



## **Filling the Gaps: A Virtual Discussion of Gender, Peace and Security Research**

### **Module One Summary**

Hello all,

What a great first week of discussion!

This has been a brilliant start to “Filling the Gaps” in Gender, Peace and Security research. The aim of last week was to get a general assessment of the work being done in gender, peace and security research. I have attempted a brief summary of the argumentation strings of this first module of our virtual discussion.

We certainly have conceived an extensive evaluation including:

- a broader understanding of security from state security to human security;
- the continued dominance of masculine viewpoints in many traditional academic disciplines;
- and, pervading most discussion comments, how gender analysis and perspective is incorporated (or not) in academia, organizational level work and policy.

Many participants wrote about the shift from national or state security to a focus, or at least an awareness, of **human security**. It was noted that the idea of human security was more likely to be taken into consideration at an organizational level, such as at the UN or in NGOs, than within traditional academic disciplines such as international relations. At the same time, notions of what human security captures are still being explored, in particular *whom* is being kept ‘secure’.

In a related issue, Kathleen Staudt and Elisabeth Porter, among other contributors, noted the continued **masculine-dominated approach** to research and study in academic disciplines. Work being done to incorporate gender perspectives is still marginalized and a masculinist-dominated approach in many disciplines is standard procedure, particularly international relations, security studies and peace studies. Further, gender analysis has not expanded to include racial and ethnic analysis which is vital to understanding security needs.

Though the first week was intended to be a general assessment of current research in gender, peace and security, many comments began to also identify gaps in research. One of the most glaring gaps identified is the need for a more inclusive approach to security studies. To understand inclusion, participants highlighted what is currently excluded from research, namely, the voices of those being ‘protected,’ experiences of **marginalized populations and groups**, and a range of perspectives of all of those involved in security processes.

Dan Mosehenberg asked an important question: **what is the *human in human security***? And many participants responded with varying perspectives. Celia Cook-Huffman discussed an article in American Newsweek magazine imploring the return of the western cowboy ready to ride in and save the day, the 'individualistic, unattached male hero' that is not concerned with the role of women beyond the ones waiting to be rescued. From a different perspective, Gloria Caballero shared her own experience of being security screened at an airport in Spain and the intersections of race, language and citizenship that influenced security measures there.

While considering the human in human security and the need for a wider gender perspective, some participants pointed out that simply including women in decision making processes does not guarantee a prioritizing of gender equality or perspective. Erin Baines showed this in her article on Rwanda's parliament which has a female majority yet, 'female parliamentarians...by virtue of their sex [do not automatically] prioritize gender equality over the ruling party's political agenda.'

Marian Douglas-Ungaro's experience at a conference in Europe where a women conference presenter failed to include any sort of **ethnic background** in her gender analysis of field mission staffing also reminds us that a gender analysis is not fully inclusive unless it considers all marginalized perspectives, including race and class. Ximena Jimenez noted this with an example from a women's conference in Ecuador where participants from indigenous and black descendents organizations' concerns were completely excluded and the participants were suffering 'two kinds of discrimination: ethnicity and gender'. These comments remind us that gender cannot be examined without also considering race, ethnicity, class, citizenship and religion.

I am excited to have started **Module 2** of "Filling the Gaps" and I hope we can expand on the excellent comments already being made.

Thank you all very much for participating!

Warm regards,

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