

Working Paper

Fighting 'Feminist Fatigue'? Women and Peace Negotiations

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List of Acronyms

CSS	Center for Security Studies
FDFA	Federal Department of Foreign Affairs
HD Centre	Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue
IIS	Institute for Inclusive Security
KOFF	Center for Peacebuilding
MILF	Moro Islamic Liberation Front
OSCE	Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe
UN	United Nations
WIPNET	Women in Peacebuilding Network

Abstract

This working paper investigates how the presence of women affects peace talks. Its importance is based on the increased theoretical and empirical interest surrounding women and peacebuilding coupled with the salience of mediation and negotiation as a key conflict resolution mechanism. The roots of the debates surrounding women at the peace table are multidisciplinary in nature. The advocacy movement was not based on women's rights exclusively, but was part of a larger constellation of conflict resolution and inclusive peacemaking; human security and human rights as well as the human rights of women. With this in mind, the following working paper focuses on the particular challenges of the women's rights approach, questioning the effectiveness of strands of current feminist academic and policy literature and the resulting advocacy campaigns pushing for greater representation and participation of women at the peace table. It argues for a greater focus on the current architecture of peace negotiations as an alternative entry point for more inclusive peace processes. The working paper begins with an analysis of relevant literature on mediation, policymaking, women and peacemaking, as well as feminist theory before undertaking an interpretive analysis of 14 interviews with mediation experts and negotiators. The research findings show that the presence of women does make a fundamental difference in peace talks, but not necessarily in the way assumed by gender mainstreaming policy literature, i.e. as an aid towards the conclusion of a negotiated settlement. The findings suggest instead that a holistic gender analysis and greater synthesis of policymaking on women and negotiations with peace process design and structure is needed in order to move the debate beyond discussions on women and quotas towards discussions on how having both men and women actively participating in formal peace processes leads to fuller, broader, and more sustainable peace agreements.

Foreword

Nearly fourteen years have passed since the emergence of the women, peace and security agenda in the global arena. It has been an extraordinary period of progress and stagnation, innovation and inertia. Taken from a historical perspective this is not surprising. The agenda was always transformative in nature, challenging not only the usual suspects but business as usual in the realm of peace and security. It calls for inclusivity where exclusivity reigns supreme. It demands recognition not only of the needs of civilians and women in particular, but acknowledgement of their insight, contributions and influence in mediating and bringing peace and a sustainable future.

From the outset there were always creative but clear tensions between the range of voices and forces that coalesced in support of the agenda. The agenda emerged from the grassroots experiences and demands of women in war zones and required an international platform and support from formal institutions – notably the UN, governments and regional organizations. In the process much of it has become bureaucratized and at times removed from the reality of women’s lived experiences.

As Julia Palmiano elegantly and eloquently demonstrates, the agenda also emerged from interactions between women’s rights activists who revived the strong anti-militarist lens of the feminist movement, and the nascent conflict resolution practitioners who found voice and space in international civil society the chaos of the post cold war years. They found commonality in their shared demand for peace and non-violent approaches to the resolution and transformation of conflict. They also shared a strong human rights perspective, recognizing that so much of modern day violence is rooted in the abuse of basic rights. Finally, there was a shared fundamental assumption that women – as half of the population, who often bear the brunt of warfare and survive the travesties – have an inalienable right to participate fully in the decision making that shapes their lives and the future of their countries for generations to come.

But from the outset there were differences in tactics and strategy, in nuance and priorities, particularly when it came to advocacy and generating political support and interest in the agenda. Practitioners and advocates from conflict resolution community highlighted the importance of women as peacemakers, as contributors to the solutions needed, rather than as passive victims in need of assistance or as another group demanding rights. Their effort was driven by the recognition that in every war zone women emerge who are self-empowered and who have profound courage and capacity to reach across the divisions and to find commonality and humanity in their erstwhile enemies, and in this way pave the way towards peace. They do not forgo the message of rights or gender equality, but by their actions and words they demonstrate the necessity of their inclusion peacemaking. But this perspective was and remains new to many.

Over the years, it has been overwhelmed by the overtly feminist rights-based approaches that have been more prevalent and louder. In part this is because of the long and deep history of the global women's movement, but also because they are right. It is absurd that at the dawn of the 21st century – when so much of daily life is globalized, when even violence is democratized and there is a proliferation of actors in every conflict zone, peacemaking is still largely the exclusive domain of a small cohort of men. It is doubly absurd given the failure rate of such processes in the past twenty years, and the evidence of effective peacemaking that ordinary people engage in, in war zones. In effect while the problem has become more complex, those responsible for providing solutions have been unwilling or unable to revisit peacemaking models to tackle the complexity, to shift their approaches and embrace new methods.

But as Palmiano demonstrates, being right in principle does not always translate into effective advocacy and action. Peacemaking in any war zone is also about realpolitik. It is inevitably tied up with competition and challenges among actors and states. It is also driven by the urgency to stop the bloodshed and destruction. As such, it can be understandable why the world of mediation has been reluctant to embrace the gender equality and women's inclusion agenda as a priority. In their views, there are enough 'urgent' issues and actors to contend with - dealing with the so-called spoilers – those who bear arms and threaten stability. The message of women's rights and inclusion is seen as being of secondary importance. Not in the realm of the 'urgent'. It is also implicitly viewed through the lens of 'power sharing' – as if women, vying for space and voice, are just another cohort of actors seeking their share of power, adding to the list of demands being made.

Fourteen years since the adoption of SCR 1325, the recognition of women as peace actors, as the anti-spoilers, or actual and potential contributors to peacemaking remains poorly understood or accepted. Meanwhile, countries experiencing conflict and transition are becoming ever more complex political and security spaces, with the lines between civilian and combatant, citizen and politician, victim and perpetrator increasingly blurred. Research shows that inclusive peacemaking is more sustainable. The policy frameworks and recommendations exist in reams, the rhetoric is overwhelming, but progress remains glacial.

Palmiano's timely study offers an opportunity for assessment of the developments thus far, and a chance to realign advocacy and practice in this field. To the feminist scholars and the community of practice, it reiterates the message that while rights based advocacy is important, the need to demonstrate efficacy is also essential. Moreover, the lack of attention to women's actions and activities is itself disempowering and harmful to those women in war zones that have risen up in support of peacemaking. To the community of mediators and conflict resolution practitioners, it is a reminder that feminist scholarship and activism is rooted in reality and the analysis they offer gets to the very heart of the complexity and challenges the world faces today.

Ultimately, there is a need to recognize that whether rights based or peace based, ideal or real in approach, the scholars and practitioners engaged in this field are all on the same side of the issues. We are collectively facing immense challenges to peace and security worldwide, and we are motivated by our desire to see the prevention of and end to violence. Palmiano reminds us that there is a need for wider dialogue and interaction; for greater respect and collaboration; and a need to challenge assumptions and embrace new approaches by all. I hope we can heed her advice.

Sanam Anderlini
Washington, DC 2014

Introduction

While women's peace movements span the globe from Northern Ireland to Liberia, galvanizing thousands of women to participate in peace marches and protests against armed conflict, the participation of women in formal peace negotiations remains strikingly low (UN Women 2012). This working paper focuses on the role that women play in formal peace negotiations and investigates the following research question:

How does the presence of women affect peace negotiations?

The paper breaks down this research question into several themes and sub-questions. The first is the theme of 'effectiveness.' Are feminist arguments effective in getting women to the peace table; and once they get there, is the presence of women at peace talks more or less likely to bring the talks to a peaceful negotiated settlement? The second is 'delivery.' Once women negotiators are at the peace table, what aspects of their performance affect their delivery of their mandate as negotiators and ultimately, the success or failure of a peace talk? The third is 'impact.' What are the deeper implications of notions of gender analysis in relation to the structure and arena of conflict resolution mechanisms more broadly? These themes and questions are explored through a review and analysis of the existing literature and an analysis of interviews with mediators, negotiators, and experts in this field.

While women remain vastly underrepresented in formal peace negotiations, a large movement advocating for greater inclusion of women in peace negotiations emerging over the last decade has pushed the issue to the forefront of peacebuilding and security policy and practice. Despite the plethora of policy papers and reports promoting the inclusion of women at the peace table, most notably CEDAW's General Recommendation 23 pertaining to a 'critical mass' of women needed to 'make a difference', there is a considerable research gap on the specific impact of the presence, number, and type of involvement of women in current peace processes. swisspeace's Centre for Peacebuilding's (KOFF) policy paper on United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 elucidates this central problem:

"Undoubtedly, greater and equal participation of women at levels ranging from governmental to grassroots (Tracks I – III) on the basis of fundamental human rights, equality, political co-determination and democracy are a political condition sine qua non that cannot be put in doubt. Yet, the fact is that there are still no detailed studies on the varying and partly contradictory roles played by women in these "deals". We have little in-depth knowledge on how the inclusion of women or their exclusion from formal peace talks affects the success or failure of peace processes. What might be different if there are more women and fewer men involved?" (Reimann 2004: 5)

While this paper focuses on the specific challenges of using a wholly women's rights approach to the women at the peace table debate, it is important to acknowledge the complex and multidisciplinary way these debates have been formed. The advocacy road to Security Council Resolution

1325 was not simply based on women's rights exclusively, but was part of a larger constellation of conflict resolution and inclusive peacemaking; human security; human rights as well as the human rights of women.¹ The advocacy road to getting women at the peace table also incorporated realities on the ground and shifts in the landscape of international conflict and conflict resolution. The increasingly complex nature of conflict and the challenges the international system faced in responding to them effectively gave way to greater consideration of the role of all sectors of society, particularly women. Thus, given the complexity of the advocacy that has taken place over the last few decades, it is important to distinguish between the different strands that emerged. This working paper focuses specifically on the challenges the feminist literature and policy literature on women and peacemaking face in approaches to getting women to the peace table.

1.1 Theoretical and Practical Goals

Given the theoretical and empirical interest surrounding the relationship between women and peacemaking, this paper hones in on the question of how the presence of women affects peace negotiations. This question can be extrapolated into four main tasks. Firstly, it aims to investigate relevant, timely, and useful existing literature to gain a sound understanding of the current international context of the role of women in peace processes of internal armed conflict. Secondly, it aims to explore the role of women in peace negotiations by analysing how the different relational dynamics, performances, and social processes play out in the present architecture of mediation and negotiation processes. Thirdly, it aims to shed light on an important nexus often missed in advocacy and policy on this topic: integrating participation of women in peace processes into actual mediation process and design. Fourthly, it aims to move the debate on the role of women in peace processes beyond discussions of critical mass, quotas, and differing definitions of success, towards discussions on how having both men and women actively participating in formal peace processes leads to a fuller, broader, and more sustainable peace.

Given the ambitious and complex nature of these tasks, this paper's findings do not simply try to affix a practical and 'easy' solution on how to get more women to the peace table through the familiar liberal recipe of 'add women and stir'.² It finds instead that a truly honest and critical view of the shortcomings of feminist arguments surrounding women and peacebuilding reveals a need to (in the words of Stern and Zalewski) "suggest a re-conceptualization of failure as offering political possibility" (2009). One alternative approach that should be considered is using the current architecture of conflict resolution mechanisms, albeit its structural flaws, as an entry point. This will not eradicate the pesky 'sexgender predicament'³ explored later in the paper that much gender mainstreaming policy unknowingly utilizes to get more women to the peace table, but it is a starting point towards what is really needed – a holistic gender analysis that escapes the familiar 'feminist fatigue' of scholars, practitioners, and donors of international relations and peacebuilding.

1 See Beijing Platform for Action Chapter E. Available at: <http://www.un-documents.net/bpa-4-e.htm>.

2 'Add women and stir' is an expression concerning policies that increase the number and representation of women in places of power. It is used widely in feminist and political discourse.

3 The 'sexgender predicament' is a theoretical conundrum referring to the tendency of feminist scholarship to produce the very conceptions of women that they aim to deconstruct. This will be explored in more depth in the section on Phase 3: Outcomes and Analysis.

This paper cautiously questions the effectiveness of some strands of current feminist academic and policy literature and the resulting advocacy campaigns for bringing more women to the peace table. It warns against the danger of slipping into conflating concepts of ‘sameness’ and ‘difference,’ within essentialist and rights based arguments. This can have deleterious effects on the perceptions and performances of women and men who participate in these peace processes and affect the quality of the talks and resulting agreements.⁴ These questions cut to the heart of a debate between those who come from a peace mediation approach and those who come from a strong women’s rights approach. The hope of this paper is to stimulate discussion, and find convergence between these two approaches in the hopes of a common goal: better and more sustainable peace agreements, and effective implementation that results in the cessation of violence and a more durable peace.

1.2 Methodology

This study employs two main research methods: it first explores the existing literature on the role of women in formal peace negotiations and analyses their impact on research, theory, and practice. It then employs the use of expert interviews to tease out the analytical ‘hunches’ discovered through an analysis of the existing literature.

Following in-depth desk-based research, 14 interviews were conducted with mediation and negotiation experts and participants in peace processes based in six countries spanning across Asia, North America, and Europe. The intention of the interviews was to gain a sense of the narratives and stories surrounding the roles women and men play in actual peace processes. These narratives shed light on how social processes play out in a variety of situations and contexts at formal peace negotiations. The interviews were then transcribed and analysed to glean commonalities and trends from the narratives told and the perspectives shared. From the interviews, the observed commonalities and trends were developed into an interpretive analysis that forms the argumentation of the study.⁵

This study is not about testing a scientific hypothesis in a quantitative way, but about illuminating certain dynamics and performances at play at and around the peace table, which is a consideration of central importance in peace negotiations. Thus, the expert interviews tapped into knowledge and data from a relatively condense pool of experts on the subject. The units of analysis of this study are conflict management process actors, specifically conflict parties and both male and female mediators. This plays out in the ‘contained’ arena of conflict management process structure, specifically Track 1 formal negotiations with an external mediator. This arena also refers to the actual negotiations themselves, not pre-negotiations or post-agreement activities.

⁴ See Annex 1 for a list of definitions of key terms.

⁵ See Annex 2 for more information on research methodology and selection of interview partners.

This paper is organized as follows. The first section provides a brief introduction of the existing literature that explores the role of women in formal peace negotiations, analysing the impact of the literature on research, theory and practice. The second section fleshes out the conceptual frameworks provided by the literature in tandem with an analysis of the results of interviews with current mediation experts. The third provides further questions and analysis for discussion, laying out grounds for further research and inquiry while the fourth section offers some concluding remarks.

2

Learning from the Literature

The following section introduces the existing literature exploring the role of women in formal peace negotiations and analyses their impact on research, theory, and practice. This working paper divides the literature into the following main groups: policy literature on women and peacemaking within the larger framework of peacebuilding (KOFF 2012; Anderlini 2010; International Alert 2012; IIS 2009; CSS and Swiss DFAE 2008; HD Centre 2011, 2012), selected feminist theories (Mouffe 1992; Hartsock 1998; Butler 1990) and scholarly articles on gender and international relations (West and Zimmerman 1987; Stern and Zalewski 2009; Cohn 2013). The literature explored in this section on women and peacemaking is both theoretical and practical, encompassing scholarly literature and policy papers on women and their role in peacebuilding. The feminist literature that follows explores the seminal works of several feminist writers, and the scholarly work provides an extra layer of complexity and depth through reflections on the role of gender and feminism in international relations. Firstly, feminist theory spans decades and has gone through multiple evolutions and transformations – this paper addresses the resulting perceptions of certain strands of theory and its effect on practice. It is important to consider the distinct quality of both feminist literature and theory and policy making literature on women and peacemaking. While the feminist theories explored in this working paper critically deconstruct the way we view societal processes between women and men as part of a rich and complex body of thought drawing all the way from Simone de Beauvoir and Nancy Chodorow, it should not be conflated with the policy making literature that is rooted in a constellation of historical, political, and societal shifts within the landscape of international relations at large. Furthermore, collective references to women's groups do not mean they are a homogenous entity – they come from different backgrounds, hold different mandates, and have differing objectives. However, there are many important intersections and layers between these entities that enrich these questions and this debate.

Understanding these landscapes as complementary to each other through searching for the connections leaves us with some answers to the research question. Firstly, mediation literature has stood on its own for a long time, with little interaction with women and peacemaking literature. More research could focus on exploring connections between the two strands of literature. Secondly, women and peacemaking policy literature has taken on a strong advocacy approach. This has had the effect of instrumentalizing the different attributes, qualities, and deliverables that women bring to the peace table as well as utilizing the liberal rights argument as a key entry point for demands to get more women to the peace table. The latter ambition is understandable, as the obvious and undeniable reality is that women are underrepresented at formal peace negotiations (UN Women 2012). However, there is a certain danger of sliding into essentialist notions of differences while conflating them with the 'sameness' of rights based argumentation. Thirdly, investigating feminist standpoint theory and its connection to perception and performance is crucial to understanding not only how women attempt to get to the peace table, but the social processes that take place between men and women once they do get to the table. Lastly, taking a step back and thinking

about this issue in connection to critically questioning and assessing issues of masculinity, femininity, war and peace shows us that perhaps there are unsolvable shortcomings with current feminist approaches. Perhaps a wholly different conceptualization must be undertaken, not with the end goal of simply adding women to the peace table, but moving towards a greater understanding of how these complex social processes influence the success or failure of peace talks, and ultimately, the saving of thousands of lives detrimentally affected by war and conflict.

These four landscapes provide some partial answers to the research question, but have also prompted a further problematic of great theoretical and practical consequence. Some feminist approaches that influence advocacy campaigns pushing for greater involvement of women in peace negotiations can conflate arguments of 'difference' and 'sameness.' How can we improve and clarify this argumentation? It is undeniable that the *social arrangements* that women and men experience in war and the resulting peace are distinct from each other. But if these differing social arrangements also inform the unique standpoints of women and men at the peace table, how does one escape the 'sexgender predicament'? In other words, how can one advocate for women's participation in peace processes based on their unique knowledge (which is an important and necessary element for better peace agreements) without being labelled and critiqued as essentialist? Finally, in cases where this approach does not work, how does one ameliorate the argument of rights and sameness that can lead to complacency and token women who are at the table without actually being able to deliver?⁶

2.1 Implications for Research and Practice

Thinking about these four bodies of literature in relation to each other matters. It affects policymaking and determines how gender mainstreaming in peace negotiations is conducted on local, national and international levels. However, some feminist literature is rendered ineffective in several ways. At the outset, some of the literature problematically assumes unitary constructions of women as inherently peaceful, teetering on the use of essential differences to instrumentalize them. Other literature purports a women's rights perspective as the underpinning rationale in its advocacy for greater representation and more meaningful participation at the peace table. This presents certain dangers because it can lead to women insisting on representation without taking the initiative to actually deliver once they get there. The crux of the matter lies in the fact that the 'difference' of essentialism and the 'sameness' of rights make their way into the same argumentation, contradicting each other and leaving out fundamental and necessary holistic gender analysis of the relationships between men and women, which is what really determines the level and quality of participation of women at the peace table.

⁶ See Annex 3 for a complete list of sub-questions for discussion used to guide interview content.

On a practical level, some feminist approaches compound the already elusive nature of 'success' in conflict transformation. In other words, what does

'success' mean for advocates calling for higher women representation at the peace table? Is success measured by the number of women with a seat at the table? Or is it measured by the extent to which women's issues are integrated into peace agreements? Or is it signing a negotiated settlement for a ceasefire agreement, regardless of whether women's issues are included or not? This approach adds additional agenda items for women who actually get to the table. This agenda may or may not be compatible with their existing mandates, depending on the constituencies they represent. This in turn might actually negatively affect the performance, or outcome of peace negotiations if, according to the literature, parties to conflict want their negotiators to fully represent their constituencies and for mediators to be impartial and neutral in relation to the conflict parties and the issues on the agenda.

In terms of research implications, a review of the literature also finds that while the literature on mediation as well as on women and peacemaking is abundant, the two areas of work read as mutually exclusive, rendering the resulting policies that aim to marry the two fronts insufficient. The mediation literature is largely 'gender-blind', focusing on strategies, decision-making processes and game theories, sometimes underpinned by the assumption that negotiations are zero-sum, impersonal and apolitical strategies. While the human factor is missing in many senses, some feminist interventions on women and peacemaking are largely focused on women's rights rather than asking how women can contribute to peace processes within the larger peacebuilding framework. In addition, given the closed-door and discreet nature of many formal peace negotiations, rigorous academic research on this topic is lacking, notwithstanding the abundance of practical op-eds, manuals, and mediation guides written by mediation experts and participants, including conflict parties, observers, and mediation support staff.

3

Learning from the Peace Process

In this section, the conceptual frameworks introduced by the literature are analysed more thoroughly in tandem with data from interviews with mediators and practitioners. An analysis of the existing literature has honed the research question by allowing for a better conceptual connection to the structure of peace processes. One can now conceptualize the question as: What is the impact of women during the three phases of negotiations?

- The fight for inclusion
- Performance at the peace table
- Outcomes

The following sections elucidate each negotiation 'phase' and provide insights from both a theoretical and empirical purview.

3.1 Phase 1: The Fight for Inclusion

Key Questions:

- Are feminist arguments effective in getting women to the peace table?
- To what extent can a unique women's standpoint be discerned among people participating in peace processes?

3.1.1 'Men Make War, Women Make Peace': Notions in Gender and Peacebuilding

A gendered approach to peacebuilding can be understood as considering the different social roles men and women play in pre-conflict situations and thus result in different vulnerabilities and security needs during conflict. For example, a common gender role revealed in the literature paints women as the main victims of armed conflict, but often the first advocates for peace, whereas men predominate not only as actors in war but also as "perpetrators of violence [...] and decision makers in institutions that underpin violence" (El-Bushra 2012: 7). This theoretical notion that men make war and women make peace is an important perspective that forms the contours of this puzzle in recognition that gender is a social construct and has immediate effects on how social phenomena in peace processes are considered.

Firstly, there can be little argument against basic historical and cultural evidence since antiquity of what Elisabeth Prügl terms "the masculinity of war," (2012: 2) or the observation that throughout history men dominate the field of security in the arena of war and war making. This notion then proffers a simplistic logic of the resulting femininity of peace – that is, if men make war, then women make peace. This hypothesis, known as the 'women and peace hypothesis' further maintains that women have the tendency to hold

more peaceful and compromising attitudes than men, (Maoz 2009) and thus are less likely to use violence to settle conflicts as compared to men. This hypothesis has been widely debated among scholars and practitioners who see women not only as actors with agency in instances of war and conflict, but potentially as perpetrators of violence. Not only can women support husbands, fathers, and brothers in armed groups, but they can also constitute a significant portion of armed groups and militias themselves. The Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam serve as a cogent example, as the female cadre of the armed group called the 'Freedom Birds' were fierce fighters and participated in many suicide bomb attacks that soon became a widely used asymmetric tactic of guerrilla warfare. Thenmozhi Rajaratnam, a female freedom bird, executed the assassination of Indian Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi in 1991. Thus, the women and peace hypothesis should be examined and challenged rather than considered a consequence of the simplistic notion that men make war.

Secondly, there is a certain 'women's rights' approach that underpins much of the policy literature on this subject, beginning with the celebration of 1325 as a 'milestone' or 'paradigm shift' in greater awareness and inclusion for women in peace and security because of a question of right. Resolution 1325 is not just a resolution, but also "an important tool for women" (Anderlini 2010: 11). This standpoint is expressed in the opening of the KOFF policy paper on women, peace and security: "Women have the right to engage and benefit from decision-making on equal terms with men." (Keller and Wildt 2012:1) Much of the literature stating the rationale behind advocating for policy change or greater participation of women echoes this sentiment (KOFF 2012; Anderlini 2010; International Alert 2012; IIS 2009; CSS and Swiss DFAE 2008; HD Centre 2011, 2012). The women's rights approach focusing on the marginalization and underrepresentation of women serves as a foundational starting point for the literature on the role of women in peace negotiations.

Thus, some women's groups have fiercely challenged the view that the peace table is not an appropriate venue for discussing gender equality and women's issues, but for hard line security and power-sharing deals. They have used several approaches, ranging from those that challenge traditional gender roles to actually utilizing socially accepted and entrenched identities in the fight for inclusion and a seat at the peace table. Some draw on women's rights movements and engage in public demonstrations and advocacy. A powerful often cited example are the women of Liberia's Women in Peacebuilding Network (WIPNET), led by Nobel Peace Prize laureate Leymah Gbowee, who literally waited in the corridors of the peace talks venue in Accra blocking negotiators from exiting the venue until they reached an agreement. The number of women's groups advocating for greater participation and consideration of women in peace negotiations worldwide are numerous, ranging from the Northern Ireland Women's Coalition, Save Somali Women and Children which played a key role in Somalia's peace talks with Djibouti, and the International Women's Commission, which was one of the first to monitor the implementation of Resolution 1325 in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. These

women's groups underscore the women and peace hypothesis by adding the element of agency – women are not only victims of war, powerless and only able to adapt to the consequences of conflict –they are stakeholders with agency.

By extension, the women and peace hypothesis interacts with classical mediation design and structures in a maddeningly complex manner. This hypothesis, albeit teetering in the precipice into essentialism, is sometimes used as an entry point by advocacy campaigns for women to get seats at the peace table, utilizing the concept of women as 'agents' of peace. However, the literature explored in the above section suggests that while this argument can be cogent and used effectively, there are other aspects that might hamper women's representation, as they accrue extremely low percentages of representation at the peace table. This can be partly explained by the classical design of a peace process. The classical design of peace negotiations brings parties to *conflict* to the table, not parties to *peace*.

Another implication of approaches lacking proper consideration of both women and men in the arena of 'gender and peacemaking' is encapsulated by Judy El-Busha's observations during training workshops and consultations with women's groups in Burundi and Nepal:

"The predominant framework explores diversity between men and women, rather than amongst men and amongst women [...] While many people agreed that 'gender is not just about women', it was difficult, especially for women's rights activists, to move on from this idea and see what else it could be about, or to envisage men as anything other than barriers to women's advancement" (2012: 16).

Such approaches focus too much on which sex should have a place at the peace table based on gender differences, rather than considering how a better understanding of unique and possibly gendered standpoints based on social arrangements created by war and conflict might be able to contribute towards a larger goal of peace.

3.1.2 Essentialism and Feminist Standpoint Theory: Vision, Positionality, and Agency

The notion of a feminist standpoint emerged in the early 1980s, inspired by Marxist theory and its understanding of the social experience: that is, "socially mediated interaction with nature in the process of production that shapes both human beings and theories of knowledge" (Hartsock 1998: 106). Nancy Hartsock, in her seminal work *The Feminist Standpoint: Developing the Ground for a Specifically Feminist Historical Materialism*, uses Karl Marx's 'gender-blind' (1998: 106) materialist theory of the oppression of classes and supplements it with a feminist structural theory of a system of patriarchy. Using what she calls the "institutionalized sexual division of labour" in which women are institutionally responsible for producing both goods and human

beings as a methodological basis, she combines materialist theory with the social experience of women to construct a feminist “standpoint”: a methodological tool with which to both critique and work against “phallographic ideology and institutions” (Ibid: 126).

However, Hartsock relies on a pre-existing structure of male hegemony that mediates the construction of a standpoint from the bottom – greatly reducing agency of the subject seeking knowledge. Furthermore, this “standpoint” can create an essentialist divide as it lumps the panorama of women’s lived experience into one lens. This constructed and perhaps singular view of women, war and peace can have direct influence on the role women play in peace negotiations. It can affect the way female negotiators advocate for a seat at the peace table, what issues they bring to the agenda, and what they believe constitutes a successful outcome to negotiations. Consequently, it also affects the way others perceive the female negotiator and how (or if) she adds value to the negotiations.

Thus, one can argue that a feminist standpoint is contradictory and paradoxical: in the aim to mediate, understand, and explain the material and social world (in epistemological terms, the search for truth), feminist standpoint theory takes into account asymmetries between the power and agency of men and women. However, in doing so from a situated and preferred subjugated positionality *as a woman*, it reduces the plurality and complexity of women’s identities and experiences.

3.1.3 What the Experts Say

Some of the literature on women and peacemaking that use a one-dimensional women’s rights approach fall prey to essentialist stereotypes and misguided feminist standpoints. However, interestingly, the interview responses intertwined both groups in a manner almost naturally and organically – observed from practice.

The Issues: The Effect of Women on Agenda Topics

One of the topics most frequently brought up by respondents was how the presence of women affected the agenda items at peace talks. One respondent stated that she preferred to approach the whole concept not from a gender or mediation perspective, but from an ‘issues’ perspective, while another stated that keeping track of agenda items (how women added new items, or how they shaped discussions around key issues) could be seen as one of the few indicators or ways to measure the differences women made. While the responses clearly indicated agreement among respondents that the presence of women did affect peace talks, they diverged on whether the effect women made on the ‘ambiance’ around the negotiation table affected peace talks positively or negatively, and secondly, how this implicated the definition, and to some, even the *raison d’être* of ‘women’s issues’ and their place in conflict resolution mechanisms. A common answer among respondents was that

women brought other issues to the table that would not be brought by men. However, probably one of the most fascinating trends gleaned from the responses were three respondents giving a very similar answer to the question of why they thought it was important to include women at the peace table: women negotiators brought issues that focused on *responsibilities*, while male negotiators focused more on power sharing. The most illustrative example is the following:

“There was a distinction between the men seeing it as a power issue, wanting their seats in the parliament because frankly it gave them salaries and stipends and a power base, whereas the women’s approach to this is that we are setting the future course of the country – it was a sense of responsibility.”⁷

While this consistency is noteworthy, it is limited by the fact that these are observations from respondents and are individual interpretations. It is also interesting to note that within these observations along with many other respondents, their comments on the difference women brought to the table often included words such as ‘community,’ ‘society,’ ‘broadening,’ and ‘space.’ These bolster the argument that the inclusion of women at peace talks can bring a broader and more holistic knowledge of the society in question, with one respondent even commenting that women possess an inherent knowledge of society.⁸ This is demonstrated by one interviewee’s pithy example of one mediator’s recounted experience of peace talks in Darfur:

“The men were having an argument about a river that flowed through a piece of land – and the women said, ‘Didn’t you know that that river dried up three years ago?’ It was because the men weren’t there and the women remained there, and they knew things that were relevant – just facts that the men didn’t know. In one sense, it is more complete evidence.”⁹

Even when the respondents stated that women brought different issues to the table, it had nothing to do with the fact that they were women. Respondents attributed this phenomenon more to societal constructs that precipitated ‘facts,’ or simply a unique knowledge that women had from being exposed to situations where men were not present. This idea of women possessing a unique knowledge due to a situational context rather than construct calls into question what ‘women’s issues’ (a phrase so embedded into policy making lexicons on gender and peacebuilding) are in the first place.

“So what are women’s issues? Because the issues of women are also the issues of men [...] and not only women’s specific issues, women victims, and women’s rights. Let’s do more broad and general issues about how women can be seen as part of the society. It’s not just women’s issues.”¹⁰

Furthermore, an insistence on the existence of women’s issues and its conflation with women’s rights can negatively affect how women negotiators frame their issues.

7 Respondent 12, Interview conducted 21 March 2013.

8 Respondent 9, Interview conducted 21 March 2013.

9 Respondent 5, Interview conducted 21 March 2013.

10 Respondent 11, Interview conducted 21 March 2013.

For example, one respondent says:

“A lot of the agenda has been pushed forward to put forward women’s rights; this is what we want for women. The attitude is ‘we believe in social justice’ - of course they’ve had a gender lens, or tried to make sure that women’s rights and the representation and so forth is also addressed, but that hasn’t been the primary driver of their presence, and I think that is really important because when psychologically, you think, were coming here and we want peace for women, it’s like, well what does it mean for everyone else?”¹¹

This questioning of the *raison d’être* of women’s issues and the subsequent effect on women’s rights campaigns is critical, as it has become entrenched terminology in campaigns to bring more women to peace tables. If women bring wholly different qualities to the table than men, then why is there no discussion whatsoever on ‘women’s issues’ when setting the agenda? Why is there a silent aversion from some of the respondents while one respondent asks outright what women’s issues are in the first place?

3.1.4 The Actors: Women and their Fingers on the ‘Pulse’ of their Communities

Many of the respondents focused on the ‘actors’ - namely the role of the mediator and negotiator and their effect on negotiations. While literature on mediation proffers strategic reasons for how to determine the selection of a mediator and negotiator in a given peace talk based on certain qualities and characteristics (that were largely gender blind) (Maoz 2009), the women and peacemaking literature focused also on ‘strategic’ reasons why women should be selected as mediators and negotiators also based on certain qualities and characteristics - a greater ability to cooperate, listen, and create trust between the parties. The responses again conveyed mixed results – a minority of the respondents agreed with these assertions, answering that it is important to include women in negotiations because they can work more collaboratively and are better team players, while the vast majority responded that women’s ability to use different skills, abilities and perspectives results in much more innovative and interesting outcomes. There was very little discussion on ‘inherent’ qualities such as “doves, peace, babies - whatever,”¹² but respondents shared a much more nuanced perspective on how women bring different perspectives because of their differing social roles, especially in times of war.¹³

“The value added that women bring is being able to harness the voice of the public in their demand for peace and to use their identities to push for that in different ways.”¹⁴

Other respondents spoke in the same vein of women’s social roles allowing them to tap into a distinct and deep knowledge of their communities, or as one respondent stated, “having their finger on the pulse of communities.”¹⁵ One respondent gave an example that in Pakistan, even though women admittedly lack education and access to basic rights, they play a:

11 Respondent 12, Interview conducted 21 March 2013.

12 Respondent 5, Interview conducted 5 March 2013.

13 Respondent 12, Interview conducted 21 March 2013.

14 Respondent 12, Interview conducted 21 March 2013.

15 Respondent 14, Interview conducted 28 March 2013.

“ [...]very important role in their community, their family, and particularly in their society [...] I have seen that men who are very active in the daily life are greatly being impacted by what women say in their families [...] so although they are not directly engaged, their opinions and suggestions greatly change the mindsets of the men in their particular family.”¹⁶

Thus, the respondents tended to state that the quality and ‘value added’ that women bring are not attributed to inherently peaceful qualities, but rather a more nuanced understanding of how a social *context*, and not necessarily *construct*, provides them with *different*, not necessarily *better* perspectives and ideas to contribute to reaching sustainable negotiated settlements. However, there is a certain danger when confusing context with construct. While women’s and mother’s movements admittedly invoke a certain kind of ‘power’ because of the socially constructed role of a mother in a traditional nuclear family unit, it is based on a precarious balance and is in constant danger of slipping into essentialism. For example, the case of a female mediator who brought a cake to the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) in the Philippines to gain access to the talks could be seen as using the construct of femininity and motherhood a strategic entry point into the peace process.¹⁷ However, this must be done with caution, as it is important to retain the distinction that women can bring unique standpoints developed by unique social arrangements. This conclusion is expressed well by one respondent:

“Every time you have had mother’s movements, it’s a conscious decision to use their social role as mothers. They have certain immunity and status in society to then push for the agenda for peace. But it’s not that. In fact, you can go in many different directions. It is harnessing the power in a very conscious way.”¹⁸

3.2 Phase 2: Performance at the Peace Table

Key Questions:

- Do these processes constitute gendered performances?
- How do the narratives of interviewees go against gendered clichés?
- Are there violations of gendered scripts that play out during actual peace processes?

The second phase examines what happens when women actually find a seat at the table. How do the relations between men and women and the differences in the way they speak, what they choose to say, and how they choose to say it impact the effectiveness of peace negotiations? The answers to these questions vary widely and should be considered in terms of gender relations among men and women and not just women. Some interesting studies have been conducted to shed light on this issue. In one such study, Ifat Maoz hypothesizes that the ‘women and peace hypothesis’ and the resulting gender

16 Respondent 13, Interview conducted 21 March 2013.

17 Respondent 14, Interview conducted 28 March 2013.

18 Respondent 12, Interview conducted 21 March 2013.

stereotypes that portray women as more cooperative, considerate, and more capable of cultivating trust cause what she terms a 'gendered evaluation effect,' in which women's proposals in peace negotiations will be valued more favourably than if a man had made the same proposal (2009). Antonia Potter's experience and interviews with numerous male and female negotiators has also led her to suggest that the presence of a woman can seem less threatening to conflict parties, promoting a less aggressive atmosphere. She quotes one male negotiation specialist describing how "female archetypes can bypass the tango of male egos" – dialing down intensity without anyone losing face" (Potter 2005: 11). These dichotomies reveal an underpinning sense of a constructed perception of femininity and that once women actually get a seat at the table, an 'unproblematic' and 'universal' idea of women overrides her identity as simply an individual negotiator or mediator. This understanding can be beneficial in peace negotiations as seen by the examples above, but it can also stagnate women's contribution at the table. While the effectiveness of a mediator admittedly depends on personality and charisma to some extent (Potter 2005), it ultimately depends on skilled performance that requires accurate knowledge, critical analysis and strong problem solving skills. Setting the agenda can also be a source of division between women at the table. Those who come from a background in women's rights can focus on what peace can do for *them*, as opposed to those who come from a background in peace movements and activism, who focus on what *they* can contribute towards peace (Anderlini 2007). This substance angle (as opposed to the performance angle as described above) can also have negative consequences on the participation of women in negotiations and on what they choose to place on the agenda. Some female negotiators choose to focus on 'women's and victim's issues' in negotiations instead of security-oriented agenda items. Some view these issues as important, but appropriate *later* in the negotiation process. While actors other than women can also emphasize these issues, they tend not to do so – passing the buck to women to fight another battle to get these issues regarded in the same vein as security and power sharing.

While the preponderance of literature stakes a claim that women should be present in formal peace negotiations because it is their right, as they represent half the population, this provides powerful but partial reasoning. Several peacemaking institutions that work on gender issues attempt to argue that women have certain attributes that make a difference in peace negotiations. The Institute for Inclusive Security's (IIS) 12th Annual Colloquium in 2011 gathered 21 female mediation experts from around the globe to exchange views on advancing women's inclusion in mediation. They claimed that women change the "focus, dynamic, and outcome of negotiations because they bring unique experience and expertise to the table" (de Langis 2011: 2). This is, according to them, due to a *perception* of difference. In many cultures, they say, women are perceived as less threatening. Because of this, they are well placed to facilitate difficult conversations among negotiators:

“Women come to the peace table with socially constructed roles; drawing on cultural mores and traditions that position women as peacebuilders in their families and communities. Participants felt that women may be more practiced than men at accommodating the needs of others, establishing relationships of trust, using a more collaborative and cooperative approach generally, and dealing with disputing groups, in particular [...]. Additionally, women may be more open than men to addressing the emotional and psychological trauma of conflict” (de Langis 2011: 2).”

This argument that the presence of women at the peace table promotes good relations and changes the atmosphere to one of warmth and humour resounds through the literature. In an additional policy paper making the case for women in peace negotiations, the IIS claims that women negotiators help establish positive relationships and steer talks away from zero-sum games over political domination. “Women are usually perceived to be more trustworthy and less corruptible, and to favour a non-competitive negotiating style” (de Langis 2011: 2). Thus, to the question they pose of ‘what differences does *difference* make’ their answer can be read as the perceived differences between men and women.

3.2.1 The Deconstructed Woman and Performative Gender: Judith Butler

Judith Butler deconstructs this ‘perception’ of women that has embedded itself into peace processes as described above. In her seminal book *Gender Trouble*, Butler problematizes the assumption that there is some existing identity understood through the category of women that not only initiates feminist interest but also constitutes the subject for whom political representation is pursued (Butler 1990). By questioning these existing assumptions about the category of women through the formation of a core gender identity, Butler suggests that the presumed universality of the subject of feminism is effectively undermined by the constraints of the representational discourse in which it functions (1990:4). She deconstructs women as a unitary subject through investigating what assumptions inform the discourses of gender identity. She finds that gender identity is the result of repeated external constructions rather than simply a construction itself. In this way, gender is not only “performatively produced” (Butler 1990:24) but “compelled by the regulatory practice of gender coherence.”(Butler 1990:24) In other words, Butler’s argument that gender is ‘performative’ differs from saying that gender is a performance – she is speaking about performative gestures that produce a series of effects that are produced and reproduced all the time, from the way individuals walk and talk and think and speak and thus, no one really is a gender from the start. These performative gestures are produced and reproduced everywhere, all the time, from the most mundane of examples to more complex arenas, such as the political peace table. If female negotiators get to the table and continue to use these gendered performative gestures as mothers, doves, and feminine peacemakers as a strategic entry point, then they risk trapping themselves in a restrictive pattern that Butler terms performances and parodies (1990).

Through deconstructing the notion of a coherent subject of women, Butler simultaneously deconstructs identity categories that have been previously deemed as foundational to feminist politics. According to Butler, this assertion of identity to mobilize agency also limits and constrains the movement, trapping it in cultural constructions bound by unnecessary binarism of free will and determinism (Butler 1990: 147). What can feminism do with this complete upheaval of the construction that it had previously organized itself around? How does this parody, these performances, and these scripts transform into politics? (Butler 1990: 147) The critical task for feminism, according to Butler, is not to search for agency outside of constructed identities, but to “locate strategies of subversive repetition enabled by those constructions” (Butler 1990: 147) and to contest them.

3.2.2 A Gender Analysis Approach

Judy El-Bushra’s report for International Alert provides another answer to the question of how the different approaches that underlie gender and peace-building work. She links the conceptual base for taking a gendered approach to practice. She writes that on top of being theoretically complex, gender is also to some extent ‘imposed’ through donor conditionality – which results in some peacebuilding actors misunderstanding the approach or other actors simply checking the gender box in order to get donor funding. ‘Gender mainstreaming’ in peace negotiations can thus become a confusing convergence between those for whom gender is a “professional competence” and for those for whom it is a passionately fought campaign (El-Bushra 2012:17). She then identifies three approaches to gender and peacebuilding: the *gender blind approach* (as we have seen in mediation literature), the *1325 approach* in which it is axiomatic that women are marginalized from decision making processes and men are the barrier, and *gender relational approaches*, based on a strategy of benefit sharing and solidarity building between men and women. (Ibid: 4) This study focuses on discovering, uncovering, and evaluating the presence of unique women’s standpoints and their relation to perception using the third approach and adding the layer of interaction with the structure of mediation processes and the peace table itself. Thus, for gender relational projects, gender analysis is the starting point, not the end point. It consists of a range of open-ended questions about the nature of gender relations and the roles in the context concerned. This approach is a means and not an end, a “preparatory step towards defining the problem to be addressed, and might result in addressing the needs of either men or women or both in a variety of ways.” (Ibid: 19)

Judith Butler destabilizes the notion of gender, exposing the performances that societies perpetuate. Taking these into consideration alongside Judy El-Bushra’s consideration of a gender analysis as a theoretical framework, this working paper aims to provide an answer, albeit only in the specific arena of peace negotiations, of feminist theorist Chantal Mouffe’s extremely important question on what feminist politics should be: a type of democratic politics that aims to articulate different struggles against

oppression (1992: 381). Thus, the methodology for future projects on this topic should be free of a feminist standpoint that is underpinned by essential differences between men and women (i.e. maternity and sexuality), and abandon the category of a subject as a homogenous entity that does not convey the multiplicity of relations with others, subordinate or not.

This discussion begets the question: is it possible to have a feminist standpoint that is anti-essentialist and incorporates diffused, pluralized identities, positionalities, and locales? Mouffe provides a partial answer through describing the social agent as constituted by an “ensemble of ‘subject positions’” (Ibid: 372) that articulate “different standpoints” (Ibid: 373). The problem of feminist standpoint theory is its susceptibility to essentialism, rendering it contradictory and not very useful in conceptualizing feminist politics in practice. The impact of recognizing essentialist and anti-essentialist approaches to feminist epistemological methods cannot be understated. It impacts the way knowledge is constructed, and how it is used politically: in this case, politics of inclusion at the peace table. Thus, Mouffe could not be more correct when she states that:

“This is why the critique of essentialism and all of its different forms: humanism, rationalism, universalism, far from being an obstacle to the formulation of a feminist [...] project is indeed the very condition of its possibility” (Ibid: 382).

At the peace table, this translates to having greater inclusivity as the starting point rather than the end goal in the pursuit of better and more sustainable peace agreements.

3.2.3 What the Experts Say

The complexities of Butler and El-Bushra’s argumentation play out in the arena of peace negotiations through the ‘performances’ that take place during the actual negotiations. The difference between success and failure in peace negotiations is influenced by a much more complex set of factors – the performance of those present at the peace table. As one mediation expert calls it, peace negotiations are as much about “the art of talking” (Prentice 2012: 1) as having an appropriate structural design. As such, peace negotiations are as much about performance as structure: how negotiators and mediators at the table exude a certain ambiance and tone, how negotiators interact with each other and the mediator(s) present, and how individual personalities and communication styles influence the environment of negotiations.

The present literature on mediation does not delve into this arena in much detail, as its quantitative nature does not mesh well with the minimal anecdotal and experiential evidence that currently exists. On the opposite end of the spectrum, many advocacy-based pieces from the women and peace-making literature make their case based primarily on this type of anecdotal evidence that is hard to quantify from a methodological perspective. This renders the perpetuation of the same, albeit cogent argument this group

currently proffers: women should be included in peace negotiations because they have inherent qualities that make the talks themselves more pleasant, and have the ability to communicate in a less 'abrasive' and assertive way. As with the previous section, the interviews convey a happy medium between these two groups, offering some alternative insights to remedy this research gap. They add a more human approach to mediation literature, in no small measure due to the lived and experiential nature of respondents' observations. The interviews also provide a more nuanced perspective on the performance of women at the peace table than the literature provides and most importantly, draw a significant conclusion: women who communicate in the 'language of women' (as advocated by some of the literature) in peace negotiations can greatly affect peace talks, but not necessarily in a positive manner.

3.2.4 Performance at the Peace Table: Ambiance and Tone

The majority of respondents, both male and female, acknowledged a noticeable shift in the "ambiance" and "tone" of peace talks when at least one woman was present.¹⁹ This is something wholly unquantifiable, as it is an observation of a certain 'feel' of the environment – but many of the respondents clearly expressed and acknowledged its importance. Respondents mentioned that the tone got "more courteous,"²⁰ that a qualitative difference was felt, and that their presence made the atmosphere calmer. One negotiation expert expressed that from experience, even with limited numbers of women present at a negotiation table, they saw a much richer dialogue between the participants. In the respondent's experience, the observation that women tended to begin and open the conversation speaks to a key aspect of negotiations – building the level of trust between the parties.

"Frankness and honesty. It is critical for this to happen, fundamental to develop in a class in negotiation, and that is trust. Without that, you're going to go nowhere. And in peace negotiations, trust is always fragile."²¹

The assumed tendency of women fostering a more trusting negotiation environment due to greater openness and self-awareness, thus contributing to an environment more conducive to reaching an agreement, is cogent reasoning as to why women should be at negotiations. However, the women and peacemaking literature focuses too narrowly on this single dimension, which runs into problems when the second 'phase' of negotiations (the talks themselves) begins, beyond the selection and consultation of who gets to be included at the table.

3.2.5 Performance at the Peace Table: Communication and Language

The women and peacemaking literature focuses too greatly on the first phase – understandably so, as if women cannot be represented at the table there is little case for subsequent phases. But more research needs to be invested into analyzing the performance of women *that have already made it to the table*. Unfortunately, as seen in the literature and confirmed by the interviews,

19 Not only just at the table, but even as a non-speaking observer in the room.

20 Respondent 8, Interview conducted 7 March 2013.

21 Respondent 1, Interview conducted 13 February 2013.

this is not the case. Women are trained on mediation and negotiation skills to allow them to perform better strategically, but this is not a targeted and sustainable solution as they do not get the same level of training²² on substantive matters. Thus, when it comes down to being able to perform and deliver on hard issues other than gender, women negotiators can fall short. This exposes what could be argued as the great 'Catch-22' in current advocacy campaigns for greater participation of women in peace talks: women are brought into negotiation delegations due to the efforts of advocacy campaigns to get women to the table. However, due to the structure and nature of peace talks they are brought in not to represent women's issues, but to deliver on a political mandate. One respondent elucidates this Catch-22 in practice:

"Fascinating, because these women are super political, and they know these people personally and plant information, but as soon as you talk about gender issues, they get all ideological and then they start thinking if I don't say this is a women's issue...I want to have access to that well because I need water' – it's a completely different issue and it's an issue that everyone can relate to. But if you go there and say, 'I'm a woman and I need my needs met.' How can we meet your needs, what do you want? We are dealing with security needs first and quite frankly, you're disturbing us."²³

Consequently, once they arrive at the actual peace talks, sometimes they simply cannot deliver or speak about issues other than women's rights and peace for women, and not peace for entire communities. This can perpetuate the negative barriers and stereotypes about female negotiators and mediators that currently bar them from greater participation. Several respondents voiced similar sentiments, including the following:

"They phrase it in terms as demands or entitlements, whereas you are a negotiator thinking about so many things to deal with, the last thing you want is another demand, giving you a hint of, so what do you want me to do? [...] Rather than thinking as an entitlement, think strategically, give incentives of why should you be heard. Truth is, if you have to ask to be present, clearly someone doesn't want you to be present, so simply insisting on a right, it's probably not going to help you, unless you have a very formal process [...]"

What is a possible solution to this 'Catch-22'? The realization that focusing strategically on the issues at hand soberly and rationally is possible through recognizing the importance of differing frames of reference created by societal and conflict constructs of men and women. In other words,

"It's the intangibles [...] the issue is how do you build up, and what does it take to change the relationships, to try and build the human relationships and get to each other."²⁴

²² Respondent 12, Interview conducted 21 March 2013.

²³ Respondent 8, Interview conducted 7 March 2013.

²⁴ Respondent 12, Interview conducted 21 March 2013.

There is no need to trade-off between a technical strategic approach and an emotive, perceptive approach. In fact, several respondents stated that what is really needed for successful peace talks is a marriage of both.

“It’s about how you communicate your demands and being able to articulate why you think you should be heard, and why you will make a difference in terms of sustainable peace. [...] In addition, how do you communicate, it’s also a matter of, [...] the incentives you were talking about. Showing ways how it can be done. And again insisting on having women without saying okay, here’s a good candidate, she represents someone, or here is something that we can concretely offer you, or even using the argument, these are the future constituencies, or these are the constituencies, if you get them on board, (not coopt them) you are strengthening your case and strengthening your negotiation position.”²⁵

In sum, ‘the art of talking’ is a crucial aspect of peace talks – the responses reveal a cognizance of the importance of the nuances of communication and the use of language – a human element that in many cases is a strategic negotiation tool itself. For the purposes of this working paper, the question of communication is especially pertinent, as for women who actually get to the peace table, the way they communicate has great consequences for the talks themselves, as well as the trajectory for movements advocating for greater women participation at the peace table. If female negotiators perform according to preconceived expectations and gendered scripts, they will not be able to transcend the same perceptions and preconceived notions that possibly bar them from participation in the first place. There needs to be buy-in from fellow interlocutors and the constituencies who send negotiators and mediators; that buy-in arises from perception of a certain value added that negotiators and mediators, gender wholly aside, bring to the peace table. Once at the peace table, it is about merit, perception and performance. This perception of value added comes from how well and effectively negotiators and mediators communicate and the demands they make. Thus, skillful delivery of substantial talking points and communication skills is what matters, and not just the fact that women are women.

This section elucidates that at the negotiation table, performance and perception are key factors that mutually reinforce each other. Performance, namely how negotiators communicate their demands, what language they use, and how they affect the negotiation environment greatly affect the perception of their merit, strength, and ultimately, their value added. Since mediation is an industry in which performance, reputation and merit are key factors in choosing negotiators or a mediator, its importance cannot be stressed enough. These factors are often missed by current literature and advocacy campaigns for greater representation of women at the peace table. How female negotiators perceive others around them greatly affects their performance, and their performances greatly affect how other negotiators perceive them. If, following the opinions given by the respondents, women who actually get to the table cannot achieve the necessary buy in due to only speaking about women’s issues or communicating their demands as entitlements, it can have negative and debilitating consequences in advocacy campaigns.

²⁵ Respondent 10, Interview conducted 21 March 2013.

A more difficult question perhaps, is what other factors feed into perceptions of each other and perceptions of self? A surprising number of respondents spoke about the importance of knowing oneself as a person and as a negotiator – what are their negotiation styles, strengths and weaknesses, skills and expertise? How does their self-perception affect this? The jury is still out on whether this can be answered by a Butler-esque concept of gendered performances. There might not be a definitive answer – but being aware of this underpinning factor could make or break women at the peace table movements, or more broadly, the peace talks themselves.

3.2.6 Performances at the Peace Table

The following section applies the ‘gender analysis’ approach to the structure, content, and performance of peace negotiations. Following the theoretical framework laid out El-Bushra’s recommendation that a third type (neither *gender blind* or *1325 approach*) needs to be explored in more depth, this section examines responses in the interviews to open ended questions about the nature of gender relations, performances, and roles in the context of a peace talk around the classical peace table. This is accompanied by the understanding that this idea of ‘gender’ is not only theoretically and philosophically complex and elusive, but to some extent ‘imposed’ in practice through donor conditionality. Thus in other words, how can a gender analysis meet the needs of donors in a practical sense, without sacrificing complexity of a campaign that is rooted in philosophical and theoretical questions about the human condition – how do you push inclusion of women without reducing the movement to a mere checking of the proverbial ‘gender box’? The following observations and responses add complexity, depth, and most importantly, variation to this topic. They also emphasize that greater exploration into understanding the role of women in peace negotiations cannot possibly focus on women alone. The role of women must be critically examined in relation to the role of men in terms of how they relate to and among each other.

When asked to respond to the question: “*Can you tell me some specific examples or cases in which having a woman at a peace table actually made a difference?*” the majority of the respondent’s chose to recount observations of men and women going against these ‘expected gender roles’, including women who choose ceasefires over women’s health as a priority agenda item, or men that actively discuss women’s issues during negotiations without the presence of women. Whether this is because these instances are the exception to the status quo, or whether it is a quiet transformation of gender relations within the context of peace talks is unclear. The following section explores these narratives of men and women going against the regular clichés of gendered stereotypes.

3.2.7 (De)gendered Performances at Peace Talks: Female Negotiators

“The notion that women are angelic, no. I started as a troublemaker and from a troublemaker you become a peacemaker. I would believe in this internal process in each of us, as a person.”²⁶

²⁶ Respondent 11, Interview conducted 21 March 2013.

Several examples of these 'non-angelic' women were recounted by respondents, either as observations from mediation experts or negotiators themselves, or single individual women whose personalities in themselves debunked these notions that women performed according to these essentialist stereotypes at the peace table.

"The other processes, more interesting: women on both sides of table. On one team, the woman was the head of delegation, and on the other side, woman part of leadership. The woman who was the head of delegation, she evidently ran the show. It was a very good example of how having a woman in charge goes against the clichés that she will be more compromising, she will be interested in hearing the other side...not at all, she had her script, she was very professional, she knew how to play it, and she never strayed away. Maybe she had the opposite effect: she was so focused on playing her role and representing her side on all the tough points, sometimes for reasons of proving to her team, that she was the right one to be in the alpha position.

The respondent also conveyed that performances at the peace table ran deeper than the words spoken out loud:

On the other side, the set up was slightly different, because usually with these teams there is someone that is clearly in charge. Then the others are in the room, for witnessing, to withdraw and discuss, that woman had no speaking role whatsoever, but neither did other male delegations. It is difficult to infer from it, because if they are there, they are there for a reason. And in this instance we know that she had a leadership position within the organization.

They also do not take place at the physical peace table itself:

What was interesting is that she actually headed the women's wing. While still on political questions, obviously having the same line as everything else even within the movement, she had the role of speaking on behalf of women combatants. You couldn't see it at the actual table, but I can assure you 100 per cent in the corridor doors that it makes a difference."²⁷

This response clearly indicates that female negotiators can (1) deliver in leadership positions and (2) play their role not as a woman at the peace table, but as a negotiator at the peace table. In the quotes above this is due to the nature of her mandate as the head of the delegation. This is juxtaposed to another female negotiator that represented the women's wing. While there was not more information on her actual performance at the table, it is interesting to note how much performance is based on mandate and position and the structure of the peace process itself.

Another respondent said that:

"The men, and they come from very conservative and traditional culture, had no problem at all with the idea of women getting involved in peace and

²⁷ Respondent 8, Interview conducted 7 March 2013.

peacemaking. They wanted to seek their advice, they were interested in their views, they hadn't that the women wanted to be in that public decision making space with them. Well, the women said, send our council of elders [...] or we will send one ourselves, but if we send one ourselves we are going to need your help [...]. And even to that, these men, to my surprise, weren't that negative. They were like, oh yes, okay maybe think about that. But where they got really surprised was that the women picked up on that other aspect of 1325 under discussed was security, national reconciliation, and justice. We think none of this can be discussed without talking about security.”²⁸

These responses convey two points: that women who actually get to the peace table do *not* necessarily perform in a way that societal constructs of women would expect, e.g. bringing a gentler, softer approach to peace talks. Secondly, this notion is so entrenched that anything that does go against the ‘cliché’ still remains an exception rather than the norm and surprises those who experience it. While this ‘duality’ is important to recognize in the context of peace talks, there is recognition in women and peacemaking literature and peacebuilding literature and policy at large that these dualities exist among women, especially when examining women victim-perpetrator dualities during armed conflict (e.g. women also make up part of the armed groups of the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam in Sri Lanka, the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia, and many more across the world). This recognition must be greater during mediation and peacemaking processes as well to give greater depth and dimension to discussions – but this is still a nascent and burgeoning notion.

3.2.8 (De)gendered Performances at Peace Talks: Male Negotiators

What is missing from this body of literature and resulting policies are accounts of men going against the usual suspects of gender clichés. There are stereotypes that are never mentioned explicitly but sometimes conveyed as undertones: men are aggressive, power-hungry and single-mindedly focused on power sharing rather than peace for entire communities. They are less willing to collaborate and listen, and they foster a tense atmosphere of territoriality and mistrust. And if the ability to listen, communicate, and create trust between parties are the fundamental tenets of good negotiators and successful peace talks, then all is lost. While these may hold in many examples, these are not the absolutes that they are carelessly and dangerously entrenched to be. This is the result of an ironically unfair gendered approach, in which men are seen as nothing but barriers to the empowerment and advancement of women to truly be perceived as equals in societies. This is where the gender analysis approach is most helpful, in looking at relational dimensions of gender from *both* sides of the spectrum.

Several respondents, both male and female, spoke about male negotiators and mediators negotiating on ‘gendered’ issues. One respondent referred to Jamal Benomar, the United Nations Special Envoy to Yemen in the context of the National Dialogue Process, who argued that amnesty cannot be provided in the light of accusations of crimes against humanity, including sexual violence.²⁹ To the respondent, this is a cogent example of reducing the ‘feminist fatigue’ when trying to address gendered issues. Another example

²⁸ Respondent 5, Interview conducted 5 March 2013.

²⁹ Respondent 9, Interview conducted 21 March 2013.

given was that the Expert on Gender and Social Inclusion for the UN Mediation Standby Team for 2012 was Gerard Nduwayo, one of the few males in posts of this nature. Furthermore, a mediator involved in the peace talks in a confidential process in a Middle Eastern conflict context provided the following illustration:

“If we ask, the discussion that we facilitated with Islamic actors, we asked parties to nominate their representatives, [...] none of them came up with women delegation or part of delegation, which says something about, the role they can play in negotiation process, the quality of it, that’s a fact. But they are keen on discussing gender issues.”³⁰

This example is especially useful in debunking polemic assertions that men do not care, are not knowledgeable or have no political will to discuss women’s issues or discuss ‘gender’, as well as ‘cultural’ arguments that negate certain cultural contexts for having stricter restrictions on the participation of women in political life and formal peace negotiations. It is important to distinguish that men’s participation on this issue gives it legitimacy because it shows that both men and women acknowledge, show responsibility and political will towards it, and not necessarily that only when a man deems it important does it create legitimacy.

The following responses conveyed another crucial point of argumentation: the gender performances and relations observed still operated within the contours and boundaries of political mandates and the structure of the negotiation process. Women who were brought to the peace table with a specific political mandate did not necessarily speak about issues that women’s groups may have wanted to include. One mediator gives this example of a female negotiator in a recent peace process in South East Asia:

“When she was appointed as part of negotiation team, she was appointed to handle the ceasefire. She even wanted the ceasefire, not to be the gender advocate, not wanting to advocate gender but wanting to be effective on these other issues. All the tension there, did not advocate for gender concerns.”³¹

Conversely, the same issues could be brought on the agenda if politically willed by the negotiator, or mediator, male or female.

3.3 Phase 3: Outcomes

Key Questions:

- How does feminist argumentation inform questions of peacebuilding, security, and international relations as a whole?
- How does the current architecture of peace negotiations affect women’s access and representation to the peace table?
- How can women use this architecture as an alternative entry point to increase representation at peace talks?

30 Respondent 7, Interview conducted 5 February 2013.

31 Respondent 3, Interview conducted 14 February 2013.

The following section adds a deeper layer of complexity to the questions on unique women's standpoints and their connection to the concept of 'performative gender' by critically questioning the effectiveness of feminist argumentation not only within the arena of peace negotiations, but war and peace studies and perhaps even the entire discipline of international relations. This requires actually taking a step back and soberly assessing how feminist conceptualizations of masculinity, femininity, war, and peace inform the stances women and men take towards war and the ways in which women and men build peace. This 'redux' analyses the work of Carol Cohn's recently edited *Women and Wars* and thought provoking articles by Maria Stern and Marysia Zalewski and Candace West and Don Zimmerman. This work was selected on the basis of its ability to courageously and critically self-reflect on larger questions of gender and the appropriateness and utility of feminism on this topic.

Carol Cohn brings two important points to the table. Firstly, she revisits the topic of women and war with a different conceptual framework utilizing a more 'systems-thinking' approach: war and gender are mutually constitutive and is "at its heart, a structural power relation" (2013:4). In this system, "men and women's unequal access to power, authority, and resources are not only legitimated, but also made to appear natural and unremarkable [...] This way, men's dominance of political, economic, and social institutions is seen as simply a result of their *inherent* capacities (and women's lack of those capacities) rather than as a result of *social structures* which systematically advantage men and disadvantage women (Ibid: 6). This framework helps shift conceptualization of women and peacemaking to greater complementarity with the mediation process and design, if one accepts that conflict mechanism architecture is comprised of uneven power structures. Given the current quantity of representation and quality of participation at the peace table, this is undoubtedly relevant. Thus, a possible nexus between the two fronts can be conceptualizing conflict resolution mechanisms as what Cohn calls "gendered institutions" that each have "gendered divisions of power and labour within them"(Ibid: 15). Alongside gendered institutions, understanding the enormity of "social arrangements" that dictate and constitute women and war and women and peace is key. The perception of what exactly women do bring to the peace table stems from a perception of "natural and self-evident membership" in a given sex category and the accompanying character traits, capacities, and access to resources and power. These "social facts" or "arrangements" are important shapers of women and men's experiences in war (Ibid: 7). This significant perspective is summarized as follows:

"[...] it is not a woman's biology that is the principle shaper of her experiences of war [and peace] but the gender arrangements in which she lives" (Ibid: 8).

Candace West and Don Zimmerman's influential 1987 article, 'Doing Gender' puts forth another powerful constructivist argument that gender is "not a set of traits, nor a variable, nor a role, but the product of social doings of some sort" (127). Not only is gender constituted through interaction between individuals, but it is perpetuated on an institutional level, normalizing

“social arrangements based on sex category” (Ibid: 146) as a normal, natural and legitimate way of organizing social life. In thinking about the confusion and conflation between social and natural orders of sex category and gender, West and Zimmerman take the argument one layer further to this sex category/gender relationship as a mechanism of social control that perpetuates uneven power dynamics between those that “do gender appropriately” (Ibid: 146) and those that do not. Those individuals that do sustain, reproduce, and legitimate this construction, and those that do not “may be called into account (for their character, motives, and predispositions” (Ibid: 146). What is the problem with this construction and perpetuation of gendered identities? Or in other words, so what if we constitute our daily lives and social interactions according to a certain social script?

The problem reveals itself in certain arenas of international relations as a “historically masculinized discipline,” (Stern and Zalewski 2009: 614) especially in the context of peace negotiations where the vast majority of actors with decision-making power are male. When women do try to find an entry point towards a greater share of power (i.e. greater representation and participation in peace talks), they enter using constructions of gendered identity that are laid out for them, as policymaking articles use these qualities of softness, trust building, and maternal protection as incentives for seats at the table. The policymaking literature explored in this section does not take these constructive conceptual frameworks into account. It focuses on the individual, namely the *differences* between men and women: the ways in which they negotiate, the agenda items they choose to put on the table, and perhaps even their conception of what constitutes a successful outcome to a peace talk. The literature does not delve into a deeper layer of complexity into why these differences exist in the first place, which can be instead attributed to gendered social arrangements and institutions as described above.

A significant article that underscores the spirit and approach of this study is Maria Stern and Marysia Zalewski’s, ‘Feminist fatigue(s): reflections on feminism and familiar fables of militarization.’ They critically consider the idea that feminism has performatively failed in the discipline of International Relations because of an unsolvable dilemma they term the performative sexgender predicament. Drawing from Judith Butler, West and Zimmerman, they expose this under-explored paradox that “feminism’s own apparent failure in relation to sexgender is that feminist scholarship performatively produces the sexed identities and attached gendered harms it sets out to eviscerate”(2009: 615). In other words, the sexgender predicament is “the post-structural suggestion that feminist representations of women do not correspond to some underlying truth of what woman is or can be, rather, feminism produces the subject of woman which it then subsequently comes to represent” (Ibid: 617).

Stern and Zalewski add another layer of complexity to this reality check on the performative status of feminism in international relations. They argue that this unfortunate and self-defeating paradox renders feminism doomed to fail because of a certain “grammar of temporality” (Ibid: 617) often found in it that suggests an ongoing sort of feminist struggle towards the solutions of

paradoxes that are actually intractable. This concomitant need to find solutions rather than accepting this “unavoidable failing to ever arrive” (Ibid: 626) shifts the discourse and scholarly maturation of feminism towards seemingly more tangible problems, such as how to get more women sitting around peace negotiation tables without critical self-reflection. In other words, as Stern and Zalewski argue, this renders feminist approaches “unreflectively accepted without question” (Ibid: 626), with regard to questions of security, armed conflict, conflict resolution and peacebuilding. This is because thinking of the failure of feminism in this regard produces a certain anxiety among those that fear that its failure consigns women once again to the domestic, subordinated, and dominated realm. This lack of self-reflection and accompanying anxiety coupled with the renewed interest in gender mainstreaming in politics via academia, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and international organizations allows the sexgender predicament to performatively reproduce itself. The reproduction of these categories is played out in all phases of the negotiation process, from deciding who gets to sit at the peace table, how social interactions play out during the negotiations themselves, and how the resulting peace agreement is forged, if any.

3.3.1 What the Experts Say

In keeping with a sober reassessment of the current architecture of peace negotiations and how the sexgender predicament plays out in this arena, one of the most important patterns was respondents’ cognizance and critical questioning of the current design of the peace table itself. Many respondents attributed the current situation of the low numbers of women at peace tables in relation to the architecture of peace talks themselves, rather than women being excluded because of the fact that they are women. There are three main structural explanations. The first is that peace talks, paradoxically, bring parties to conflict to the table rather than parties to peace. Although parties to peace are also required for the long term, without parties to conflict, peace cannot be made, as they are the ones who control the violence. Thus, in the classical structure of peace talks, negotiators are those who bear arms, not those who bear peace. Conflict resolution mechanisms have undergone a large shift in the transition to including non-state armed actors at the peace table, but to some respondents, it is not enough. The next frontier, so to speak, is the question of non-armed, non-state actors.³²

The second is the evolution of diplomacy and conflict resolution mechanisms. The history of diplomacy and conflict resolution has always been state based, with envoys using good offices, political clout, while representing a state at very formal degrees (i.e. embassies). While diplomacy evolved towards a more inclusive structure with the emergence of trade diplomacy, cultural issues, interactions between citizens and states increased even more. Government mandates also expanded to include health issues, education, culture, and transportation with what one respondent described as “global international connections amongst professionals.”³³ However, “peace and security remained in the realm and hands of states.”³⁴ After the Cold War, the

32 The 2010 ICAN/MIT study *What the Women Say: Participation and UNSCR 1325* highlights the inclusion of non-armed, non-state actors and recommends shifts toward criteria for their inclusion. Available at: http://web.mit.edu/cis/pdf/WomenReport_10_2010.pdf.

33 Respondent 12, interview conducted 21 March 2013.

34 Respondent 12, Interview conducted 21 March 2013.

international landscape of peace and security evolved, seeing a rise in civil wars (Kaldor 2007) and protracted conflicts between government forces and armed rebel groups and militias. This, according to one respondent, is “where we got stuck.”³⁵ Although the nature of armed conflict has changed, the mechanisms to find solutions and peaceful settlements of armed conflict have remained the same - ‘stuck in this framework’ resulting in peace negotiations involving military actors and armed groups on one side and increasingly, non-state actors on the other. This new asymmetric nature of these negotiations implicates the effectiveness of the peace talks that in turn have greater effects on entire societies than ever before. It is interesting to note just how self-aware many mediation experts are of the structural problem of current peace talks. Even though the architecture is anachronistic, mediation designs still focus on the small classical table, which spells greater problems for advocates of broader inclusion who choose to insist on inserting individuals into the current classical structure rather than advocating to change the structure of the table itself.

According to some respondents, this is seen with women’s movements who advocate for greater participation of women in peace processes. Such movements are seen as being effective in addressing the crucial fact that many elites are not in touch with their constituencies because populations are fragmented or there are no accountability mechanisms in place. This is where women’s movements have added real value. Taking caution to avoid simply pushing women towards Track 2 or 3 processes and continuing exclusion in Track 1 processes, these movements can create a broad base of support in society that expose the limitations of elite leadership that make decisions on behalf of entire communities. The key here is recognizing that these women’s groups are not necessarily “seeking to be part of the little club that sits around the table, but are actually demanding a different process altogether.”³⁶ However, women’s movements do not always seize this opportunity. Either they do not recognize it or deem it futile, or perhaps simply do not have enough power to change the underlying structures. Whatever the reason, the result is often advocating to try and move women into an anachronistic peace table that is too small, physically and proverbially to address the needs and contexts of modern armed and protracted conflicts.

Acutely aware of this structural conundrum, the third aspect of current structural design of peace talks called into question by respondents is simply the size of the peace negotiation – in other words, how many seats, both physical and proverbial, are included at the peace table. Recognizing the way talks are designed to be discreet with high security meaning that they are one of the “least inclusive structures in the world”,³⁷ some respondents proffered options for change. There was a lot of discussion of the notion of ‘space’ and its widening and broadening. One has to be careful in distinguishing sex category and gender in this respect; including individuals of a different biological sex does not guarantee the broadening of perspectives and political space. However, in speaking to mediators and negotiators, they suggest that a Track I ‘quiet process’ is necessary at times, but not sufficient. A full Track II

35 Respondent 12, Interview conducted 21 March 2013.

36 Respondent 8, Interview conducted 7 March 2013.

37 Respondent 14, Interview conducted 28 March 2013.

‘noisy process’ can diffuse perspectives and become fragmented, but it is also necessary to include perspectives of the broader constituency. Thus, several mediators suggested the idea of Track 1.5 diplomacy, which would reflect a fundamental tenet of mediation strategy, search for common ground on the issues. Then why can’t the actual table physically embody this moderation?³⁸ One respondent speaks exactly as to why broadening inclusion could be simply seen as a fundamental structural and strategic need, rather than being just about women’s rights:

“There is a concept that I have written about called the paradox of noise. In the Irish mother’s movement it was clear, just from observation; you can’t solve conflict from the extremes. If it’s going to be solved, it’s going to be solved from the moderate middle. Whether it’s female or male leadership, its whole humanistic impact to make that work is from the centre outwards, across lines of division from the middle outwards. The closer you get to peace, the more threatened the extremes become. They get noisier; it could be the noise of bombs and murder, but the paradox is, during and because of growing peace and understanding, you can create the appearance of increasing conflict because the extremes are isolated. They make more noise and more violence (Middle East and North Africa) to make peace, so involve enough people with enough influence to withstand the extreme noise, and regain composure from reactive violence from extreme groups.”³⁹

These responses render the women’s rights approach to advocating for greater inclusion of women at the peace tables on the right track, but incomplete and misguided. All of the respondents commented that in differing ways and forms, it is important to include women in peace negotiations. Many of them cited that it is because women do affect peace talks in a profound way – they bring different perspectives in account of their different experiences in the context of armed conflicts that can result in greater mobility and flexibility in the search for common ground in agenda issues within a context of red lines, time constraints, and the need to report back to a constituency.

Furthermore, taking greater consideration of the existing structure of peace talks, everyone invited to a peace talk is there for a reason. Therefore, despite all the rhetoric on why individuals, both women and men should participate; participation does not exist on its own. Negotiation experts and design inexorably pairs participation with representation. A negotiator is selected to be part of a negotiation team to *represent the interests of their constituency*. As such, an individual cannot go there and say that they represent ‘peace’ - they represent, in most cases, a government, an armed group, and other relevant counterparts.⁴⁰

Thus, the women’s rights argument that women need to be included because they represent 50 per cent of the population is important and necessary, but not sufficient. While many advocates recognize this, they bolster this argument with reasoning infused with feminist standpoints and essentialist stereotypes that fail to interact with a larger picture of the

38 Respondent 11, Interview conducted 21 March 2013.

39 Respondent 10, Interview conducted 21 March 2013.

40 Respondent 12, Interview conducted 21 March 2013.

current paradigm of the design and structure of peace negotiations. As a paradigm shift towards a different structural design of peace processes to include parties to peace and more holistic representation from communities will not come easily, current campaigns for getting more women to the peace table could include more fruitful argumentation that proffers women's inclusion as a means towards a more sustainable peace agreement - as a form of greater representation from constituencies that consequently creates greater buy in, a higher level of legitimacy, and a greater likelihood of ceasefire and peace agreements being implemented and sustained.

Thoughts for Discussion

The following section elucidates the research gaps both explicitly and implicitly conveyed by the interview respondents. Through this, it will make comments on this community of experts itself, in other words, observations drawn from their observations.

- Lack of quantitative data I: This is by far the largest research gap on this topic. Respondent states the lack of data sets.⁴¹
- Lack of quantitative data II: Many of these experts draw on personal narratives, experiences, and testimonies, and stories, narratives, and testimonies shared between them in this community of experts. Many of these are counterfactuals.⁴²
- Inability to measure the ‘impact’ of mediation and negotiation processes.⁴³
- Inability to define the meaning of ‘success’ in mediation and negotiation processes.
- Lack of research on the role of women after peace processes, or what happens after the negotiation.⁴⁴
- Inability to measure the impact of women in bringing about more sustainable and durable peace agreements.⁴⁵

While this paper focused on the responses themselves, from an epistemological and methodological point of view, interviewing this rather contained community of experts gleaned some observations. The first is that the community was much more self-contained and smaller than it had initially seemed – the most widely cited and circulated literature came from organizations specializing in mediation and negotiation (i.e. based mostly in Europe and North America, such as The Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue, swisspeace, The Institute for Inclusive Security, and larger organizations such as the OSCE and the UN). In addition to this, many of the respondents referred to the work of other respondents in their interviews, sometimes even by first name, conveying a sense of familiarity and collaboration on research and work on this topic.

Secondly, out of the 14 interviews conducted, 10 were conducted with female respondents and the remaining four with males. While only one respondent explicitly stated that they were approaching this topic from a ‘women’s rights perspective’ and another noted explicitly that they were *not* coming from a ‘women’s right’s perspective’, the majority of the respondents did not explicitly state the perspective they used in their approach. Gleaning from the interviews, the male respondents did not say anything strongly negative about the women’s right’s approach, while the female respondents were actually much more vocally critical of this approach. Another interesting issue of note is that several female respondents used the term ‘we’ quite often when referring to women, others when referring to mediation and negotiation delegations. Whether women automatically group themselves as a collective with other individuals due to a shared gender experience, or as a collective

41 Respondent 3, Interview conducted 14 February 2013. However, it is important to acknowledge the wealth of qualitative work that exists, but from publications that are not necessarily registered or accounted for (e.g. from Liberia, Palestine, or South East Asia).

42 Respondent 3, Interview conducted 14 February 2013.

43 Respondent 9, Interview conducted 21 March 2013.

44 Respondent 11, Interview conducted 21 March 2013.

45 Respondent 4, Interview conducted 27 February 2013.

with other individuals due to a shared political mandate, it is hard to tell, but important to recognize.

The interview responses not only bolster the argument that conflating arguments of 'differences' and 'sameness' to get women to the table is not only ineffective but detractive and even destructive to peace talks and the sustainability of peace agreements. This buttresses the need for more focus towards a paradigm shift in the mechanical, strategic, and structural design of peace talks themselves. One respondent's organization has already recognized this in practice and has taken steps to kick-start this paradigm shift. Their following statement sums it up quite well:

*"It makes a big difference; we are trying to [move] away from the advocacy approach, because 12 years, 13 years, it really hasn't worked. And it turns off a lot of people. It is not just getting an agreement right, it is making sure that agreement is sustainable. You need to make sure it is well thought through, there is buy in, and legitimacy. Try to sell it in mediator speak, how do you get a good agreement not just from an advocacy perspective, but from a sustainable peace perspective."*⁴⁶

Additionally, gleaned from the answers given by the interview respondents, this seemingly missing nexus between mediation and women and peacemaking landscapes seem to engage much more seamlessly in practice. Additionally, experts recognize that the current architecture of conflict resolution mechanisms is archaic and does not serve the needs of today's typography of conflicts. The majority of responses conveyed a sophisticated view of the importance of the role of women at the peace table that pushed far beyond the fact that they were women, and towards the fact that they, as members of a larger constituency, had much more to contribute to negotiations at the peace table than a gentle disposition and a calming atmosphere. Having women at the peace table is extremely important for reaching a negotiated settlement and achieving a sustainable peace agreement or ceasefire, but not in the manner that is currently expressed in existing literature.

⁴⁶ Respondent 9, Interview conducted 21 March 2013.

5

Conclusion

Feminist approaches advocating for greater inclusion of women at peace tables are important, but some remain misguided and ineffective. Advocacy campaigns should be wary of arguing for a seat for women at the peace table just because they are women. The unique standpoint they actually make based on their knowledge of communities at times is rendered distinct because of the societal constructs of war and conflict. Whether a unique standpoint is also classified as 'essentialist' is a conundrum that cannot be solved within the scope of this paper. For now, advocacy campaigns can work to shift the anachronistic classical peace table instead to result in not only better buy in from parties to conflict, international organizations, and individuals but more representativeness from constituencies, which, according to most respondents, are what leads to more effective and sustainable peace agreements.

This working paper is significant because it challenges pre-existing views in gender mainstreaming approaches and existing conflict resolution paradigms. The classical peace table is no longer a sufficient medium for negotiating and trying to search for peace and desperately needs to catch up with the changing state of today's conflicts and wars. It is also significant in its methodology, as it provides a wholly new approach to this topic in two ways. Firstly, it investigates the role of gender, women and peacebuilding without many of the same assumptions found in other literature on this topic that are based much more heavily on solely women's rights, although it uses feminist theory as a theoretical basis to both critique paradigms used in current advocacy campaigns and to introduce new perspectives. It is not based on advocacy using stylized facts, but goes past the numbers debate and argues for the necessity of having a deeper level of gender analysis to be inserted at all levels of negotiations. Secondly, this working paper attempts to bring about a novel approach, providing a deep investigation and analysis of both the world of mediation and the world of women in peacebuilding in tandem. The new knowledge and information discovered provide an up to date, practical view of the role of women in peace talks bolstered by both a feminist and mediation-design theoretical framework. It also provides a rare foray and interpretative analysis of an existing body of knowledge – the close-knit community of mediation and negotiation experts and practitioners.

5.1 Implications for Theoretical Frameworks and Policies in Practice

The research findings show that there is a need to integrate both the mediation and women and peacemaking groups of literature, as the lack of recognition of a viable nexus between the two can result in inefficient policy and practice. It also reveals that feminist theory has matured towards a viable gender analysis, but current advocacy campaigns may have not yet caught up. Alongside this theoretical maturation, greater integration should also be made between existing gender mainstreaming campaigns, policies, and mechanisms and current feminist theory, demystifying the theories and eradicating the stigma that cause practitioners to 'check the gender box' and move on.

How do these issues affect policy making in peace negotiations? Mandated through United Nations Security Council Resolutions such as 1325 and 1889 – UN Women, for example, is training hundreds of women on mediation skills and employing gender experts to consult negotiation delegations. While this is an important and necessary step, more must be done to address the root of problem – the structure of the conflict management process itself. Policies should not simply ‘add more women’ but should do more to engage those who pull the strings and decide who gets to sit at these tables. Ban Ki-Moon’s efforts to include more women on rosters and in high level posts is a start, but is not an appropriate policy in different structures (e.g. military, armed groups) that choose delegations and mediators. Thus, even if women around the world were trained on mediation and negotiation, many parties to conflict would be hard pressed to let a woman onto their delegation simply to fill a gender quota.

5.2 Limitations of Study and Opportunities for Further Research

The lack of existing data sets and empirical, quantifiable data was a limitation on the research findings. The literature review conveyed only 33 recorded instances of women playing formal roles at peace talks, with very little evidence on the different modalities through which women take part in the entire peace process. The interview respondents also conveyed the same frustration, and also added that the discreet, closed door nature of many high level negotiations and mediation processes contribute to this lack of existing data. Due to the lack of existing data, much of the existing literature is also based on anecdotes and empirical experiences, personal experiences, stories, and testimonies, and counterfactuals. Thus, because of the limitations in resources for this study, most of the empirical data were based on the responses from interviewees and are subject to individual bias both from the interviewer and interviewee. The empirical data should also be tested against cases, but as conveyed previously, there are not enough cases with variables that can be controlled effectively and validly.

Some areas for further development and research include conducting a broad and comprehensive mapping of all peace processes, and controlling for appropriate variables that map out the role of women in peace processes in the different modalities in which they play it. This would be done to produce a viable dataset as well as some quantifiable results on the difference women play in peace processes, and whether and in what ways the number of women present in a peace process affects the outcome of the negotiation (namely whether the negotiation leads to a political settlement or not). This leads to a crucial area that is in great need of development: researching how greater inclusion in peace processes leads to more sustainable and durable peace agreements (in a quantifiable or an in-depth qualitative manner). Thus, due to the very little data produced and difficulty determining a causal relationship in the ‘difference’ women bring to the peace table, there is a need for richer and broader research on this topic.

Annex 1

For the purposes of this study, the following key words are defined for clarity and accuracy. The phrase ‘advocacy campaigns’ is used to convey the growing movement and salient phenomenon of women’s groups or networks that advocate for greater inclusion of women at formal peace talks. In this regard, it is especially important to consider the distinct quality of each women’s group and avoid lumping them into a homogenous movement. It is also important to avoid the conflation between women’s rights advocacy campaigns and feminist approaches to gender and peacebuilding. Essentialism is a complex concept used in this study to convey the idea that women and men are inherently different and thus bring inherently different qualities to the peace table. Peace negotiations, peace table, and formal peace talks all refer to the actual dialogue process between two or more parties to conflict towards the common goal of cessation of hostilities and the determination of their future relationship. Mediation is a conflict management tool defined by the presence of an outside or third party in the negotiating process between the parties to conflict.

Annex 2

The interviewees were identified through selecting several authors of policy literature in the literature review as well as practitioners (mediators and negotiators who took part in actual peace negotiations), contacted, and those who replied were interviewed. The ‘snowball sampling’ method increased the number of interviews from 4-5 to 14, as interviewees suggested more people to contact and in some cases, made first contact themselves.

None of the interviewees found any issue with the interview being recorded, although they were notified that their interview would remain confidential. Thus, in the following section, only an assigned number will distinguish them from each other. The Table 1.1 below gives more information about the interviews and resulting transcriptions. The transcriptions were then ‘coded’ manually by looking for reappearing words and sentences. The same questions were asked to the interviewees (with a few variations depending on the nature of their work and expertise), and thus the answers were compared and contrasted across the board.

Table 1.1

Interview Respondent	Affiliation/Position	Sex	Interview Date	Respondent's Location	Interview Medium	Interview Length	Transcription Length
Resp. 1	Negotiator/Consultant	F	13.02.2013	London	Skype	55m 34s	1425
Resp. 2	NGO Professional/Author	F	14.02.2013	Bern	In-person	49m 03s	2102
Resp. 3	Mediator	M	14.02.2013	Cyprus	Skype	28m 10s	1728
Resp. 4	Mediator	F	27.02.2013	Lausanne	Skype	49m 10s	2002
Resp. 5	Mediator/Author	F	05.03.2013	Brussels	Skype	27m 13s	1889
Resp. 6	Mediator/Author	F	05.03.2013	Singapore	Skype	27m 13s	1889
Resp. 7	Mediator	M	05.03.2013	Geneva	In-person	19m 29s	1116
Resp. 8	Mediator	F	07.03.2013	Geneva	In-person	27m 19s	2527
Resp. 9	INGO Professional	F	21.03.2013	New York	Telephone	31m 41s	1288
Resp. 10	Mediator/Lawyer	M	21.03.2013	Vancouver	Skype	48m 19s	977
Resp. 11	Negotiator	F	21.03.2013	Geneva	In-person	28m 25s	1966
Resp. 12	Mediator/Author	F	21.03.2013	London	Skype	36m 12s	2865
Resp. 13	Mediator	M	25.03.2013	Islamabad	Skype	~30m	1630
Resp. 14	NGO Professional	F	28.03.2013	New York	Skype	~30m	1294

Sub-Questions for Analysis

Fight for Inclusion

- Are feminist arguments effective in getting women to the peace table?
- To what extent can a unique women's standpoint be discerned among people participating in peace processes?

Performance at the Peace Table

- Do these processes constitute gendered performances?
- How do the narratives of interviewees go against gendered clichés?
- Are there violations of gendered scripts that play out during actual peace processes?

Outcomes

- How does feminist argumentation inform questions of peacebuilding, security, and international relations as a whole?
- How does the current architecture of peace negotiations affect women's access and representation to the peace table?
- How can women use this architecture as an alternative entry point to increase representation at peace talks?

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holds a MA in International Affairs from the Graduate Institute of International and Development Studies in Geneva, Switzerland and a BA from the University of British Columbia, Canada. She joined swisspeace in 2013 as a Mediation Program Assistant. Before joining swisspeace, she held internships with the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, Human Rights Watch, and The Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue. She has also worked as a Research Assistant for the Political Science Department of the University of British Columbia and as a Project Assistant for the Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade Canada. Her research interests include mediation of internal armed conflict, humanitarian assistance & negotiation, and issues surrounding women, peace & security.

Sanam Anderlini

is co-founder of the International Civil Society Action Network (ICAN) and a Senior Fellow at the MIT Center for International Studies. In 2011, she was the first Senior Expert on Gender and Inclusion on the UN's Mediation Standby Team. For nearly two decades she has been a leading international advocate, researcher, trainer and writer on conflict prevention and peacebuilding. In 2000, she was among the civil society drafters of UN Security Council Resolution 1325 on women, peace and security.

Between 2002 and 2005, as Director of the Women Waging Peace Policy Commission, Ms. Anderlini led ground breaking field research on women's contributions to conflict prevention, security and peacemaking in 12 countries. Since 2005, she has also provided strategic guidance and training to key UN agencies, the UK government and NGOs worldwide, including leading a UNFPA/UNDP needs assessment into Maoist cantonment sites in Nepal. Between 2008 – 2010, Ms. Anderlini was Lead Consultant for a 10-country UNDP global initiative on "Gender, Community Security and Social Cohesion" with a focus on men's experiences in crisis settings. She has served on the Advisory Board of the UN Democracy Fund (UNDEF), and was appointed to the Civil Society Advisory Group (CSAG) on Resolution 1325, chaired by Mary Robinson in 2010. In 2013, she was appointed to the Working Group on Gender and Inclusion of the Sustainable Development Network for the post-2015 agenda.

Ms. Anderlini has published extensively on gender, peace and security issues. She holds an M.Phil in Social Anthropology from Cambridge University. Iranian by birth, she is a UK citizen, and has twin daughters.

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swisspeace is an action-oriented peace research institute with headquarters in Bern, Switzerland. It aims to prevent the outbreak of violent conflicts and to enable sustainable conflict transformation.

swisspeace sees itself as a center of excellence and an information platform in the areas of conflict analysis and peacebuilding. We conduct research on the causes of war and violent conflict, develop tools for early recognition of tensions, and formulate conflict mitigation and peacebuilding strategies. swisspeace contributes to information exchange and networking on current issues of peace and security policy through its analyses and reports as well as meetings and conferences.

swisspeace was founded in 1988 as the “Swiss Peace Foundation” with the goal of promoting independent peace research in Switzerland. Today swisspeace engages about 40 staff members. Its most important clients include the Swiss Federal Department of Foreign Affairs (FDFA) and the Swiss National Science Foundation. Its activities are further assisted by contributions from its Support Association. The supreme swisspeace body is the Foundation Council, which is comprised of representatives from politics, science, and the government.

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