, feminist foreign policy, postcolonial/decolonial studies, have determined who and what is outside or inside, included or excluded. By contrast, in this handbook we have sought to ‘cross-disciplinarise’ themes and approaches, breaking, rather than building fences. We have also endeavoured to decolonise our approaches and methods by paying attention to the topics we have chosen, to wider authorship ‘of’ and not just ‘from’ the global south, and to citation politics, by encouraging the citation of authors who might not be the ‘usual suspects’, but whose research is important. Along these lines, we argue that there is a productive tension between the postcolonial global south as a geopolitical and historical reference point and the postcolonial as an analytical approach for deconstructing received realities. This tension informs the debates in the chapters, which unpack silencing and silences as postcolonial critiques of standard knowledge production. We feel that we need to pay attention to what has been missing, including non-hegemonic thinkers, traditions, and ‘local’

knowledges as intellectual authorities (Shilliam, 2011; Parpart and Parashar, 2019; Brigg and Bleiker, 2011).

Central to feminist analysis is the concept of gender. While multiple strands of feminisms are sometimes labelled with adjectives like “liberal”, “radical”, “standpoint”, “postmodern”, “postcolonial”, and others, we find useful Laura Shepherd’s (2013), strategy of mapping different theories of gender onto feminist approaches. Shepherd distinguishes between essentialist, constructivist, and post-structuralist theories of gender, each preferred by different feminist approaches. Some feminists hold an essentialist view of gender, where sex and gender are mapped onto a male-female binary, while body and behaviour are in direct relationship with each other. As such, in an essentialist view, women as a category are systematically victimised by violence because of their supposed gender characteristics (Shepherd, 2013, p.13). Other feminist approaches hold a constructivist view and think of gender as a social relation of power mapped onto supposedly biological differences between the (two) sexes. Assumptions and expectations about what it means to be a woman or a man, shape and are shaped by bodily experiences, including experiences of violence onto or by the body. Yet again, others challenge dualistic and determined notions of both sex and gender, seeing both along a politically, socially, and discursively constructed continuum (post-structuralist theories of gender). The categorisation of bodies into male or female at birth is itself an act resulting from ideas about bodies, not because there is anything essential about them (Butler, 1993; Shepherd, 2013; Väyrynen, 2019a). Both sex and gender, rather, emerge “into a particular ‘discursive context’” and “we make sense of bodies and ascribe them meaning (F/M) *as a result* of ideas we have about gender” (Shepherd, 2013, p. 14). The authors in this volume may ascribe to one or another theory of gender: our intent here is to “ride the hyphens” of the “cacophony” of voices that is feminism (Sylvester, 1995), and embrace the plurality of the feminist body.

While feminisms use gender as a central category of analysis, not all gender analysis is feminist. Unlike non-feminist gender analysis, feminism is normatively and explicitly interested in both critique and emancipation. Feminism emerges out of women’s experience of oppression and violence, and as such is attentive to, and critiques any social order based on gendered hierarchies, violences, and oppressions. It does so, in order to find ways to remedy those injustices and create alternative worlds (Naples and Desai, 2002). In that sense, feminist analysis is explicitly normative

and interested in various forms of violence and injustice that affect all types of individuals, regardless of their gender. While this entails struggles, contradictions, and debates, it also entails constant self-interrogation and reflexivity, which are a fundamental part of feminist methodologies (Wibben, Confortini, Roohi, Aharoni, Vastapuu, and Vaittinen, 2019; Ackerly and True, 2008). Epistemologically, feminism is grounded on a relational and embodied commitment to include knowledge from the margins, whether those margins are women or other (gendered) people, ideas, or other sentient beings. Feminist analysis is also open to untidiness, complexity, and coexisting contradictions, all emerging from the awareness of our “ethical precarity” (Lynch, 2019) and “response-ability” (Barad, 2012) in the world. Such awareness makes us mindful of the possibility that our own research/action might contribute to harm, violence, and/or oppressive relations.

Critical feminist peace research, in some sense, brings us together in our shared angst about the exclusion of feminists and the ‘whiteness’ of peace research. Whiteness in our understanding is not an identity category, but rather a set of attitudes and values (Bhambra, 2017). Here, our varied research interests, ‘locations,’ and methodological approaches enable a productive space for disagreements and differences. Ours are times when differences look non-negotiable, perpetuate ideological divides, and generate anxieties; times when similarity of thoughts and beliefs are embraced as a mode of life and intellectual discourse. This project is an attempt to reclaim ground for feminisms and feminists to embrace and work with differences and empathetic critique in the production of knowledge about peace and justice and in activist network settings.

Feminist Peace

As feminist academics, activists and practitioners, we have struggled with the concept and idea of ‘peace’ at different stages of our professional and personal lives. We assert that while peace is most definitely a universal pursuit, it does not conform to a universal understanding, unanimous definition, or singular phenomenon; it cannot be represented as a fixed or monolithic notion. Rather, the efforts for peace are tangible manifestations of a global aspiration as well as mundane practices with varying imaginations. We argue that peace needs to be ‘rescued’, ‘revitalised,’ and ‘reinvented’ in these times when violence, bigotry, and fear are normalised across the spectrum, in most social, cultural, and political encounters.

On one level, the handbook is inspired by the feminist idea that peace is not a singular or linear event but a process with multiple contestations and challenges, which demands passionate and incessant labour from scholars, critical thinkers, educators, activists, and practitioners. Peace in this sense does not mean a state of absolute lack of frictions, struggles, or conflict. Rather it refers to an unstable equilibrium among several contradictory forces, which does not degenerate into violence of any sort. The authors offer multiple entry points into the discourses and practices around peace as a contested process: they may refer to it as an everyday lived reality, as an aspirational social and political goal, as a measure of cultural and economic well-being, and/or as a counter hegemonic force in global politics.

In addition, this expansive understanding of peace does not consider violence, especially direct violence, as its absolute opposite. We follow in this regard, a feminist (peace) tradition that rethinks violence and security in reference to peace, rather than peace as an absence (of violence). In a critical feminist peace perspective, the polarisation of violence and peace has often been problematic. Feminists pay attention to the ways in which ‘peace’ — as a concept associated with femininity — is devalued in a gendered hierarchy where violence is associated with masculinity (Tickner, 1992; Kaufman and Williams, 2013; Runyan and Peterson, 2018). To the trite criticism that feminist peace research thinks of women as naturally peaceful, feminists have responded with research on women’s violence (e.g., Gentry and Sjoberg, 2015; Parashar, 2014; Yadav, 2016), sexual violence against men (Féron, 2018), the gendering of men’s refusal to fight (Kwon, 2013; Çinar and Üsterci, 2009), women’s militarism (Kronsell and Svedberg, 2011; Duncanson and Woodward, 2016) and so on. We do not deny that some feminists have made claims about the natural or socialised predisposition of women to be peaceful and men to be violent (for a variety of perspectives, see Pierson, 1987); the body of feminist thinking is full of contradictions and tensions that need to be taken seriously and engaged with thoroughly, rather than through simplistic (and, frankly, intellectually lazy) generalisations.

Feminists have also raised attention to the fact that a strict dichotomy between peace and violence is artificial because peace can exist in contexts of violence, and vice versa (Cockburn, 2014; True, 2020). They have notably shed light on patterns of everyday violence in so-called peaceful societies, such as domestic violence or violence in everyday care, as well as practices of everyday peace (Väyrynen, 2019b) in contexts of violent or structural conflict, for instance between different

cultural groups. In this way, the handbook expands the notion of violence, by including multiple violences that take place well beyond war and along temporal and spatial continuums (see Yadav and Horn, this volume; Cockburn, 1998). The continuums of violence/peace manifest themselves temporally — in the buildup and legitimation of war through gendered institutions, or in the daily work of establishing the foundations for peace — and spatially — in the connections between the private and public domains, or between local realities and global forces. The field of peace research, however, has been slow in recognising these continuums of violence/peace (and even slower in acknowledging feminist innovations and inventiveness about them) and the entanglements of the varieties of violence.

The recognition of these continuums of violence leads feminist research to consider peace and violence as co-constitutive, in a series of gendered entanglements that we aim to unravel. Here is where the feminist idea of intersectionality is particularly useful. (Hill Collins, 1990; Crenshaw, 1989). The term ‘intersectionality’ has been used to understand women’s experiences at the intersections of a number of simultaneous oppressions including race, class, caste, gender, ethnicity, sexuality, disability, nationality, immigration status, geographical location, religion and so on. In this handbook, many authors use intersectionality as a (methodological) approach that aims at destabilising all static and abstract classifications by exploring the various ways in which oppressions intersect in shaping structural and political aspects of violence and peace. We consider the decentering of abstractions to be particularly important as it enables robust analyses of the entanglements of different forms of violence as well as the varieties of peace and justice in the continuums of violence and peace. In short, by destabilising static classifications and rigid boundaries, intersectional analysis makes the entanglements of violence, power, and politics visible. Intersectionality as a feminist methodological approach recognises that overt and structural violence are often entangled with epistemic and slow violence. Unlike mainstream peace research, critical feminist peace research also pays attention to slow violence, namely to “a tender, intimately-scaled, lived violence that is constantly being reproduced and reborn through individual bodies and relationships” (de Leeuw, 2016, 17; Nixon, 2011). Slow violence is often accompanied with epistemic violence that erases the space from which alternative knowledge claims can be vocalised. (Spivak, 1988; also see Parashar and Orjuela, this volume) Through the violent dismissal of the other ways of knowing and by rendering them inadequate, naïve and sentimental,

knowledge, and also speaking, from less privileged positions is rejected in conventional scholarship on violence and peace. Critical feminist peace research is attentive to these intersections of multiple violences.

Postcoloniality, Decoloniality

It is pertinent to point out that feminist re-interrogation of categories of peace and violence has not been without normative tensions among feminists, specifically from the standpoint of postcolonial, decolonial, and intersectional thinking (Parashar, 2016). This thinking, in turn, has contributed to the shaping of a ‘critical’ agenda within feminist peace research, which the handbook takes up explicitly. We are mindful of artificial divisions between global south and global north as these are not simply geographical locations, but created, imagined, invented, and maintained practices, including global practices of knowledge production. Geopolitically global south and north are also entangled with each other, as north and south co-exist in gendered hierarchies sometimes in close geographical proximity. Whilst recognising the artificial divisions we notice that many postcolonial societies (states) are bequeathed with unresolved tensions and contradictions. As we envisage it, the idea of peace is different from the erstwhile colonial powers and settler-colonial dynamics, whose idea of ‘civilising mission’ was to bring the uncivilised into a western mode of civilisation, through extreme and/or more hidden forms of violence (Grovoqui, 1996). In colonial states, the civilising mission believed peace would follow the assimilation of diverse but archaic societies into European modernity. In settler-colonial settings, on the other hand, the mission has been to replace the original population of the colonised territory with a new society of settlers, and thereby create peace through dominance and by silencing local and indigenous knowledge claims (Veracini, 2015).

Particularly for postcolonial feminists, questions of war and violence are intimately connected to the conceptualisation of the ‘political’ itself as most postcolonial nations achieved political rights through active political struggles which were violent and at times (Jayawardena, 1986, also see Yuval-Davis, 1997). Admittedly, anti-colonial struggles were led by local elites which were heavily influenced either by western liberal models, or by communist and socialist ideologies. But they were also sustained from below or through the active participation of the subalterns, who imagined a more equitable and just order, which would provide them with human dignity. Yet, in

their quest for political freedom from colonial rule, most postcolonial societies attempted to bury their societal, cultural, ethnic, gender, and religious differences. This was contested by feminists and subaltern activists in various ways (Ogundipe-Leslie, 1994; Afshar, 1996). Feminists in the global south have long claimed that gender issues should be put at the very core of anti-colonial struggles, and that women's emancipation could not be divorced from freedom from colonial and neo-colonial subjugation. Leaders of anti-colonial struggles have, however, often subordinated women's claims to the larger goals of the independence movement (Chadya, 2003).

Further, feminists in the global south critically highlight the disjunctures within feminist movements, theory, and activism (especially between global north and south), pointing at where claims of emancipation excluded or marginalised the experiences of racialised others (Talpade-Mohanty, 1988). Questions of reflexivity, positionality, and intersectionality have imbued the debates that broadly can be construed as feminist research and feminist activism in the global south as elsewhere (Lock Swarr and Nagar, 2010; Galván, 2014). Although not all activists and scholars who are contributing to this handbook use this vocabulary, it is important to foreground it, given the convergences and divergences in feminist thinking on these subjects and in feminist peace research more specifically.

Organisation of the Handbook

In this handbook, we have brought together a diverse group of feminist scholars and activists to offer insights into (un)doing peace from different perspectives and vantage points; scholars inside and outside the European and North American academies, as well as practitioners, and 'intellectual workers' from outside of academia. The authors offer multiple entry points into the discourses and practices around peace, in all its multiple and entangled meanings. Some authors do not exclusively identify with critical feminist peace research although their work is informed by feminist methodologies and analysis. Their voices are extremely important in this handbook in acknowledging both the limits of the politics of nomenclature and the plurality of feminisms and feminist approaches, as we mentioned earlier.

In order to appreciate the multiplicity of feminist approaches and re-think the thematic categories of peace research, the handbook offers feminist analyses divided into five major sections, each

with a specific theme of relevance for feminist interventions. The order of the sections is less important for us than their internal content — where core (conventionally defined) topics intersect with others taken up anew in critical feminist peace studies. Within each essay we have asked that the author/s highlight pioneering feminist research, discuss the state-of-the-art, and identify avenues for future research. In that sense, all chapters center the authors' own feminist understandings of the topic covered, rather than engage with mainstream literature in any length. Our sidelining of mainstream peace research and its canon is intentional and political: we claim for critical feminist peace research its own genealogies, insights, empirical findings, not as marginal and uninteresting appendage, but as a body of research, albeit one full of tensions and contestations. Together, these contributions are designed to equip the reader with key concepts, approaches, and methodologies in order to critically examine, and consider under a new light, conventional and unconventional or specifically feminist issues as well as engage with possible new directions for peace and conflict studies.

The volume starts with a “Methodologies and Genealogies” section, where the authors provide an overview of theories, concepts, histories, and methodologies characterising a critical feminist peace approach. The second section, “Politics, Power, and Violence” explores the interplay between these concepts, rather than seeing them in opposition. It looks at the various ways in which violence manifests itself in the world, and the gendered dynamics of these manifestations, as well as its complex relations with politics and power. In “Institutional and Societal Interventions” the authors look at various ways in which organisations and movements from the local to the global participate in gendered ways to the construction of peace/violence. The fourth section, “Bodies, Sexualities, and Health”, explores topics at the core of feminist research across disciplinary fields including body politics, masculinities, sexuality/ies. We close with a section entitled “Global Inequalities” where feminists map gender onto global/local economic intersections. In chapters with subjects ranging from informal economies, to diasporas, or famines, this section sheds light on perhaps some unusual topics for peace studies. We wish to emphasise that these sub-sections and chapter arrangements are only indicative as most chapters are in conversation with other sub-section themes.

Way Forward / Expectations

Curating a project like this involves collaborations at multiple levels and we are grateful for the trust and patience of our authors. As readers will notice, our contributors are at different stages of their professional careers, troubled by different intellectual puzzles. Few are taking the early steps of their intellectual journeys through their handbook contributions; others have been writing and publishing for a long time. Our conversations have enriched both the process and the outcome of this publication project; they have sustained us through the worst of times and contemporary politics when a project like this seems like another of those academic items to list in the *résumés*. In times of great cynicism and despair, our hopeful contributors have uplifted us, and when overly enthusiastic, we have been anchored to reality by the musings of the experienced and the wise amongst us. Collaborations of this kind itself are feminist peace activism and feminist research practice, which must be acknowledged as such.

As editors, we remain committed to the original idea that this project is both necessary and cathartic and will find interested and engaged readers across academic disciplines and beyond academia. We are mindful of course, that we may have underplayed many worthy and conventional peace study topics, such as peacebuilding, conflict prevention, mediation, conflict resolution, conflict transformation, and transitional justice. Our handbook also does not cover some less conventional but equally important and interesting topics, like sports, global health, other sentient beings, or popular culture. There are always limitations in large projects like these. As we stated at the beginning of this introduction, our intent is partially to expand the realm of inquiry for peace research, sketching the contours of a field transformed by feminist approaches and sensitivities. We also know that feminist imaginings of peace will have to reinvent, innovate, and transform continuously through creative processes to respond to new and pressing global challenges. Today, for example, famine, migration, and climate violence are important to recognise. They demand reparative justice for genuine peace. Tomorrow, there will be other forms of exclusion, violence, and injuries on ‘undesirable’, lifeless, mourning, surplus, and marginalised bodies that will demand attention from peace scholars and activists. This handbook is therefore, also an invitation for further conversations. We are hopeful that the chapters will individually and collectively inspire more critical thinking, insightful, ethical, and collaborative research, and passionate utterances to reimagine ‘peace’ for the future.

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