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ARTICLE

Sexual Violence and Two Types of Moral Wrongs

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Abstract

Although the idea that sexual violence is a "structural" problem is not new, the lack of specification as to what that entails blocks effective responses to it. This paper illustrates the concept of sexual violence as structural in the sense of containing a type of moral wrong called "structural wrong" and discusses its practical implications. First, I introduce a distinction between two types of moral wrongs—interactional wrongs and structural wrongs—and I argue that the moral problem of sexual violence includes both types, each of which calls for a different set of moral responses. Second, drawing on Iris Marion Young's social connection model of responsibility, I argue that recognizing the structural-wrong element of sexual violence does not reduce individual perpetrators' responsibility for it. Instead, it implies that a broader group of agents are required to join collective actions to reform the social structure. I conclude by evaluating some preventive programs against sexual violence through the lens of structural wrongs and providing directions to advance them.

The idea that sexual violence is a "structural" problem is now relatively familiar, at least within academic discussions. When discussing sexual violence, concepts such as rape culture, patriarchy, misogyny, and rape myths are often mentioned to indicate that sexual violence is related to social structure (Brownmiller 1975; Card 1991; Heberle 1996; Cahill 2009; Randall 2010; Parekh 2011; Fraser 2015; Jenkins 2017; Manne 2017; Yap 2017; Hänel 2018; Jackson 2018; Freedman 2020; Rasmussen and Yaouzis 2020; Kukla 2021). While this idea is now more familiar, several questions have also arisen: in what sense is sexual violence structural, given that it is always inflicted by individuals? If sexual violence is structural, then who should bear responsibility for it? How does individual responsibility for particular acts of sexual violence fit with claims about the broader role of social structure? What kinds of measures against sexual violence are both morally appropriate and practically feasible? Overall, what the appeal to social structure suggests about the moral problem of sexual violence and what it implies for our moral response to that problem are still relatively underexplored, both within philosophical literature and in real-world practices.

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The lack of specification in these questions risks raising wrongheaded concerns and blocking effective responses to sexual violence. One concern that is sometimes raised regarding the claim that sexual violence is structural is that it implies blame should be directed at the social structure and not individual agents, and that the responsibility of individual perpetrators who conduct sexual violations should be reduced. The infamous recommendations from Rape, Abuse & Incest National Network (RAINN), the largest anti-sexual assault organization in the United States, for the White House can be seen as responding to such thought. In their recommendations on how to protect students from sexual assault, RAINN suggested that "there has been an unfortunate trend toward blaming 'rape culture' for the extensive problem of sexual violence on campuses" and argued that such a claim missed the simple fact that "[r]ape is caused not by cultural factors but by the conscious decisions, of a small percentage of the community, to commit a violent crime." The most effective way to address sexual violence, it claims, is to "use the criminal justice system to take more rapists off the streets" (RAINN 2014). I suggest that RAINN's interpretation is misleading and can be avoided once we clarify the meaning and implications of sexual violence as structural.

Indeed, in addition to sexual violence, many social problems have been described as being "structural": homelessness, housing segregation, the gender pay gap, and sweatshop employment, to name a few. In referring to these issues or problems as "structural," some people mean that a comprehensive *explanation* of that social issue cannot be offered entirely in terms that focus on the specific behaviors of individuals, but must also include reference to broader social structures.[1] Some emphasize that the *cause* of that social issue has to do with structural and societal factors rather than merely the individual character of particular people.[2] There is another sense in which a problem might be "structural": some problems involve a type of *moral wrong* imposed by the social structure, and this type of moral wrong is different from those directly inflicted by a few individual agents. While the idea that sexual violence is structural in the first two senses has been discussed extensively, understanding the claim in the last sense is less often spelled out. This paper aims to bridge this gap.

The aim of this paper is twofold: to clarify the moral problem of sexual violence, and to discuss what this understanding implies in terms of responsibility for sexual violence and measures against it. In the first half of the paper, I argue that sexual violence contains two elements of moral wrongs and discuss the relations between them. I introduce the distinction between two types of moral wrongs—*interactional wrongs* and *structural wrongs*—which might be revealed from the two perspectives of moral analysis, and each deserves to be addressed seriously. Next, drawing on feminist studies, I argue that sexual violence is a dual-element moral problem as it includes wrongs of both types: acts of sexual violation, which constitute interactional wrongs, and social structures that systematically force some groups of people into positions in which they are more vulnerable to sexual violations, which constitute structural wrongs. I also argue that current measures against sexual violence focus excessively on addressing its interactional-wrong element and that this trend is problematic, as it risks further sustaining the wrongful social structure.

To address sexual violence more effectively, we need a better understanding of what kind of moral responses are appropriate for addressing its structural-wrong element. The second half of the paper discusses these issues. Drawing on Iris Marion Young's social connection model of responsibility, I argue that recognizing the structural-wrong element of sexual violence does not entail a reduction of individual perpetrators' responsibility for it. Rather, it implies that a broader group of agents are required to

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join collective actions for reforming the social structure. I evaluate some preventive programs against sexual violence through the lens of structural wrongs and provide some directions to advance them. My overall goal is to show that fully appreciating this dual-element feature that is present in sexual violence and many other social problems should prompt us to recognize the broader responsibility and develop more comprehensive measures in response.

Two types of moral wrongs

When engaging in a moral evaluation of a social phenomenon, there are at least two perspectives that can be adopted. Consider the issue of sweatshop labor in so-called developing countries. Many garments sold around the world are produced in impoverished countries by people working in appalling conditions. These sweatshop workers, many of them young women, work in unsafe or unpleasant conditions for long hours for very low pay. Many people find this social phenomenon morally troubling. They wonder whether these sweatshop workers are wronged? If so, how?

In this section, I point out that these questions can be approached from at least two different perspectives: one concerning individuals' interactions and the other concerning the social structure. I delineate these two perspectives of moral analysis and how they reveal two types of moral wrongs—*interactional wrongs* and *structural wrongs*. Then I describe the distinct differences between interactional and structural wrongs and explain why these two types of moral wrongs call for different sets of moral responses. Clarifying the relationships between these two categories of moral analysis, moral wrongs, and moral responses can help us examine the progress and problems in responding to sexual violence.

From two types of moral analysis to two types of moral wrongs…

When conducting a moral evaluation of a social phenomenon, the first type of moral analysis examines it through a more micro, action-centered perspective, focusing on the details of particular individual actions or interactions between a few individuals. I call this first type of moral analysis *interactional analysis*. The interactional analysis raises the question, "Do any of the individual actions of these particular people violate the moral rights of the people involved?" If so, then such an individual action constitutes an *interactional wrong*.

Analyzing the case of global sweatshops from this perspective, we might ask the following. Does this treatment violate the moral rights of the people working there? Do the actions of the owner amount to degrading treatment of these workers? Does the owner of a sweatshop fail to meet the standard of fair employment in a way that violates individual moral rights? If the answer is yes, then we conclude that these sweatshop owners wrong the workers via their individual actions. Depending on the moral rights that are violated, we might further suggest that the owners' behaviors are wrongful as degrading, exploitative, or something else. We might also examine the individual actions of those of us who purchase or sell products made through sweatshop labor, asking: Does buying products made at sweatshops violate the moral rights of the people working there? Does selling such products violate their moral rights? And so on.

The second type of moral analysis shifts the focus to a more macro, structural perspective and examines how social structures function. I will call this second type of moral analysis *structural analysis*. Structural analysis raises the question, "Does the way that social structure functions create some undeserved disadvantageous social

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positions and systematically put some groups of people into those positions?" If so, then the way that social structure functions constitutes a *structural wrong*.[3]

To better grasp structural analysis and structural wrongs, since they are somewhat less familiar than the interaction-focused alternative, let me begin by saying more about the idea of social structure. The idea of *social structure* is widely used when describing and explaining patterns of individual behaviors, which highlights that individuals' actions are often enabled or constrained by something larger than just the individuals (Johnson 2008; Young 2011; Haslanger 2016). A social structure is created and sustained in the dynamic process of social practices through the complicated interactions between *norms* (e.g., institutionalized laws, social norms, and economic policies), *schemas* (e.g., social meanings, associated values, and ideologies), and *distributions of resources* (e.g., material resources and epistemic resources). While a social structure does not directly determine or block any agent's actions, it affects the relative attractiveness, salience, and difficulty of various options, thereby affecting the choices people make and the behaviors they engage in.

As an analogy, when driving in countries with right-side traffic, although it is technically possible to drive on the left side of the road, people will almost universally drive on the right side of the road; it is the option "of least resistance" (Johnson 2008, 17). Traffic laws are known and transparent to those who are affected by them, but this is not always true of social structures. Even though people might not be fully aware of the influence of a social structure, their actions may be significantly shaped by it. By defining some actions as laudable versus forbidden, suggesting certain features are valuable versus degrading, and distributing resources to some groups of people but not others, social structures may present different levels of resistance to different groups of people. Depending on the options and opportunities presented, people can be described as situated in different *social positions*, which are associated with different levels of power and resources.

Based on this understanding of the social structure, structural analysis is conducted to carefully examine *how* social structures enable or constrain people's options, or situate them in different social positions. In cases where a social structure creates undeserved disadvantageous social positions in which some people are systematically made vulnerable to exploitation, homelessness, violence, or other forms of harm, we can see that there is something wrongful with the way social structure functions and recognize it as a *structural wrong*.[4] When conducting a structural analysis of the global sweatshop, it raises questions like: Does the way social structures function create the disadvantageous social positions of being exposed to sweatshop working conditions and systematically make some groups of people, such as young women in impoverished countries, likely to be situated in those positions? When the answer is yes, we may conclude that the social structure wrongs sweatshop workers via the way it functions. Then, depending on the form of incurred undeserved disadvantage, we might further suggest that the social structure is wrongful in different forms.[5]

It should be noted that interactional and structural analysis are distinct, as are the two types of moral wrongs that might be revealed. Through these two perspectives of moral analysis, we direct our focus to different aspects of a social phenomenon, ask different questions, and concern ourselves with the existence of different types of moral wrongs. In the case of global sweatshops, it may be that some wrongful interactions can be observed, but the social structure does not function problematically. On the contrary, it may turn out that, while each individual behaves appropriately and does not violate others' moral rights, the social structure is wrongful, as it systematically forces

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some people into positions vulnerable to undeserved working conditions. Of course, it is also possible that both interactional and structural wrongs are present at the same time. The point is this: the interactional and structural wrongs that might be revealed from the two perspectives of moral analysis are distinct from each other, and each deserves to be addressed seriously. Whether a social issue includes structural-wrong elements should not influence the case for addressing its interactional-wrong elements should they be observed. Similarly, if a social phenomenon includes structural wrongs, then whether any interactional-wrong elements are involved should not distract us from tackling structural ones.

...to the need for two types of moral responses

What is more challenging, then, is to understand what kinds of moral responses are required, especially for addressing structural wrongs. Human societies have tried to deal with interactional wrongs for a long time. When someone's behavior constitutes an interactional wrong, we ascribe moral responsibility to that person and impose moral sanctions accordingly, such as blame and punishment. The criminal system functions on a similar premise: when someone's behavior deviates from the legal rules and norms, we ascribe legal responsibility to that person and impose sanctions based on those laws and norms. Whether these responses are appropriate is an issue worth discussing, but at least there has been much effort to determine the best responses to interactional wrongs. Due to the distinct nature of structural wrongs, however, these familiar moral and legal responses cannot be directly applied.

First, unlike an interactional wrong, which can mostly be attributed to a few identifiable agents, a structural wrong is a collective result. It is important to note that social structures do not exist independent of individuals, but are only produced "in action" (Young 2011, 59). Social structures are created and sustained in the dynamic process of social practices through the complicated interactions between norms, schemas, and distributions of resources. These complicated interactions are not designed by a few agents, but formed through the often uncoordinated participation of many agents. By following or obeying the norms, embracing or challenging the shared schemas, and distributing resources in different ways, each participating agent plays some role in shaping, producing, or reproducing the social structure. Thus, the resulting wrongful social structure is a collective outcome.

Second, while the actions constituting interactional wrongs would usually be considered deviant, practices contributing to a wrongful social structure are often regarded as normal or morally permissible under the existing norms. For example, when purchasing clothing from fast-fashion retailers, consumers contribute to the social structure that sustains the existence of global sweatshops; parents who buy houses in "good" school districts to send their children to "good" schools contribute to the social structure that impels housing segregation. These behaviors are generally regarded as normal. Seeing that many others behave similarly, individuals can even maintain the belief that they are acting just like everyone else. As a result, they may contribute to the wrongful social structure through their everyday practices without intending to or being aware of the consequences.

Third, unlike interactional wrongs that wrong people through direct interactions that violate their moral rights, social structures wrong groups of people by putting them into undeserved social positions. By presenting different sets of options and opportunities for different groups of people, social structures wrong some people by making them

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more likely to be situated in undeserved positions prone to burdens. Even though occupying those positions does not necessitate encountering harmful events, such as exploitation, homelessness, and violence, their well-being is compromised or less secured under such situations. In this way, all people who are put into those undeserved social positions are wronged by the social structure, regardless of whether they end up encountering harmful events.

Overall, this comparison of interactional and structural wrongs supports the view that they are distinct from each other. Moreover, it suggests that new sets of moral responses need to be developed in order to respond appropriately to structural wrongs. While moral philosophers have been exploring adequate moral responses to structural wrongs recently (I will discuss this later), this remains relatively underdeveloped territory. With the distinction between these two categories of moral analysis, moral wrongs, and moral responses in mind, in the following sections, I examine the progress and problems in analyzing and responding to sexual violence.

The dual-element moral problem of sexual violence

Sexual violence is a serious and universal social issue. It is a pervasive global problem that occurs throughout the world, regardless of development or wealth. In the United States, for example, one person is sexually assaulted every 68 seconds (RAINN 2021). The seriousness of sexual violence calls for immediate action to combat it, but to do so appropriately, we need to first clarify what type of moral wrongs it consists of. First, I analyze the issue of sexual violence through both interactional and structural analysis and argue that it contains both interactional-wrong and structural-wrong elements. Then I argue that current practices against sexual violence fail to recognize its dual-element nature and thus risk sustaining the wrongful social structure.

Analyzing sexual violence from two perspectives

In this section, drawing on feminist studies, I illustrate the dual-element of the moral problem of sexual violence: other than acts of sexual violation, which constitute interactional wrongs, it also includes a structural-wrong element since the social structures systematically make some groups of people more likely to be situated in social positions vulnerable to sexual violations.

Interactional analysis is often adopted when evaluating sexual violence and helps to reveal its interactional-wrong element. From this perspective, the problem of sexual violence lies in the acts of sexual violations that can be attributed to a few individuals, and these events are "fundamentally dyadic encounters between a perpetrator and a victim" (Kukla and Herbert 2018, 248). These acts of sexual violation wrong the victims by violating their moral rights, which are sexual in nature, and thereby directly inflict harm on them.

While in principle, anyone may suffer acts of sexual violation, some groups of people are affected disproportionately. In the United States, nearly half of women (43.6 percent) experience some form of contact sexual violence in their lifetime, in contrast to a quarter of men (24.8 percent) (Smith et al. 2018); 21 percent of transgender college students have been sexually assaulted, compared to 18 percent of cisgender female and 4 percent of cisgender male students; Indigenous people are twice as likely to experience sexual assault than all other races (RAINN 2021). Conversely, men are the main perpetrators of all forms of sexual violence against women: 98.1 percent of rapes and 92.5 percent of other types of sexual violence are committed by male perpetrators

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(Black et al. 2011). Although sexual violence is often referred to as "gender-based violence" or "violence against women," as the above statistics show, sexual violence also influences people differently according to other social categories, such as race, gender identity, and sexuality. I thus suggest that *group-based violence* is a more appropriate characterization of this phenomenon.

The fact that sexual violations disproportionately affect some groups of people suggests that an analysis from a structural perspective is needed. Indeed, feminist scholars have been taking this perspective for long to reveal some contributing factors that put women into social positions in which they are more vulnerable to sexual violations,[6] and have described the various ways in which the axes of gender, race/ethnicity, class, disability, sexuality, etc., interact and result in a more complicated picture of such structural restrictions.[7] For example, the Western stereotype about Asian women as submissive and exotic has compounded with patriarchal norms that deny women's agency, making Asian and Asian American women more vulnerable to the threat of sexual violence in the North America (Cho 1997; Pyke and Johnson 2003; Park 2012; Zheng 2016). Some obscured social understanding and background assumptions surrounding sexual violence (e.g., it always involves overwhelming physical force or is only committed by strangers), ideal perpetrators (e.g., perpetrators are monstrous and mentally ill), and ideal victims (e.g., victims should physically resist when encountering violence) stop victims from appropriately understanding their experiences.[8] The victim-blaming culture, which tends to blame, shame, or disbelieve victims, also functions to silence them. Moreover, the current institutional design and material distributions, such as the burden of proof, low conviction rate, and psychological and financial efforts required to appeal lawsuits, make it more difficult for victims to report their experiences and expect to be heard and given justice. For some who also face the challenges of poverty, unemployment, insecure immigration status, or language barriers, appeal to the formal process is even less accessible.[9]

The structural analysis reveals that, other than acts of sexual violation, the problem of sexual violence is also enmeshed in a wrongful social structure that systematically renders some groups of people unfairly vulnerable to the threat. This structural-wrong element of sexual violence is related to what feminists call "rape culture," a term describing the socio-cultural context in which acts of sexual violation are condoned, excused, or normalized (Powell and Henry 2014). My analysis adds that the existence of rape culture, or more broadly, "sexual violence culture," constitutes a case of a structural wrong. Creating and sustaining such a wrongful social structure is a collective result, and people might contribute to the social structure unwittingly via their everyday practices. By telling jokes that objectify women, making comments supporting rape myths, or conforming to practices that support patriarchal norms, many individuals contribute to forming and sustaining the structural-wrong element of sexual violence.

From this perspective, the harms of sexual violence go beyond those directly inflicted through acts of sexual violation and should include those resulting from being situated in disadvantageous social positions. For example, feminist scholars have pointed out that fear of sexual violence causes psychological stress and impedes women's social mobility and access to the public domain (Valentine 1989; Pedersen 2020). Due to the fear of using public transportation at night, women might be reluctant to take night shifts, go to social or professional events at night, or participate in political movements that start or run late. Identifying the structural-wrong element of sexual violence suggests that these impacts should also be counted as part of the harm that calls for moral repair.

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Concerns about current practices in responding to sexual violence

So far, I have illustrated the two-element moral problem of sexual violence: the acts of sexual violation, which constitute interactional wrongs, and the social structures that systematically expose some people more than others to sexual violations, which constitute structural wrongs. Despite efforts taken to critique the structural-wrong element, in this section, I argue that current practices against sexual violence still focus too much on its interactional-wrong part, and that this trend is problematic.

When considering the fight against sexual violence, the question of how to identify those who commit wrongful actions and sanction them appropriately and adequately often receives most of the attention. For example, when #MeToo draws the public's attention to the pervasiveness of sexual violence, many reactions focus on outing those perpetrators, as evidenced by the French version, "#BalanceTonPorc (Expose Your Pig)" (Rasmussen and Yaouzis 2020, 273). Several lists of names, such as the "Shitty Media Men" and the "Spreadsheet of Shame," with names of British Members of Parliament, have been circulated. Once particular names are identified, the public often follow up with social sanctions (like public shaming), expecting that some formal procedures (e.g., legal or institutional procedures) will be conducted, and hoping that some sanctions will be enacted against the accused if the evidence demonstrates that their behaviors constitute sexual violations.

It should be clear that these responses focus on addressing acts of sexual violation. Since an interactional wrong is imposed by particular individuals, *who those individuals are* is an important question with which to begin the examination. Furthermore, as interactional wrongs occur as discrete events of dyadic encounters between a few perpetrators and victims, the focus of examination zooms into the details of the interactions to decide whether any actions satisfy the criteria of sexual violation. In media reports, the details of the interactional event of sexual violence are scrutinized to determine whether the interactions were inappropriate and whether the inappropriateness could be attributed to the accused. Similarly, when appealing to legal or institutional procedures, attention is paid to deciding whether the accused has performed some inappropriate behaviors according to legal or institutional norms.

Considerations regarding harm repair and victim compensation have also been focused on those affected by acts of sexual violation. Several NGOs provide victims with psychological (e.g., counseling) and physical support (e.g., shelter) after they have suffered a sexual violation. When acts of sexual violation are demonstrated through legal or other formal procedures, victims might also receive compensation for the harm they suffered. Overall, these measures strive to provide support for victims directly influenced by acts of sexual violation.

While the acts of sexual violation should definitely be addressed, I argue that the current trend of focusing excessively on the interactional-wrong element is problematic. First, too much focus on the interactional-wrong element distracts society from the equally important task of addressing the structural wrong of sexual violence. Jennifer Saul criticized the current excessive focus on legal and formal procedures for responding to sexual harassment on the grounds that this focus created "the impression that this is all that one can or should do" (Saul 2014, 309). The excessive focus on addressing the interactional wrongs of sexual violence does something similar: it makes society think that addressing acts of sexual violation *is* the proper response and distracts it from also paying attention to thinking about how to deal with structural wrongs.

Worse, current measures that target interactional wrongs may reinforce the wrongful social structure by supporting the problematic social imaginary of sexual violence,

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perpetrators, and victims. When the structural-wrong of sexual violence is underrecognized, measures targeting the acts of sexual violation often motivate thoughts toward individualism and psychologism, namely, the thoughts that attribute the problems to an individual's personal and psychological features (Haslanger 2015). This tendency supports the problematic portrayal of the ideal perpetrator. For example, when someone is accused of sexual violence during the #MeToo era, the media often describe the accused as a "monster" or report other bad things that the accused has done,[10] to prove that these people are really deviant, and it makes sense that they perform sexual violence. In other cases, when people want to defend the accused, they provide other kinds of evidence, such as "He is such a nice young man" and "He performs well at school," to suggest that the accused cannot be the *kind* of person who performs sexual violence.[11] What is shared in both scenarios is that they function to sustain the problematic portrayal of the ideal perpetrator—that is, the distorted belief that sexual violence perpetrators are monsters or psychopaths (Yap 2017; Manne 2017). When the accused does not fit into the social imaginary of the perpetrator, it leads to what Kate Manne called the problem of "himpathy," or "the excessive sympathy sometimes shown toward male perpetrators of sexual violence" (2017, 197) which prevents some cases of sexual violations from being identified.

Responses to sexual violence not only influence how the perpetrators are portrayed, but also how the victims are treated. Consider the connections between responses targeting interactional wrongs and the sustaining of victim-blaming culture. When the issue of sexual violence is understood largely from the interactional perspective, the problem is assumed to be located at the dyadic interaction between perpetrator and victim. Thus, when names have been identified, and accusations have been made, the situation is often framed into a dichotomy scenario: either the accused is in the wrong and thus should be formally sanctioned, or the person who made the accusation is in the wrong, for example, by being too sensitive or making false accusations. When there is insufficient evidence to hold the perpetrator responsible, or when himpathy is shown toward the male perpetrators who do not fit into the image of an ideal perpetrator, the burden then shifts to the victims: "The victim must have made a false accusation! She must have problems!" In this way, the limited focus on dyadic interactions between perpetrators and victims supports victim-blaming culture and sustains the problematic social structure.

Overall, the current responses that mainly concern the interactional-wrong element of sexual violence are problematic in many ways. They convey the message that sexual violence is primarily an issue of interactional wrongs, distract society from addressing structural wrongs, and further sustain the wrongful social structure by supporting the distorted portrayal of the ideal perpetrator and fueling victim-blaming reactions.

Responsibility for sexual violence

To better address sexual violence, developments in responding to the structural-wrong element of sexual violence are required. However, in contrast with the well-developed theories and practices of addressing interactional wrongs, responses to structural wrongs are growing, but still inchoate. One thing that prevents people from effectively addressing structural wrongs is the lack of an adequate concept of responsibility. What should responsibility for structural wrongs look like? What is the moral ground of this responsibility? Who bears this responsibility?

Here, drawing from Young's *social connection model* (SCM) of responsibility, I argue that we can hold all participants in the wrongful social structure responsible for joining

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collective actions in shaping the social structure. I delineate the responsibilities of different actors—from states, privileged groups, and powerful agents to oppressed groups—based on their positions in the social structures. I close this section by pointing out some issues that SCM fails to answer and that should be further explored in future work.

Responsibility for the structural wrongs: lessons from the SCM

It would be helpful to introduce Young's SCM of responsibility by contrasting it with the model that is often used to assign responsibility for interactional wrongs (Young calls this the *liability model*). In holding people responsible for interactional wrongs, both in moral and legal contexts, the following criteria are usually required to be met: (1) the agent's action can be shown to have causally contributed to the wrong, and (2) the action was performed by an agent voluntarily and with sufficient knowledge of the consequences of their actions. In the following, I will refer to the sense of responsibility based on the liability model, *interactional responsibility,*[12] as a shorthand for responsibility for interactional wrongs. However, as pointed out earlier, these criteria for assigning interactional responsibility are often inapplicable for structural wrongs.

Seeing the insufficiency of the liability model, Young proposed the SCM to offer a different ground and sense of responsibility that took the features of structural wrongs into account. According to the SCM, individuals bear what Young called *political responsibility* when their actions contribute to reproducing the wrongful social structure.[13] In contrast to the process of assigning responsibility for interactional wrongs, the SCM does not aim to trace the specific causal impact of each action, as the social structure is formed and reproduced through complicated interactions between these actions and the material conditions, making the causal tracing of specific actions almost impossible. Instead, the political responsibility derives from the fact that the participants of a social structure interact with others in the dynamic process of reproducing the wrongful social structure. As Corwin Aragon and Alison Jaggar (2018) added, people are "structurally complicit" when exercising their agency reinforces the wrongful social structure and thus should be held politically responsible.

Young contended that political responsibility was different from interactional responsibility in many respects, such as being non-isolating, without blame and guilt, and forward-looking. Political responsibility is non-isolating in the sense that it does not try to single out a few individuals while letting others off the hook; rather, it is shared among all participants in the social structure and can only be discharged through collective actions. Furthermore, political responsibility does not assign different levels of blame, guilt, and punishment based on each individual's specific causal contributions to the structural wrong.[14] Instead, it emphasizes the forward-looking goal of transforming the social structure. Overall, the SCM suggests that all participants whose actions contribute to the reproduction of the wrongful social structure bear the shared political responsibility together, which is not about fault finding or assigning blame, but requires them to join the collective action of reform.

What does the discussion on the SCM and liability model entail about the responsibility for sexual violence? First, it helps distinguish between two different kinds of responsibility for sexual violence, which need not undermine each other. Young explicitly stated that the SCM does not replace, but supplement, the liability model of responsibility. In other words, these two models of responsibility are suitable for different types of moral wrongs: the liability model is appropriate for assigning responsibility for interactional wrongs, and the SCM is appropriate for assigning responsibility for

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structural wrongs. Applying the two systems of responsibility to the case of sexual violence suggests that we can attribute interactional responsibility (and ascribe, for example, blame and punishment accordingly) to individual perpetrators who conduct acts of sexual violations based on the liability model and, at the same time, attribute political responsibility to all the agents participating in the wrongful social structure that makes some groups vulnerable to sexual violations. In this way, considering responsibility for one of the elements should not exclude the other.

It is true that when attributing interactional responsibility to perpetrators who conduct acts of sexual violation, questions might be raised about whether that individual should be held fully responsible (or responsible at all) if their actions are somehow substantially influenced by factors outside of their control. This is a deep philosophical question that deserves comprehensive analysis and has indeed been raised in the debate regarding skepticism about moral and legal responsibility.[15] However, it is important to note that this concern is raised regarding the attribution of responsibility for interactional wrongs (how and whether the relationship between social structure and events of interactional wrongs should influence responsibility attribution to it), and it is different from the question of the attribution of responsibility for structural wrongs. On responsibility for sexual violence, there is one question regarding whether and how perpetrators of specific acts of sexual violation are responsible for those actions, and another regarding how to be responsible (and who is responsible) for the social structure that makes some groups of people unfairly vulnerable to the threat. Thus, unlike the concern raised by RAINN in the recommendations, being concerned about the responsibility for rape culture does not entail reducing perpetrators' responsibilities for sexual violations.

Second, the SCM makes it clear that a broader group of agents is responsible for the wrongful social structure in the sense of being required to do something about it. Talking about the structural-wrong element of sexual violence does not suggest that we should just "blame the structure" and let individuals off the hook. Rather, the SCM points out that all agents contributing to the structural-wrong element of sexual violence, from the privileged and powerful to the oppressed, bear the shared political responsibility for shaping the social structure together. Thus, apart from holding individual perpetrators responsible for the acts of sexual violation, we should also hold *all* participants of the social structure politically responsible, asking them to join the collective action to reform the social structure that unfairly exposes groups of people to the threat of sexual violations. In this way, the recognition of rape culture implies a shared responsibility for changing it.

It should be noted that this shared responsibility is not shared equally among all members and might entail different actions for different agents. Young proposed four *parameters of reasoning* derived from situated social positions: power (agents with the ability to shape the social structure), privilege (agents who benefit from the structural process), interest (agents with an interest in reshaping the social structure), and collective ability (agents with the ability to mobilize organizations). Those in social positions with greater power to influence the social structure (such as the government and legislators) should try to do so, for example, by enacting laws and policies that better ensure gender equality in social-political, economic, and cultural domains. Those who benefit from the structure (such as men) should offset their privileges by using them to challenge the source of structural wrongs,[16] such as critiquing patriarchal norms and expectations. Those who are oppressed and thus have an interest in reshaping the structure (such as women) should contribute their knowledge and experiences

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of being oppressed by the existing structure, thereby providing helpful information on how to reform it. Those with collective ability (such as CEOs and religious leaders) should try to mobilize the members of their organization(s) toward collective efforts. Overall, it is through the collective actions of various individuals situated in different social positions that the social structure can be reformed.

The idea of holding oppressed groups politically responsible for sexual violence might seem controversial at first glance. However, it is sensible from the consideration of shaping social structure. Young provides two reasons. First, the everyday practices of the oppressed also play a critical role in reproducing the wrongful social structure. Thus, holding people politically responsible is also applicable to them. Second, their experiences of being oppressed provide valuable information and resources for transforming the social structure. Without including the oppressed in the movement, the transformation of the social structure cannot proceed appropriately.

Aside from these two reasons, I want to add the potential value of empowering the oppressed by participating in structural transformation. As the structural-wrong element of sexual violence is essentially rooted in the power imbalances between different social positions, addressing it comprehensively requires a change in power relations within the social structure: reducing the undeserved power of the privileged while empowering the oppressed. Including the oppressed in transforming the social structure conveys a message of recognizing their agency: the oppressed are not passive beings who are vulnerable to harm and in need of the protection of others by nature; rather, they are agents who have power and can contribute to structural change.

Directions to advance the SCM

While the SCM is helpful for thinking about the responsibility for structural wrongs, in the following, I point out some issues that the SCM fails to answer and which are presently underdeveloped in the literature. Future research could advance the theory of responsibility for structural wrongs by exploring these issues.

The first issue concerns the moral objective of addressing structural wrongs. It should be noted that the backward-looking moral objectives of responding to structural wrongs are left out in the picture of SCM. The objective of political responsibility, as portrayed by Young, is forward-looking in the sense that it primarily focuses on shaping the social structure and disregards harm that has occurred. As Young puts it, "The point is not to compensate for the past, but for all who contribute to processes producing unjust outcomes to work to transform those processes" (2011, 109).

Although the forward-looking objective is important, it seems problematic to suggest that it should be the only focus when addressing structural wrongs. For example, when addressing interactional wrongs, such as acts of sexual violation, it is unsatisfactory to suggest that we should focus only on preventing future events from happening while setting aside the task of compensation and repair. Instead, we take both aspects as critical for a comprehensive response to interactional wrongs: we need to work on preventing future acts of sexual violation from happening and also compensate victims for the undeserved harm they suffered. Similarly, consideration should be extended to a comprehensive response to the structural wrong. As already discussed, not only do acts of sexual violation profoundly harm their victims, the social structure that assigns some groups of people to positions vulnerable to sexual violations also harms them. Even without directly encountering acts of sexual violation, such a status harms large groups of people by imposing psychological stress on them or limiting their social mobility.

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These influences are not unfortunate outcomes, but undeserved consequences of the social structure and require moral repair. As a result, in responding to structural wrongs, the moral objective should include not only forward-looking structural transformation, but also backward-looking harm repair. What, then, is required to repair the harm caused by structural wrongs? Who should bear the responsibility for repairing it? A fuller theory of responding to structural wrongs is needed to answer these questions.

The second issue concerns the implementation of responsibility for structural wrongs. As the SCM points out, addressing structural wrongs requires collective actions by groups of people in different social positions. It is important to note that the philosophical arguments establishing the ground of responsibility are insufficient to motivate people to confront and assume their responsibility. This is true even for interactional wrongs, but the features of structural wrongs make the task more challenging. First, several epistemic and psychological barriers, such as ignorance (sometimes willful), indifference, and inattention, prevent individuals from recognizing their connections to structural wrongs (Schiff 2014; Hayward 2017; Beausoleil 2019), let alone becoming motivated to join the collective actions. The fact that specific causal connections are hard to track, that individuals contribute to the social structure through everyday practices rather than socially deviant actions, and the difficulty of being fully aware of one's structural impact make people more likely to deny their responsibility for the structural wrong. Second, people can be deterred from taking action against structural wrongs out of inertia or uncertainty regarding where to start. What kinds of collective actions are required? What specific tasks should one take on? Answering these questions requires a great amount of effort and time, thus setting the bar for participation high. These reflections emphasize that it is crucial to explore what kinds of measures or institutions would be morally well-founded and practically effective for mobilization. Although it is not easy to provide a full picture, without some sort of proposal for responsible implementation, the claim that "all agents should join the collective action" is too idealistic and imprecise.

Overall, Young's SCM provides a helpful basis for thinking about the responsibility for structural wrongs. It establishes that the contribution to the reproduction of social structure is a sufficient moral ground for holding people responsible for structural wrongs and suggests that all responsible agents should work together to reform the social structure. Once we clarify the relationship between the SCM and the liability model, I argue that recognizing the structural-wrong element of sexual violence does not entail a reduction of individual perpetrators' responsibility for it. We can attribute interactional responsibility to individual perpetrators for acts of sexual violation based on the liability model and, at the same time, attribute political responsibility to all participants of the social structure. I further point out that there are some important issues that SCM fails to answer, including the moral objective of addressing structural wrongs and the practical measures for implementing this picture of shared responsibility. With these reflections, let us turn to exploring measures to address the structural wrong of sexual violence.

Toward measures against the structural wrong of sexual violence

The previous discussions on political responsibility provide us with some guidance for examining recent developments in measures against sexual violence. What should measures addressing the structural-wrong element of sexual violence look like? How should people be mobilized to fight sexual violence? In this section, I suggest that some

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preventive measures against sexual violence provide potential examples of mobilizing people to assume their responsibility for structural wrongs. Furthermore, the lessons learned from the structural reflections indicate directions for these measures to be further revised and developed.

In light of the insufficiency of post-event measures, preventive measures against sexual violence have been implemented in the past few decades. Some popular examples include self-defense training, men's mentoring programs, and bystander training, all of which cater to different target audiences. Self-defense training is designed to "arm women with the skills to avoid, interrupt, and resist assault" (Hollander 2016, 207) by teaching women verbal, psychological, and emotional skills to respond to potential threats and/or teaching them martial arts or other physical tactics to build their bodies. Men's mentoring programs aim to develop male mentors who might influence their peers to refrain from using violence and to intervene when they encounter violence (Nuti 2019). Building on these two methods, the bystander training approach aims to involve more people in the fight against sexual violence. It does so by engaging "third party witnesses to situations where there is high risk of sexual violence and who by their presence have the ability to do nothing, to make a situation worse by supporting or ignoring the perpetrator behavior, or to make the situation better by intervening in prosocial ways" (McMahon and Banyard 2012, 3).

Some features of these preventive measures align with the idea of political responsibility for sexual violence. First, these measures avoid isolating a few agents from blame and focus on what can be done to prevent wrongful events from happening at all. They thus resonate with the political responsibility of being non-isolating, not about blame and guilt, and forward-looking. At the same time, they recognize that various groups of people contribute together to the structural wrongs and thus should be required to join collective actions to fight sexual violence. Moreover, by designing programs that mobilize different groups of people, they manifest the idea that the detailed content of political responsibility could differ depending on the social position that one is in. These preventive measures that mobilize broad groups of people in the fight against sexual violence are well founded in terms of their responsibility for the structural wrongs.

Drawing from earlier reflections on structural wrongs, I want to point out some aspects of these preventive measures that can be improved or developed. First, other than focusing on fighting acts of sexual violation, these measures should further target the social structure and pay attention to the influence of intersecting structural constraints. The design of these preventive actions often explicitly or implicitly regards acts of sexual violation as the main target to fight against or prevent. However, as previously argued, the main problem is not only the discrete events of sexual violation, but also the wrongful social structure.

When mobilizing different groups against sexual violence, the focus should be expanded to interventions of everyday practices reproducing the wrongful social structure. For example, seeing that sexism and discrimination against women play a crucial role in sustaining the structure underlying the prevalence of sexual violations against women, Anastasia Powell suggested that the design of bystander programs should go further "upstream," preparing bystanders to intervene in practices supporting sexism and discrimination against women (Powell 2014). It is also important to recognize that the "bystanders" of acts of sexual violations are not truly bystanders to the issue; rather, they are often participants in the wrongful social structure. Through identifying other structural factors that sustain systematic sexual violence, these preventive programs should all go further upstream by preparing these participating agents to

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challenge the related practices and to stop the wrongful social structure from being reproduced.

Second, when including groups of people in the fight against sexual violence, how they are mobilized is crucial. Consider, for example, the way women are included in these efforts. Under the broader term of "self-defense program," some instruct women on "safety strategies" to reduce the risk of encountering acts of sexual violation, which often function as admonishments to drink less, wear more clothing, or refrain from using public transportation, which reduces the space and opportunities available for them. In contrast, a style of training termed *feminist self-defense* or *empowerment self-defense* (ESD) programs aim to empower women by expanding their accessible space and opportunities (Telsey 1981; Searles and Berger 1987; Hollander 2016). Other than teaching physical tactics, these programs also interrogate the social norms and shared schemas that sustain sexual violence by transforming women's beliefs about body, gender, and sexual violence. Research has revealed that women attending these programs feel more confident, bear a more critical understanding of gender norms, and tend to blame themselves less if they are sexually violated (Hollander 2016).

The reflections on different approaches in organizing the self-defense programs reveal the importance of the structural understanding of sexual violence. The structural wrongs that render some groups of people especially vulnerable to acts of sexual violence are rooted in the imbalanced power relationships between social positions. Thus, in order to disrupt such a structural wrong, the tactics and content of these programs should be designed to reshape the imbalanced power relationship, for example, through helping the oppressed move out of socially disadvantaged positions. On the other hand, other than empowering the oppressed, the unearned benefits of dominant groups should also be challenged and diminished. When mobilizing men in the fight against sexual violence, efforts must be made to examine and critique the sources of their privileges, such as the patriarchal system, gender inequality, and hostile masculinity. Without challenging the power and privileges conferred to men, there is a risk of reinforcing the message of men being protectors of women and sustaining the privileged social positions in which they are situated.

Third, as well as changing individual beliefs, it is critical to target other components of the social structure. So far, most preventive measures have been directed at the individual level, aiming to change individuals' behaviors by changing their beliefs (DeGue et al. 2014). However, research has pointed out that merely changing individuals' beliefs is insufficient to bring about behavior change (Powell 2014). Whether a bystander decides to intervene also has to do with attitudes presented at the community or social level. When it is perceived that bystander interventions are not supported by the social environment in which one is situated, intervention is less likely; in contrast, if there is a perception that society has a strong expectation of bystander interventions, it is much more likely intervention will occur. This observation resonates with the analysis of social structure, which is formed through the interconnections between norms, schemas, and material conditions, and thus difficult to change without a holistic approach. While individuals' beliefs play a role in changing practices, other components of the social structure, including shared schemas, material conditions, and institutional settings, also need to be changed.

It is worth noting that some recent attempts against sexual violence are progressing along these lines. Knowing that rape myths obscure the true nature of rape, some measures, such as holding awareness campaigns, have been taken to reduce the impact of

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rape myths (Jenkins 2017). Recognizing that the financial and technical burden often constitutes a huge obstacle for victims to appeal to legal procedures, the Time's Up Initiative provides legal resources and support for victims (Wexler et al. 2019). Recent social media activism, including #MeToo, #BelieveHer, and #WhyIDidntReport, functions to shape the public perception and narratives toward victims of sexual violence: #MeToo challenges the myth that sexual violence is uncommon; #BelieveHer aims to counter the credibility deficit that victims of sexual violence face; and #WhyIDidntReport draws people's attention to the multiple barriers that silence victims. Through adopting a holistic approach against sexual violence, there is hope that the social structure can be transformed comprehensively.

In summary, preventive measures against sexual violence provide potential examples of holding broader groups of people politically responsible for the fight against sexual violence. Drawing on structural reflections, I suggest that these measures should be further improved by shifting their target from acts of sexual violation to social structure, being mindful of the way they mobilize different groups of people, and adopting a more holistic approach to tackling different components of the social structure. With more comprehensive structural measures being developed, the fight against sexual violence can then be advanced.

Conclusion: addressing the dual-element moral problem of sexual violence

Although the fight against sexual violence has been brought to greater prominence in the past few decades, sexual violence remains a serious social issue across the globe. My paper aims to contribute to the fight by clarifying the moral problem of sexual violence and reimagining our responses to it, as well as providing the philosophical foundations of those responses.

In this paper, I have argued that the issue of sexual violence has two morally problematic elements: acts of sexual violation, which constitute interactional wrongs, and social structures that systematically force some groups of people into positions in which they are more vulnerable to sexual violations, which constitute structural wrongs. While both elements need to be addressed, I pointed out that current measures against sexual violence focus too much on addressing interactional wrongs but not the structural ones. Once we clarify the relationship between the SCM and the liability model, I argue that recognizing the structural-wrong element of sexual violence does not entail a reduction of individual perpetrators' responsibility for acts of sexual violation. Rather, it implies that, other than holding those perpetrators responsible, a broader group of agents are required to join collective actions to reform the wrongful social structure. Additionally, I suggested that some newly developed preventive programs against sexual violence serve as potential examples of mobilizing people to help them take on their responsibility for addressing structural wrongs, although they also have some problems that need to be addressed and further developed. Overall, fully appreciating this dual-element feature that is present in sexual violence and many other social problems should prompt us to recognize the broader responsibility and develop more comprehensive measures in response.

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Notes

1 For example, see Haslanger's (2015) discussions on the scenario of parental leave and Manne's (2017) discussions on misogyny. Also, see Ayala-Lopez and Beeghly (2020) for a helpful discussion on the individualistic and structural approaches to explaining injustice.

2 For example, Anderson (2010) argued that segregation is a "principal cause" (2) of racial inequality; Terry (2014) appealed to the social-ecological model to identify multiple causes of violence against women with disabilities at different (individual, interpersonal, community, policy, and societal) levels.

3 My use of "structural wrong" is similar to the current use of "structural injustice" in many ways; nonetheless, I choose to use the former term. Following Iris Marion Young, recent discussions in philosophy often use "structural injustice" as an umbrella term for all kinds of structural problems. However, it is worth noting that Young's original use of the term is tightly connected to domination, and there can be other forms of structural wrong that do not fall into that category, such as structural discrimination, structural exploitation, and structural alienation. I thus use "structural wrong" as a broader category of wrongs that can be attributed to the social structure. In other words, while structural injustice is one form of structural wrong, not all structural wrongs are structural injustices.

4 Structural wrongs often occur in a relative way, that is, when the social structure exposes some people to disadvantageous positions while conferring power or benefits to others. However, it is also possible for a structural wrong to occur even if there are no groups of people being conferred some benefits or power, that is, when the influence of social structure (e.g., through the interactions between repressive policies or social norms) problematically restricts the options of the people in the whole society. In such a scenario, it also seems plausible to suggest that the whole society of people is wronged by the social structure. I thank Daniel Forgal for pointing out this latter scenario of structural wrongs.

5 Note that the usage of structural wrong, as proposed here, refers to a broad category of different forms of wrong that can be attributed to the social structure. Some potential forms of structural wrongs include structural exploitation (McKeown 2016), structural discrimination (Altman 2020), and structural alienation (Lu 2017).

6 Such a structural perspective has been taken in feminist analysis on gendered violence for a relatively long time, such as in classic texts like Brownmiller (1975) and Card (1991). I am grateful to an anonymous reviewer for pressing me to clarify this point.

7 See Crenshaw (1991) for discussions on intersectionality and violence against women of color. Thank you to an anonymous reviewer for the suggestion on addressing the diverse experiences of people who are made vulnerable to the threat of sexual violence.

8 See Jenkins (2017) for discussions on rape myths; see Yap (2017) for discussions on the social imaginary of ideal perpetrators; see Randall (2010) for discussions on the social imaginary of ideal victims.

9 I do not suggest that these factors that contribute to the structural wrong of sexual violence are universalized. Sexual violence of different types (e.g., child sexual abuse, sexual violence during wartime, sexual violence against people of color, sexual violence between same-sex individuals, and sexual violence against men) or in different cultural contexts might occur in different social structures. Each of these different forms of sexual violence warrants separate, context-specific analysis.

10 Consider discussions surrounding the Harvey Weinstein case, such as Johnson (2018).

11 E.g., the popular narratives surrounding the Brock Turner case; see Yap (2017) and Manne (2017, 196–209), for detailed discussions. Furthermore, the prevalence of distorted presentation of perpetrators constitutes a form of hermeneutical injustice; see Falbo (2022) for further discussions.

12 Note that Young uses "moral responsibility" to refer to this type of responsibility. Such terminology, however, might misleadingly imply that the responsibility for structural wrongs is not a kind of moral responsibility—which, I think, is an issue worth discussing but not to be assumed or taken for granted.

13 My understanding of the interpretation of "connection" is drawn from McKeown (2018).

14 Several scholars have criticized Young's claim that political responsibility is without blame and guilt. See Nussbaum (2009), Barry and Ferracioli (2013), and Beck (2020). Zheng (2021) agrees with Young that blame and guilt are not appropriate in responding to structural wrongs but argues that other forms of moral criticism could be appropriate.

15 See Strawson (1994) on the illustration of skepticism about moral responsibility; see Ewing (2018) for a helpful review on the debate about whether the considerations of certain social disadvantages should diminish one's legal obligations.

16 The idea of offsetting privilege is drawn from Dunham and Lawford-Smith (2017).

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