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CHAPTER 29

GENDERING PEACEBUILDING

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This chapter introduces the reader to characteristics of *gendered thinking*, its neglect within psychology and peace psychology, and discusses how peacebuilding as commonly defined lacks a gender perspective. We argue that feminist analysis contributes to a more comprehensive meaning of peacebuilding than a non-gendered analysis. We describe results of our research on women's international peacebuilding initiatives, underscoring the emphases women give to psychosocial processes such as healing, reconciliation, and cooperation. We characterize distinct ways women build peace at grassroots (local) levels and within nongovernmental organizations (NGOs). Finally, we discuss the United Nations (U.N.) Platform for Action which is an important global feminist document that provides important directions for women's peacebuilding.

FEMINIST PERSPECTIVES IN PEACE PSYCHOLOGY

Gendered thinking, which considers the perspectives and behaviors of both men and women, has not characterized psychology in general or peace psychology in particular. *Gendering peace psychology* means that peace psychology has not, in the past, been sufficiently conscious of gender biases, biases derived from the predominance of men's thinking and perspectives. Therefore the

discipline has *patriarchal*, or male-biased, assumptions and perspectives that need to be challenged through incorporation of feminist perspectives and thinking (McKay, 1996).

Gendered thinking illuminates similarities and also substantial differences between male and female perspectives. An example of how thinking about war and peace is not sufficiently gendered is the following: Think about who is injured and who dies during wars—who comes to mind? Most people, both men and women, follow patriarchal thought by identifying combat soldiers who are mostly men. In fact, the predominant casualties of today's wars, estimated to be as high as 95 percent, are civilians—the majority of whom are women and children (Levy & Sidel, 1997; U.N., 1996a). Another example occurs when thinking about who are peacemakers and peacebuilders during and after conflicts. Many people have images from popular media of high-profile political male figures such as George Mitchell forging the May 1998 peace accords in Northern Ireland, or of U.N. Secretary-General Kofi Annan, who has been instrumental in peace negotiations in 1998 in Eritrea, Ethiopia, and Iraq. Far fewer know of instrumental women peacemakers and peacebuilders such as Hanan Ashwari (1995) of Palestine who has been a leading spokeswoman for brokering peace in the Middle East, or Monica McWilliams of Northern Ireland who founded the Northern Ireland Women's Coalition (NIWC). Nor do people often imagine the multiple venues in communities and nations in which women act to build sustainable peace. Women have long been integrally involved in peacemaking and peacebuilding processes (see Bennett, Bexley, & Warnock, 1995; Cock, 1993; El-Bushra & Mukarubuga, 1995; Enloe, 1993; Sharoni, 1994; U.N., 1996a; Utting, 1994). Their activities at community and regional levels are extensive and often within the aegis of NGOs and grassroots (local) women's organizations.

Feminism is an ideology that purports men and women are of equal value and their equality should be recognized by all societies (Reardon, 1990). This point of view recognizes that women throughout the world suffer from sex-based discrimination or *sexism*. Feminism seeks to challenge the dynamic of domination at all levels, from the home to the military, and to demand a world based more on cooperation than on conquest (Bunch, 1987). For example, feminist peace theorist Birgit Brock-Utne (1989) incorporates gender perspectives in her definitions of positive and negative peace. Thus authentic peace and security require *positive peace*, a society in which there is no indirect or structural violence such as gender inequality. *Negative peace* occurs when personal, physical, and direct violence such as armed conflict, rape, and spousal battering are absent. Peace psychologists share with feminists their concern for authentic peace and security for all humans, a focus infrequently found in governmental and intergovernmental definitions of security, which typically are framed within the limits of states' boundaries and interests (McKay, 1996).

A Critical Analysis of Peacebuilding

Feminist analysis looks at the world by gathering and interpreting information through the eyes and experiences of women as subjects. It separates itself from a patriarchal world view and the constraints of male-dominated theoretical analyses (Young, 1992), seeking to explain the importance of women's oppression in terms of their unequal status in society at large. In terms of *women's peacebuilding*, feminist analysis identifies women's specific concerns about peacebuilding, approaches peacebuilding from women's perspectives, welcomes pluralistic voices and diverse methods. Using feminist analysis, critical questions are asked about peacebuilding such as: what does building peace mean to women across cultures? Who are the women talking about

peacebuilding? Do their perspectives and practices about peacebuilding coincide with definitions of the United Nations, states, or NGOs? A question of particular interest to feminist peace psychologists is to what extent do the United Nations, various States, NGOs, and grassroots organizations emphasize in their peacebuilding human processes such as reconciliation and restoration of relationships, as compared with institutional and structural rebuilding? (Mazurana & McKay, 1999).

To build peace requires visioning the components of peace and security across cultures, nationalities, ethnicities, and between men and women. There is no unitary construct called “peacebuilding” to which everyone subscribes. Governmental, U.N., NGO, and grassroots organizations often have widely differing notions of peacebuilding. One of the most commonly-referenced definitions of peacebuilding is that of former U.N. Secretary-General Boutros-Ghali whose *An Agenda for Peace* (U.N., 1992) has become a pivotal document to describe U.N. meanings of peacekeeping, peacemaking, and peacebuilding. In it, peacebuilding is defined as occurring in post-conflict societies: “rebuilding the institutions and infrastructures of nations torn by civil war and strife and building bonds of peaceful mutual benefit among nations formerly at war” (U.N., 1992, p. 8). Most peace operations of U.N. states and NGOs focus upon peacekeeping, peacebuilding, and providing humanitarian aid. Peacebuilding within women’s grassroots groups emphasizes relational behaviors, reconciliation and healing of psychological wounds (Mazurana & McKay, 1999).

The remainder of this chapter describes women’s peacebuilding approaches within international grassroots groups and NGOs and uses data we have gathered and analyzed (Mazurana & McKay, 1999). We stress women’s meanings of peacebuilding and peacebuilding work they do.

We emphasize some distinct approaches of women, especially at grassroots levels. Importantly, to avoid imposing Western thinking about what constitutes peacebuilding, we stress recognizing culturally-specific views and methods of peacebuilding within and between various women's groups.

WOMEN'S GRASSROOTS PEACEBUILDING

The real work of peacebuilding requires that local people seek solutions in their communities, regions, and nations rather than outsiders imposing their approaches. Grassroots women's peace groups tend to center peacebuilding actions upon nonviolence; recognition of, and respect for, human rights; promotion of intercultural tolerance and understanding; and women's empowerment in economic, social, cultural and political spheres. Women's full participation is stressed in all these processes.

Grassroots women's groups may involve themselves in peacemaking and peacebuilding because of concerns for their families' survival and knowledge that women and children are the primary casualties of indirect and direct violence during armed conflict. They emphasize the centrality of psychosocial (psychological responses situated within the context of community) and basic human needs, such as food, shelter and safety, far more than governmental organizations, NGOs, and the United Nations usually do (Mazurana & McKay, 1999). For many grassroots women's groups, peacebuilding means securing food for the family and a future for children (Susanne Thurfjell, personal communication, November 4, 1997). Issues of structural violence such as the economics of poverty and the degradation of the environment are of primary concern for many grassroots women.

Women's grassroots peacebuilding is frequently personal, interpersonal, creative and political. It may use imaginative activities to protest violence and advocate peace such as the wearing of black to protest violence, employing street theater, holding demonstrations, vigils, peace camps, and peace walks. In some instances where the most creative approaches are employed, conditions are very dangerous. For example, the Women in Black in Belgrade (former Yugoslavia) demanded accountability and an end to violence, protesting when no other groups dared (Cynthia Enloe, personal communication, January 24, 1998).

Grassroots women's group often work through networks and coalitions whereby women meet to strategize, gain energy, and push for peace at regional and global levels. Above all, grassroots peacebuilding is practical. It may mean stopping the fighting, and women's groups may organize towards this aim. The Sudanese Women's Voice for Peace, for example, is made up of women from the warring factions in the North and South, seeking solutions to women's and men's violence (United Nations Development Fund for Women/African Women in Crisis [UNIFEM/AFWIC], 1995).

The rationale for grassroot women's organizing is often based on beliefs that women are by nature—often because they are mothers—more caring, peaceful, and nonviolent (i.e., Agosin, 1993; Ruddick, 1982, 1990; Women for Life Without Wars and Violence!, 1996). We contend that there is nothing inherently (biologically) more peaceful about women than men although women may be socially conditioned to exhibit more peaceful qualities. Patriarchy works through various race, ethnic, and class lines, religions, and nationalism to encourage and involve women in violence. History has shown women are often essential to the perpetration of violence, and they have acted to support and encourage it (i.e. Afkhami, 1995; African Rights, 1995; Basu,

1993; Cock, 1992; Enloe, 1988, 1993; Human Rights Watch/Asia Watch, 1993).

Women's Spiritual Beliefs and Grassroots Peacebuilding

Both secular and religious women's groups work for peace at the grassroots level. The role of churches in preventing and ameliorating the effects of destructive conflict is significant because churches are frequently well placed to mediate conflict and advocate for peace. Churches are close to local communities and understand the human costs of conflicts. They may have more resources than NGOs. Also, their personal contacts are important—for example, newsletters, pastoral sermons and visits, and often they are a public site of gathering and strength for women. Because spiritual beliefs of women's religious peacebuilding groups are a foundation for their actions, activities to promote forgiveness and reconciliation are often emphasized. Despite this, in their peacebuilding work, women's religious groups frequently critique patriarchal behaviors fostered by religion, such as the domination of women by men within the church hierarchy. Similarly, secular women's peacebuilding groups may critique patriarchal practices perpetuating the war system.

Reconciliation

Grassroots women's organizations, whether religious or secular, often emphasize reconciliation although their foci may differ. *Spiritual reconciliation*, a "change of heart," emphasizes atonement and forgiveness. In contrast, *secular reconciliation* more often emphasizes justice, a key issue for women who seek gender justice through the prosecution of perpetrators and the acknowledgment of governments' wrongdoing because of rapes, sexual slavery, and other forms of violence against women. For instance, grassroots groups have worked for gender justice in the

aftermath of massive rapes that occurred in the 1990s during the war in the former Yugoslavia and, for several decades, have sought redress and apology from the Japanese government for the sexual slavery of Korean women during World War II (McKay, 1999).

Reconciliation includes bringing together former enemies to make peace, learning to coexist in peace, and defusing enemy imaging. Women's grassroots groups often play instrumental roles. In Mali, East Africa, for example, the national Women's Movement for Securing Peace and National Unity (MNFPU) organized meetings of military officers, high-level politicians, and diplomats. The eventual result was the 1991 National Pact to stop the war. Women worked to humanize the face of the conflict by emphasizing the situation of victims. They also served as mediators. More recently, women have sought to diffuse tensions between various ethnic groups, in particular, encouraging local women to take pro-active roles in conflict prevention. A major objective has been making women's concerns a priority at the national level and increasing women's numbers within the National Assembly as well as strengthening their effective participation (International Fellowship of Reconciliation, 1998).

In Burundi, Africa, with the sponsorship of a United States-based peace group, Search for Common Ground, a women's peace center was established in January 1995. The goal of the center, where typically 200 Hutu and Tutsi women visit weekly, was to reduce ethnic conflict, encourage reconciliation, and establish a cadre of women trainers in conflict resolution methods. Hutu and Tutsi women have met there to work on common goals, and the Center has served as a resource on gender issues. It has organized round tables to promote coordination and collaboration among various women's groups. Additionally, support has been provided for local women's groups and women in displaced camps (International Fellowship of Reconciliation and Interna-

tional Peace Bureau, 1997).

Militarism

Within grassroots women's peace organizations, a persistent theme is the issue of *militarism* and its effects. Militarism refers to processes through which individuals, groups, and social, economic, and political systems increasingly become reliant upon, or dominated by the military (Enloe, 1993). Grassroots women have organized to ameliorate the effects of militarism such as domestic violence, violence against women, sex trafficking, and degradation of the environment. Further they act to bring attention to concerns such as the global proliferation of light arms, militarization of children's toys and games, difficulties in reintegrating ex-combatants into their societies—particularly child-soldiers—and land demining (IFOR, 1998; Rebera, 1992).

An effort to combat militarism and promote peace occurred with the gathering of a Christian Conference of Asian Women's Concerns when women from many countries in the region gathered to document and analyze violence in their societies, particularly in the form of militarism. Together they discussed methods based on past and future work about how to best move towards cultures of peace (Rebera, 1992). Other examples are women's peace groups in Algeria, Chile, and the Philippines, which have asked for the voluntary dumping of war toys. The groups have held ceremonial burnings, have buried these destructive toys, and have worked to help children reject games of torture and violence (Agosin, 1993; Rebera, 1992). Women in the Russian Federation and their counterparts in Chechenya have challenged militaries' practice of forced conscription. Organized as a Committee of Soldiers' Mothers, they have hidden, lied about, and physically resisted the forced conscription of their sons in Chechenya. They also have pressured the Russian government for a nonviolent solution to the conflict, challenged the military author-

ity of the State, and demanded radical reform of the Russian Army (Women for Life Without Wars and Violence!, 1996).

Women's Participation in Decision-making

Another focus of some grassroots women's peace groups has been to increase women's numbers and strengthen their effective participation in decision-making bodies. These efforts are deemed critical to enhancing women's peacebuilding initiatives and capacities for achieving a just peace. The simple presence of women in international, regional, or national decision-making bodies is not, however, likely to have an impact without recognition of causes and processes of women's disempowerment and ways in which diverse women are oppressed. This knowledge must be followed by actions that facilitate women's empowerment. For example, the Burmese Women's Union was formed in 1995 by female students in Burma (now called Myanmar) to promote women's voices in politics, increase the recognition and practice of women's human rights, and prompt women's voices in building peace and democracy (IFOR & IPB, 1997).

Stopping Violence in the Home

A U.S.-based grassroots woman-led organization, Peace Links, works to empower local people toward achieving and sustaining peace through nonviolent forms of conflict resolution and violence prevention in their families, communities, nations and world. Although the United States is not characterized by open warfare, structural and direct violence—especially violence against women—is widespread (Schuler, 1992). Western countries, too, must analyze ways in which violence occurs in their own homes and societies, and their countries' perpetuation of violence on others and also actively engage in peacebuilding. Thus initiatives by organizations such as Peace

Links to address violence in the United States are also essential to peacebuilding.

NONGOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATIONS AND PEACEBUILDING

Nongovernmental groups often work in conjunction with local grassroots movements or they may involve themselves at multiple levels from international to local. NGOs, because of their linkages to both grassroots groups, governmental, and U.N. bodies have important potential for influencing peacebuilding, particularly through the formation of coalitions. NGOs at local levels (as compared with international NGOs) have grassroots knowledge of the psychological dimensions of conflicts, and they possess know-how for local conflict resolution. NGOs thus can be pivotal agents facilitating the capacities of locals to build peace, and these are often women.

Coalition Building

One of the ways NGOs are most effective is through building coalitions, thus linking resources of States, the United Nations, and civil society (Kunugi, Boulding, & Oberg, 1996). Peace researcher Elise Boulding (1993) observed that in order for peacebuilding to be viable it must have roots in local peace concerns and the often-invisible peace culture of family, neighborhood, and community. Thus, peacebuilding should not be a process only supporting those in power but must empower ordinary people. Further, although governments can speed up peace processes, they do not invent them; local people do (Boulding, 1993).

In coalition building, the *process* of building peace is emphasized more than are specific outcomes. Peacebuilding is thus approached as a dynamic and complex process made up of roles, function, and activities and involving interactions of many actors with varying skills (Lederach, 1995a; Lederach, 1995b). Unfortunately, what may happen is outside donor organizations (for

example, international NGOs and humanitarian aid programs) establish product-oriented agendas that tend to control peacebuilding agendas. These organizations initiate little consultation with local governments and people; that is, they eschew networking and coalition building (UNRISD, 1994). Since women so often work through networks and coalitions, their initiatives can consequently be marginalized when NGOs' "outcome agendas" overshadow emphasis on peacebuilding *processes*.

An example of coalition building occurred when NGOs came together with governmental and intergovernmental organizations and the United Nations during a 1997 networking meeting sponsored by the Peace Team Forum of the Swedish Peace Council and the Swedish Ministry for Foreign Affairs. Invited representatives of nearly 40 international and national NGOs and government officials from ten countries, the European Union, and the United Nations, convened at a conference on "Government-NGO Relations in Preventing Violence: Transforming Conflict and Building Peace" (Consortium on Peace Research, Education and Development [COPRED], 1997).

Women's NGO Peacebuilding

A limited number of NGOs are starting to develop programmatic focus on how they can facilitate women's peacebuilding. An important challenge to NGOs engaged in peacebuilding is to more thoroughly integrate gendered thinking into their work and recognize the critical importance of psychosocial processes, such as healing from trauma and relationship building, as integral to effective peacebuilding initiatives. Other NGOs have always focused upon women and peace. For example, the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF) links issues of peace with women's oppression, inequality, and empowerment. Founded in 1915, its activities

are global in scope. WILPF has long advocated for women's fuller participation in all stages of peace processes and negotiations. Another woman-focused NGO is the Centre for Strategic Initiative for Women (CSIW) which, in addition to its original human rights emphasis, has extended its mission to include women's leadership roles in peacebuilding.

Other NGO Contributions to Peacebuilding

In addition to fostering activism and coalition building, NGOs can be influential in supporting research, policy development and capacity building. In Canada, the International Development Research Centre (IDRC) is an autonomous (NGO) Canadian organization created by the Parliament of Canada. IDRC's perspective is that research on and for peacebuilding can play a catalytic role in facilitating processes of dialogue, consensus and coalition building, and policy development; it supports country-specific, regional and global projects. In 1996 IDRC established its Peacebuilding and Reconstruction Program Initiative (PBR PI). The PBR PI focuses on developmental challenges of post-conflict societies. Emphasizing that gender is integral, all IDRC-funded research must consider the differential impact change will have on the lives of both men and women. Also, gender mainstreaming, that is "thinking gender" about every program and project, is supported in all of the programs of the Centre.

An NGO that fosters action research in peacebuilding is Life and Peace Institute (LPI), based in Uppsala, Sweden. Founded by the Swedish Ecumenical Council, its principal aim is to support the work of churches in the fields of peace, justice and reconciliation. LPI views the central process of both conflict transformation and peacebuilding as empowering people within societies affected by conflict so they become owners of the peace process. LPI asserts that peace must be grown from inside if it is to be sustainable. Its extensive peacebuilding work in Somalia had as

one emphasis the empowerment of women, within a broader aim of enabling women and men to work together for a new and peaceful Somali society (Heinrich, 1997). Although women in Somalia do not have prominent decision-making and public affairs roles or equal access to education, health services, and economic resources, they do play crucial roles in managing conflict and building peace. An aim of LPI was to support women in these new and often difficult roles—for example as mediators between clans and in reestablishing communication between hostile groups. Thus LPI stressed capacity building for women, such as giving support to women members of local administrative councils and sponsoring workshops that focused upon topics such as conflict transformation, peace and justice, human rights issues, leadership roles, and democracy.

Jerusalem Link is an NGO consisting of Israeli and Palestinian women who work for peace at the grassroots level. Activities are organized around several major areas: human rights education and advocacy, peace education, dialogue groups of Israeli and Palestinian women, youth and young women making peace, and the engagement of women political leaders on both sides. Most activities are joint efforts, but sometimes they are conducted for either Palestinian or Israeli women. One project of Jerusalem Link is a media campaign. Jerusalem Link has recognized the critical role domestic and international media play in shifting public opinion and has published petitions and joint letters, focusing upon both print and electronic media. Significantly, ability to access and use electronic media is critical for women's effectiveness in peacebuilding and is increasingly a focus of international attention.

THE U.N. PLATFORM FOR ACTION'S (PFA) IMPACT UPON WOMEN'S PEACEBUILDING

The PFA, adopted in Beijing, China by the Fourth World Conference on Women on September

15, 1995 with the consensus of 181 nations, provides a blueprint of peacebuilding actions for many global women's coalitions and networks (McKay & Winter, 1998; United Nations, 1996b). Many sections of the PFA address issues of central importance to peace psychologists—violence against women, women and the environment, women and the media, and human rights of women, to name a few. The PFA is of substantial interest to feminist peace psychologists because of its identified strategies that can be used by men and women throughout the world to improve the status of the world's women. The PFA places emphasis on ending direct violence and also on seeking to ameliorate structural (indirect) violence so that societies are transformed to more equitable and peaceful ones. A section on women and armed conflict and women's initiatives to build more peaceful societies emphasizes nonviolence, equality between women and men, gender justice, recognition and honoring of women's human rights, reduction in military expenditures and international trade, trafficking in and proliferation of weapons, women's contributions as peace educators and in fostering a culture of peace, cooperative approaches to peace and security with women's participation in power structures, and women's involvement in all efforts to prevent and resolve conflicts (United Nations, 1996b). The PFA is a guiding document for many grassroots and NGO women's organizations that do peacebuilding.

CONCLUSION

In this chapter we have presented examples of ways women build peace and some distinct approaches they may use. Women's peacebuilding may be informed by views of "natural peacefulness," religious beliefs, a mother's sense of responsibility to protect her family, or analyses which connect militarism with violence.

Information about women's best practices of peacebuilding is not yet well known. This is be-

cause learning about women's peacebuilding has not been viewed with much interest by governmental and nongovernmental organizations or researchers. Also, because local women often work without recognition and use indigenous methods, they have been marginalized. Their actions converge on some issues, such as increasing women's presence in decision-making bodies. Women's initiatives are also divergent, reflecting particular cultural, historical and material contexts. Importantly, through their peacebuilding practices, women are pushing "acceptable" gendered practices and spaces, and often they bring women together from diverse backgrounds and classes to work to end violence and build peace.

We believe that women's peacebuilding practices can be of particular interest to peace psychologists because women emphasize processes such as relationship building, reconciliation, cooperation, and networking and other intrapersonal and interpersonal processes. A challenge for peace psychologists for the twenty-first century is to incorporate gendered thinking into scholarship and practice. This will require evaluating patriarchal biases with respect to the acquisition and use of psychological knowledge but will substantially enrich peace psychology's knowledge base and practice.