Applying Feminist and Queer Theories to Gender-Based Violence in Post-Conflict

Societies: A Case Study of the Transition Process in Liberia

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Introduction

Contemporary wars are characterized by mass human rights violations and war crimes, including excessively high rates of gender based violence. Rape and other forms of sexual abuse are widespread during war, used as a tool to terrorize, punish and control the civilian population. These crimes go unpunished as the rule of law is demolished and impunity takes over. Although the war between the 'men' may end abruptly, the war on women continues to flourish in the aftermath of war.

Feminists have highlighted that war is highly gendered, and similarly, the post-war context is also gendered (see: Enloe, 2005; Meintjes, Pillay & Turshen 2001; Puechguirbal 2010, etc). One clear example of this is the alarmingly high rate of sexual violence women experience during war, and the often increased rates of gender-based sexual violence in the transition period. The war does not end when the peace accord is signed or the guns are laid to rest. Many times domestic abuse and rape become the new violence targeting women and girls, re-establishing the patriarchal hierarchies of the pre-war setting. A new war is engendered on women in the aftermath of conflict, as too often the failure to hold perpetrators accountable leads to a culture of impunity. If justice is not served to promote an accountable and lawful society in the aftermath of war, women will continue to be subject to abuse, torture and inequality. Liberia provides a case study in which to examine ongoing sexual and gender-based violence and gender inequality in the post-conflict context.

In this paper I argue for a complete and thorough incorporation of post-colonial feminist and queer theories in post-war reconstruction policies and models. More specifically, I highlight

the ways in which gender, security and violence, and their intersections, are conceptualized and modeled in policy in order to expose the power inherent within these documents. The adoption of liberal feminism, focused on gender mainstreaming, has thus far proven ineffective in achieving the radical re-conceptualization of gender that it proposes to do. Limited gains have been achieved in countering impunity of gendered violence: women are still unable to secure gender equality. I do not wish to dismiss the positive contributions of liberal feminism in areas of peace-building and security sector policy, as I believe UNSC Resolution 1325 is a watershed policy mechanism that has resulted in positive outcomes since its inception in 2000. Resolution 1325 (and related Resolutions: 1820 (2008); 1888 (2009); 1889 (2009); and 1960 (2010)) call for the acknowledgement that war affects men and women differently, while also stressing that women play an important role in peace building and negotiation, and advocates for their equal participation in all efforts of peace building and post-war transformation. These resolutions are the key policy mechanisms consulted during the aftermath of war concerning topics of gender, security and violence. These reports lay the foundations for 'gendering' the aftermath of conflict and are therefore key elements used during the transitional phase, as well as the key policies I have chosen to deconstruct.

Given the limited space and scope of this paper, it is not possible to evaluate the entirety of post-conflict transitional justice mechanisms and peacebuilding policies through a feminist and gendered lens. Therefore I will engage mostly with two key mechanisms that intersect gender, violence and security – UNSCR 1325 and truth commissions. I will use the recently completed Liberian Truth and Reconciliation Commission as a case to evaluate recent attempts to incorporate gender into peacebuilding, and discuss the links between gender mainstreaming, accountability and equality.

Chapter 1 will include an overview of the field of peacebuilding, the practice of transitional justice. A common mechanism of transitional justice, truth commissions, will be explored. UNSCR Resolutions 1325, 1820, 1888, 1889 and 1960 will be explored and their implementations will be evaluated. Next will be a detailed analysis of liberal peacebuilding, transitional justice and truth commissions from a gendered perspective, using a post-colonial feminist lens. Issues surrounding justice and peace, impunity and accountability within the transitional justice paradigm and truth commissions will be explored.

Chapter 2 will provide the Liberian case study. This chapter will begin with the political history of the small west African country, including social and cultural tensions before and during the civil wars between 1989 and 2003, followed by a look at the gendered relations, both past and present. More specifically, I will examine gender roles and gender-based violence before, during and after the war. Examining Liberia's mainstreaming gender policies and approaches includes an analysis of the implementation of UNSCR 1325 in the post-conflict re-construction phases of the Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration (DRR) program and the Liberian Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC). Additionally, a look into the domestic judicial reforms in Liberia since the war, concerning sexual assault and violence against women will also be evaluated. This chapter will conclude with a discussion of the utility of liberal policy instruments', namely UNSCR 1325 and 1820, and the possibility these policy instruments hold for creating gender equality. Ultimately, I argue that while liberal feminism has achieved important policy-level gains in the name of 'women', the implementation of these policies remains ineffective and superficial.

Chapter 3 offers insight into the limited success of liberal feminist models of post-conflict re-construction policy. By exploring the discursive parameters of liberal feminism one

can begin to understand the limits the liberal paradigm of 'women' offers. I deconstruct UNSCR 1325 and scrutinize the patriarchal discourse used within the document and subsequence policy measures. As an alternative to the current model, I offer the use of post-colonial feminism and queer theory to destabilize the current paradigm and allow for a re-conceptualization of gender and the use of 'women' as an organizational category. In this section I explore the intersections of gender, sexuality, power and knowledge. I aim to expose the heterosexual matrix and the patriarchal nature of international development policy mechanisms and institutions, and their resulting impacts on post-conflict societies.

Chapter 1: Gender and Violence: Peace building and Transitional Justice in the Aftermath

Pervasive violations of the rights of women and girls characterize contemporary intrastate conflict. "Violence against women in armed conflict situations is one of the most heinous violations of human rights in terms of its scale, the nature of the atrocities and the number of persons affected" (Sajor 1998, 2). But first, in order to speak of gender-based violence we must first understand the concept and use of the term 'gender'. Gender is a social construction, separate from biology, which is organized and practiced by society. Gender is so inherent in our social fabric, "we find the gender configuration of practice however we slice the social world, whatever unit of analysis we choose" (Connell 1995, 72). Not only are individuals assigned and grouped based on gender, but also institutions, the workplace and school are also highly gendered (Connell 1995, 73). Social practices are highly structured by gender. Relations between genders make up a key element of the social structure as a whole, and intersect and interact with race, class, ethnicity, and sexuality.

Within feminist studies, gender analysts have identified the concepts 'masculine' and 'feminine' as central to a hierarchal system in which masculinities are privileged over femininities. Feminists highlight how uneven gender relations marginalize women by privileging the structural position of men (Connell 1995, 41). The term patriarchy has been and continues to be used to describe this system of gender domination. The "unequal power relations between men and women are manifested in social practice and in beliefs and values that promote male superiority and female inferiority" and thus form the underlying causes of sexual violence against women (Pillay 2001, 40). Masculinities are "configurations of practice structured by gender relations" (Connell 1995, 44). The plurality of masculinities is seen in the fabric and

makeup of our societal systems and gender politics. Militarized and hegemonic masculinities are critical pieces to the puzzle of gender-based violence during and after conflict.

Relations between genders shift during war and conflict. This shift can be observed in the specific activities and expectations of men and women. Women take on many new roles, such as soldiers, laborers, political actors, refugees, and sex workers, thus providing women with a variety of opportunities and challenges throughout the conflict. For some women, war and conflict allow them to make significant gains in economic, political or material realms, while for other women, war exacerbates the hierarchal gendered system that exploits them for reproductive and labor uses. According to Manchanda, "conflict opens up intended and unintended spaces for empowering women, effecting structural social transformations and producing new social, economic and political realities that redefine gender and caste hierarchies" (2001, 99). Women, however, typically fail to consolidate these gains in the 'aftermath' of civil conflict (Meintjes, Pillay & Turshen 2001; Bop 2001; Manchanda 2001). A return to pre-war gender relations is often sought and achieved by men, re-establishing structural inequality between men and women.

Rape is an example of the exercise of power and has been described as "the perfected act of male sexuality in a patriarchal culture – it is the ultimate metaphor for domination, violence, subjugation and possession" (Morgan 1997, 163-164). Brownmiller attests that rape is chiefly political and that "given a context wherein the institutions by which men dominate women are well established, rape is an act that expresses a political dominance that is already, by and large, accepted" (Cahill 2001, 19). Masculine and feminine archetypes play into the gendered politics of rape: "to be a man is to be a member of the dominant class and thus to have nearly limitless power … power over the bodies of women; to be a woman is to be constantly subject to the

dominant power and unable to protect oneself from its reach" (Cahill 2001, 19). The unequal structural power relations between men and women are largely responsible for sexual gender-based violence before, during and after periods of conflict.

Contemporary intrastate wars are characterized by widespread and systematic rape as a weapon of war (Brown 2004; Baaz and Stern 2009; MacKenzie 2009; Diken & Laustsen 2005; Thoman and Tiessen 2010). During conflict, rape is used as a tactic of social and individual destruction (Sideris 2001, 146-147). Sideris goes on to note "the paradox about rape is that it is a political act, which has far-reaching social ramifications and violate[s] one of the most basic and intimate experiences individuals have of themselves. Thus individual victims experience a political phenomenon in a deeply subjective way" (2001, 146-147). Burt and Katz also explained this idea: "Rape may be a social/political phenomenon, but its reality is acted out in an intensely personal and personalized way" (1987, 58). Therefore, sexual violence is perpetrated on a mass scale to dismantle and control an entire community through the violation of the individual body, as well as the social body (Sideris 2001, 149). Rape is used in "maintaining the hierarchical gender roles within society, from which men benefit" (Thomas & Tiessen 2010, 483).

The endemic rape of civilian women is a result of a matrix of power, gender, class, and economic reasoning (Baaz & Stern, 2009). Rape is normalized and widespread during war, affecting the majority of women and girls, and also men and boys. The disintegration of social, economic and judicial structures during war allows for the total impunity of sexual violence. The act of rape abjectifies a woman by transgressing her border of purity: "the penetration inflicts on her body and her self a mark, a stigma, which cannot be effaced" (Diken & Laustsen 2005, 113). While the physical penetration causes bodily harm, rape also penetrates psychologically,

resulting in considerable emotional damage. Women are not only victims of rape, but also victims of stigmatization. Secondary victimization can prolong and exacerbate the psychological and emotional consequences of rape through family and community insensitivity toward the victims. Rape victims are often excluded by family and community members because they become abject through rape, and consequently feared and ostracized (Diken & Laustsen 2005).

The signing of a peace accords between warring factions, government and international actors is signifying of the end of conflict. Unfortunately, there are few, if any, examples where gains in gender equality and justice were sustained and manifested into a transformed society during this transitory moment (Valji 2007, 219).   In fact, violence against women appears to increase during this time (Pillay 2001, 37). The disintegration of social, economic and judicial structures during war allows for the total impunity of sexual violence. The violence does not end for women when the cease-fire is made or the peace accord is signed; often the rates of violence against women, especially sexual violence, continue or even increase when the fighting dies down (Meintjes, Pillay &Turshen 2001; Goldblatt & Meintjes 1998; Ibeanu 2001, 206; Tiessen & Thomas, 2010). The "cessation of hostility is not always synonymous with peace for women" (Puechguirbal 2010, 4) as sexual violence often becomes endemic in the post-war period. Authors Meintjes, Pillay and Turshen effectively sum up the history of gender relations in the aftermath of war: "the common post-war pattern the world over has been the re-creation of patriarchal dominance in new forms" (2001, 18).

The continuation, and often increase, of gender-based sexual violence in the post-war period is telling of the failure of peacebuilding and transitional justice to create a safe space for women in their communities and their homes. The inabilities for women to consolidate the many gains made and the shift in gender roles and relations during the war engenders a new war on

women in the aftermath (Bop 2001). Too often when war ends between the 'men', violence is

directed towards the women; their bodies become the new battlegrounds. The ignorance of the

gendered hierarchies, mixed with the war culture and impunity, exacerbates violence against

women in the post-war context. A return to the 'pre-existing' (patriarchal) ways is encouraged by

the fact that the men responsible for the war are the ones drafting the restructuring of the country

(Mazurana 2005). Despite the fact that there is now a consistent body of international law that

has acknowledged "rape as a war crime, a crime against humanity and an element of genocide"

(Pankhurst 2011, 36), rape in the post-war period continues to reign with absolute impunity.

Mazurana believes this is due to "many officials within peacekeeping and humanitarian

operations miss[ing] the centrality of masculinity and femininity in both the conflict and 'post-

conflict' periods" (2005, 40).

       Curbing gender-based violence in the transition period. In the aftermath of war there

becomes a small window of opportunity that, if taken advantage of, could allow for a change of

social structures to acknowledge the shifts in gender roles that the war has created. War opens

up spaces for "empowering women, effecting structural social transformations and producing

new social, economic and political realities that redefine gender and caste hierarchies"

(Manchanda 2001, 99; Pettman 1996, 140). Conflict and the shifting gender roles provide

women with prospects to break out of stereotypes and gender norms (Pillay 2001, 44). The

opportunity to establish new norms and rules, leadership and institutions that focus on women's

rights and include women, are possible in the post-conflict reconstruction (Zuckerman &

Greenberg 2004, 71). Currently, the peacebuilding model and transitional justice mechanisms

aren't taking full advantage of this window of opportunity to pave a path for greater gender

equality. Failure of the peacebuilding process to address the gendered power relations before and

during the war makes it highly unlikely that they will be addressed, much less transformed in its

aftermath (Pettman, 1996).

     Feminists have brought to light the unequal impacts of the liberal peacebuilding model on

women and it became widely understood that women experience war differently than men. The

recognition that war is gendered leads to the incorporation of liberal feminism in liberal

peacebuilding. Liberal feminism views men and women as equal, emphasizing the similarities

between them and arguing that women can be as capable and as rational as men (Davis 2010,

526). Through gender mainstreaming[1] liberal feminists aim to improve the outcome of

peacebuilding practices for women in post-conflict societies.

     One example of a liberal feminist policy designed to address issues of gender-based

violence and the greater inclusion of women throughout peacebuilding processes, is the

"landmark resolution on Women, Peace and Security" (OSAGI), United Nations Security

Council Resolution 1325 was adopted in 2000. This document was hailed as a milestone for the

transformation of gender equality. It calls for the acknowledgement that war affects men and

women differently, and stresses that women play an important role in peacebuilding and

negotiation and advocates for their equal participation in all efforts of peacebuilding. It also calls

for gender mainstreaming. Resolution 1325 recommends the incorporation of gender

perspectives in all United Nations Peace and Security efforts (OSAGI), and calls on all parties to

implement measures to protect women and girls from gender-based violence. In 2008, UNSCR

1820 was enacted to reaffirm the commitment of Resolution 1325, and recognizing the impact of

sexual violence during conflict. Resolution 1820 links sexual violence as a war tactic with

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[1] Gender mainstreaming, defined as the inclusion of gender considerations with regard to the needs, hardships and opportunities of the different sexes in all aspects of peacekeeping (Nduka-Agwu 2007, 180). UNSCR 1325 and 1820 both call for full gender mainstreaming to peacebuilding and peacekeeping operations.

women, peace and security issues (UN Security Council 2008). It also calls on all parties to implement measures to protect women and girls from gender-based violence, constituting sexual violence during conflict as a war crime.

These two Resolutions, while hailed as huge successes for the rights of women on paper, have not lived up to their anticipated glory in practice.   Despite the fact that there is now a consistent body of international law that has acknowledged "rape as a war crime, a crime against humanity and an element of genocide" (Pankhurst, 2011: 36), rape in the post-war period continues to reign unabatedly. After more than two decades of Resolution 1325 being in effect, there has been little improvement of the lives of women in post-war societies. There have been many critiques of the liberal feminist Resolution 1325, its adoption, and its implementation in post-conflict societies. Gender mainstreaming, a key component of liberal feminism and Resolution 1325, has also been scrutinized for failing to address "the material and discursive constructions of masculinity and femininity that shape and are shaped by organizational systems, work practices, norms and identities" (Benschop & Verloo 2006, 27).

Hudson argues the "narrow focus of liberal feminism on gender equality through gender mainstreaming as the path to emancipation is problematic" (Hudson 2012, 448), because it neglects to address the overlapping and intertwined relationships between gender and power. Gender mainstreaming and quotas have shown to be nothing but blunt tools of protection (Hudson 2012, 449). The current 'gendered' liberal peacebuilding fails to address the gendered inequalities embedded in the structures of peacebuilding, scratching only the surface of gender oppression. The current liberal feminist theory within transitional peacebuilding and justice focuses on the increased representation of women, hoping that "by changing the players, the nature of the game will change in turn, thereby allowing a different set of priorities to emerge"

(Bell & O'Rourke 2007, 30). In spite of these aims, 'adding' women to the transitional process has not resulted in significant gains for gender equality. The discourse of the field homogenizes women as civilians, victims, vulnerable and in association with children (Puechguirbal 2010, 172; Bop 2001). This is not only essentialist but undermines women's agency. Homogenizing women into a powerless group constructs them as a group that requires special protection by (male) protectors (Puechguirbal 2012, 10). This gendered discourse privileges a dichotomous hierarchy of masculinity over femininity, perpetuating gender inequality. International organizations and governments use this rhetoric to sustain women in the category of victims, preventing their participating in key decision-making processes in the post-conflict phase. Denying agency to women, specifically political agency, allows for the peacebuilding process to push women back into the private sphere when the fighting ends.

Denying women agency also serves to keep them from the formal peace negotiation table on the grounds that they were not fighting participants in the war. Transitional justice processes are generally by-products of peace negotiations, which are overwhelmingly conceived by men (Bell & O'Rourke 2007, 942). *Allowing* women to participate in peace processes does not challenge the dominant rules and practices of transitional justice institutions, such as the UN. The few women who reach the peace table are often tokens, used to present a face of gender equality and attention to women's issues; but are typically silenced. Women are often 'added' to the peacebuilding process, but not valued by the male dominant structure, as war and peace are seen as the business of men. Women can sometimes be effectively silenced and their opinions discarded at the peace table negotiations. This tokenship of women in peacebuilding operations masks the patriarchal structure, while continuing to relegate women to the margins (Hudson 2012, 448-449). Associating women exclusively with peace and men only with war "reinforces

a gender hierarchy because it reduces the value of women's efforts in peace building and allows

men to continue to dominate the agenda in international relations" (Puechguirbal 2012, 8). The

voices and needs of women become mute while the interests of the leaders - namely political and

economic advancement - take center stage. While there is significant push (through Resolution

1325 and by liberal feminists) to increase representation of women in all stages of the

transitional process, the voice and needs of women are not being heard, nor implemented;

creating further challenges for women and risking further instability within the society.

There has been significant progress in recent years to acknowledge women's experiences

of sexual violence during conflict, including the Rome Statue and Security Council Resolution

1325. Rape has been confirmed as a crime against humanity and as an act of genocide.

Unfortunately, while these legal gains have been made, only a small number of convictions[2] have

taken place. International law is an important tool that can be used as a basis for reform of new

national law, but requires follow-through. Ensuring justice for women post-conflict is critical, as

violence against women tends to thrive in "a context of general insecurity, impunity and an

absence of judicial mechanisms" (Valji 2007, 222). Transitional justice attempts to hold

perpetrators accountable while laying the foundations for national reconciliation and sustained

peace, but has, overall, failed to bring gender justice.

Peacebuilding, transitional justice and feminism. Transitional justice is implemented

in the context when transition from violence and mass human rights violations towards a more

democratic society begins. Transitional justice is partly the choice to determine how to address

these crimes and human rights violations. The appropriate fashion to approach past abusers

continues to be a contested area. Transitional justice, in practice, is the act of defining and of

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[2] Examples include: 1992-995 Bosnian War, 3 men convicted of systematic and savage rape; 1994 Rwanda Genocide, Jean-Paul Akayesu for systematic rape; 1991-2002 Sierra Leone, Charles Taylor (former Liberian president) convicted in 2013 for crimes against humanity and war crimes, including murder, rape and slavery.

deciding whether and how to address the crimes of the recent past. It also includes addressing

the sources of past violence and reforming the justice and security sectors (Sriram 2007, 9).

Truth and reconciliation commissions (TRCs) have emerged as one preferred tool of

transitional justice over the past 20 years. Truth commissions, simply put, are "truth-seeking

bodies set up to investigate past records of human rights violations" (Hirsch, MacKenzie &

Sesay 2012, 387). The exploratory process of truth seeking and the resulting historical narrative

are assumed to lead to justice and reconciliation within the society (Hayner 2011, 5). Aims of

justice, healing and peacebuilding accompany the primary goal of a truth commission:

establishing an accurate account of "a country's past, clarify uncertain events, and lift the lid of

silence and denial from a contentious and painful period of time" (Hayner 2011, 20). Truth

commissions aim to find a balance between total impunity and the criminal prosecution for every

offence. Truth can be used as a form of accountability in the pursuit of justice and

reconciliation, however, truth itself is not always sufficient for reconciliation, as many truths

exist.

Truth commissions provide a space for victims and perpetrators to tell their stories and

create a record of past human rights violations. TRCs also make recommendations for political,

judicial and societal reforms in an attempt to lay the foundations for sustainable peace via liberal

democracy and the rule of law. The aim of truth commissions is to hold perpetrators accountable

while acknowledging victims of their suffering so that healing and forgiveness can foster greater

national reconciliation . Truth commissions, therefore, have the potential to transform gender

relations in the post-conflict society, taking advantage of the fleeting window of opportunity.

Seeking accountability and justice serves to break the culture of impunity that was rampant

during conflict to create a safer society for all by deterring further violations of persons. If

gender based sexual violence goes unaccounted during the transitional justice process violence against women will continue, and often increase, due to impunity. Therefore, it is essential that transitional justice mechanisms pay particular attention to establishing gender equitable structures and seek redress for victims.

Truth commissions "can document human rights violations and identify the individuals and institutions responsible for abuse while also acknowledging survivors' experiences and giving them a forum to testify about their experiences" (Nesiah 2006, 1). Truth commissions provide a space for women to speak about their personal experiences, allowing for individual and collective reconciliation and healing to foster. Historically, truth commissions have failed the majority of women by neglecting to incorporate and fully engage with gendered human rights abuses within all levels, sections and structures of the process (Nesiah 2006, 3).

An emphasis had been placed on "adding" women to the process – increasing the number of women commissioners, statement takers and creating safe spaces for women to tell their stories of sexual violence. Transitional justice has continued to be blinded by zeroing in on a single violation (Ni Aolain 2012, 23), sexual violence against women, "remove[ing] it from its context within a broader framework of oppression and strips it of the power to highlight the structural factors" (Valji 2007, 229). Taking a gendered lens to examine truth commissions and the transitional justice tool-kit requires more than "adding" women. It means looking at the current structures and dismantling them to see the root causes of gender inequality to further understand the magnitude and totality of its impact. The "power relationships between men and women are the root of violence. The patriarchal structure of society enables men to use and abuse their power" (Pillay 2001, 39). "Women face underlying structural violence – the chronic violation of dignity through deprivation of basic human rights in daily life" (Sideris 2001, 57).

Women endure structural violence every day, and to focus so narrowly on the political sexual violence as the only victimization of women is to continue to mask the patriarchal power and structural inequalities within the society. Transitional justice "specifically does little to address the structural harms of discrimination, inequality and violence that characterized many women's lives" (Ni Aolain 2012, 23).

There has been, however, greater focus placed on the experiences of women and establishing gender equality structures after the war by some organizations. The International Center for Transitional Justice has adopted a 'Gender Program', which "seeks to critically revisit the operational, conceptual, policy and legal dimensions of transitional justice institutions in order to enable a more reflective, gender-conscious practice in the field at large and in our in-country programs in particular" (ICTJ). The Liberian Truth and Reconciliation Commission provides a good case study to evaluate recent attempts to incorporate gender equality into transitional justice mechanisms.

There has been a surge of truth commissions enacted in the last 20 years, clinging to the potential for positive impacts on the emerging country's reconciliation, nation building and reconstruction (Borer 2006). However, there is little agreement on the long-term impacts of truth and reconciliation commissions, nor no mechanism for measuring and assessing the overall success of the commissions in achieving their aims (Hirsch, MacKenzie & Sesay 2012, 387). Although there may be a large gap between the widespread use and the empirical assessments of TRCs for countries long term, there is still the ability to speculate on the potential for successful outcomes by observing the policy implementation of the commission, its final recommendations and the country's/government's implementation of these recommendations.

I will continue with my evaluation of peacebuilding and transitional justice, being sensitive to its link with liberal peacebuilding, by exploring the implementation and outcomes of the Liberian Disarmament, Demobalization and Reintegration (DDR) program, the Liberian Truth and Reconciliation Commission and new domestic legislature attempting to curb the rate of rape within the country.

Chapter 2: A Case Study of the Transitional Process in Liberia

The small west African country of Liberia provides a unique case to study the international community's attempts to address the high prevalence of violence against women in the aftermath of war due to the timely overlap of the war's end and new international security policy agenda related to gender and violence. After 15 years of civil conflict a peace agreement was developed and signed in 2003, which laid the foundations for the reconstruction of the country and use of transitional justice mechanisms. A DDR program was implemented to disarm and demobilize combatants and provided them with skills and training to be able to reintegrate back into the larger community. A Truth and Reconciliation Commission was also enacted in 2006, and obtained over 20,000 statements from Liberians across the country, and those around the world, to gain a better understanding of the causes of the war and the political, economic and social crimes committed during the 15 years of conflict. A gender-sensitive approach was attempted during the development and implementation of the DDR and TRC processes in Liberia, however these efforts proved insufficient. Women continued to be marginalized throughout these transitional processes in the aftermath of war (Njoki Wamai 2011). An amendment to the existing rape law was enacted in 2003, which included the creation of special Court E to deal exclusively with cases of sexual violence. Despite these legal gains at the domestic level, paralleled by international gains including UNSCR 1820, 1888 and 1889, violence against women, specifically rape is extremely widespread and frequent.

An exploration of the political history of Liberia leading up to, during and since the war, along with a study of the relations between genders before, during and after the war will follow. Afterwards an in depth investigation through a gendered-lens of the DDR, TRC and new rape law in Liberia will highlight the shortcomings of Liberia's attempt to increase gender equality in

the post-conflict period through gender mainstreaming.   The question remains: Has the election

of Africa's first female president, Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, had significant positive effects for

Liberian women and girls, or are there limits to the impact one women can have on a country?

An additional, and related questions surrounds the potential impact women in leadership roles

can have on making gender equality a priority.

Political history of Liberia. As the oldest independent African nation, freed American

slaves founded Liberia in 1847.   The rapid increase of freed slaves in America at the beginning

of the 17th century started to become an issue that needed to be dealt with, as costly slave revolts

and fears of miscegenation challenged the white American social fabric. The removal of freed

blacks from the US and their relocation to Africa became a favorable option (Sherwood 1917,

214). Repatriation would provide a home for freed slaves while simultaneously "take to Africa

the blessings of Western civilization and Christianity" (Guannu 2009, 21).

In 1821, the American Colonization Society (ACS), a private association, formed and

acquired a piece of land on the south shore of western Africa. The first group of freed black

slaves arrived in 1822 to the settlement that would become christened Liberia in 1824 (Guannu

2009, 21).   ACS, through white agents, governed the settlement until independence was declared

in 1847. Upon arrival to West Africa, the repatriates referred to the local population as 'natives'

and 'country people', and themselves as 'settlers' or 'Americo-Liberians'; dividing themselves

distinctively as civilized and Christian. Americo-Liberians comprised the power elites and

excluded native Liberians from political membership until 1904 (Guannu 2009, 20).

The small minority of Americo-Liberians, which make up approximately only five

percent of the country's population, used state institutions to their own advantage (Omeje 2009,

6). Americo-Liberian elites' True Whig Party (TWP) ruled Liberia for 133 years, marginalizing

the majority population, comprised of native Liberians, by dominating all spheres of politics and society until the military coup of 1980. The history of Liberia, simply put, is one of political marginalization by a minority elite. On April 12, 1980 Master Sergeant Samual K. Doe led himself and sixteen other enlisted men of the Armed Forces of Liberia (AFL) into the Executive Mansion and killed President William R. Tolbert (Ahadzi 2009, 41). Doe's acquisition of power was an unmistakable signal of the end of Americo-Liberian minority rule for the majority of Liberians. The coup, however, only "momentarily dislodged the oligarchy" (Ahadzi 2009, 45) and was not the revolutionary change originally perceived by native Liberians.

Under Doe's dictatorship, marginalization continued; in the aftermath of the coup, Doe's People's Redemption Council (PRC) governed a "mirror image of the previous exclusions, triggering new repressions and exclusions" (Zartman 1995, 121). While Doe initially attempted to "ensure ethnic balance and redistribute the resources evenly", he quickly began to "fill most strategic positions with his Krahn ethnic group" (Ahadzi 2009, 45). These appointees were mostly new to the political landscape and subsequently lacked the experience needed to direct the regime or to develop policies that would benefit the masses (Aboagye 1999, 33). Marked by extra-judicial killings and corruption (Ahadzi 2009, 45, 47), Doe's regime became unfavorable not only by native and Americo-Liberians, but also by regional and international leaders.

In 1985, Doe and his men "bowed to pressure from within and without Liberia" and held general and presidential elections (Guannu 2009, 32). Electoral corruption was evident and widespread, leading to tensions and a strong challenge by opposition with the announcement by the Special Elections Commission of Doe's election to president (Liebenow 1987, 298; Guannu 2009, 33). President Doe continued to rule and oppress the Liberian people for another five years. In 1989, Charles Taylor led his armed group, the National Patriotic Front of Liberia

(NPFL), into Liberia from Cote d'Ivoire on December 24, commencing a guerilla war against

Doe (Guannu 2009, 33-34). The invasion, according to Taylor, was a "pro-democracy project

aimed at ousting Doe's autocratic regime in three months and subsequently, restore

constitutional rule, rejuvenate the economy and reconcile Liberians of various ethnic or political

persuasions" (Ahadzi 2009, 50). The war began between Taylor's NPFL and Doe's AFL, but

before long a triple threat emerged: under Prince Johnson's lead an off shoot of NPFL broke off

and formed the Independent National Patriotic Front of Liberia (INPFL). The removal of Doe

from power was accomplished by Prince Johnson's UNPFL on September 10, 1990 (Guannu

2009, 34). The fighting, however, did not cease.

Several peace conferences were held between 1990 and 1994 in Africa and Europe in an

attempt to come up with a resolution that would end the Liberian conflict. The Economic

Community of West African States (ECOWAS) played a large, and sometimes controversial role

throughout the conflict in an attempt to bring about peace in Liberia and the region (Ahadzi

2009; Alie 2009; Amoo 1993). Between 1994 and 1997, four interim factional governments

ruled the country, until Charles Taylor was elected President of Liberia in 1997. The elections

were closely monitored by international and local observers to ensure credibility, and were

ultimately declared "free and fair" by the UN, ECOWAS and international observers (Adhazi

2009, 70). Many believe the majority of Liberians voted for Taylor (75.3% of the votes) partly

because they believed that he would return to fighting if he did not win (Adhazi 2009, 70).

Peace, therefore, was the first, and only, item on the political agenda for the mass of Liberians.

As president, Taylor effectively had absolute political and military power and created a

post-war Liberia "marked with repression, political assassinations and acute discrimination

against former warlords" (Adhazi 2009, 71; Aboagye 1999). Before long Liberia fell back into

civil conflict between Taylor's regime and two rebel groups: Liberian United for Reconciliation and Democracy (LURD) and Movement for Democracy in Liberia (MODEL), both comprised mainly by Doe's AFL. Taylor's forces became severely depleted by 2003 from arm embargos on Liberia, and eventually Taylor agreed to attend an ECOWAS mediated peace talk in Accra, Ghana.   On 18 August 2003, the Government of Liberia, LURD, MODEL and 18 political parties, along with civil societies groups (Ahadzi 2009, 71), signed the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) that brought the official end of 15 years of civil war in Liberia. The key provisions of the agreement included: "(a) Ceasefire and ceasefire monitoring; (b) disarmament, demobilization, rehabilitation and reintegration of ex-combatants; (c) security sector reform; (d) promotion of human rights; (e) setting up a truth and reconciliation commission; (f) addressing humanitarian issues; (g) governance issues and (h) post-conflict reconstruction and rehabilitation" (Alie 2009, 90). As well, the National Transitional Government of Liberia (NTGL) was established to operate until a newly elected government could be elected and inaugurated in 2006. An ECOWAS peacekeeping mission in Liberia (ECOMIL) was generously welcomed in Monrovia after the war, and was gradually replaced by a special peacekeeping unit of the United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL), which has generally been able to keep the peace (Alie 2009, 90).

In October 2005, the UN ran Liberia's first post-war democratic elections that presented, along with all House of Representative and Senate seats up for grabs, a 22-person race for presidency that ultimately saw Liberia electing the first female African head of state, Madam Ellen Johnson Sirleaf. Educated in business from Madison and Harvard universities in the United States, Sirleaf was heavily backed by the international community during the elections.

She quickly committed herself to the issues affecting Liberian women, speaking to it during her

inaugural address:

> My Administration shall thus endeavor to give Liberian women prominence in all affairs of our country. My Administration shall empower Liberian women in all areas of our national life. We will support and increase the writ of laws that restore their dignities and deal drastically with crimes that dehumanize them. We will enforce without fear or favor the law against rape recently passed by the National Transitional Legislature. We shall encourage families to educate all children, particularly the girl child. We shall also try to provide economic programs that enable Liberian women to assume their proper place in our economic revitalization process. (Johnson Sirleaf 2006).

The election of Ellen Johnson Sirleaf is certainly significant for women in Liberia and

potentially for the advancement of women's equality in Africa. Liberia re-elected their female

president for a second term in October 2011 under a successful campaign theme of "Monkey still

working. Let Baboon wait small[3]." The message to her people during her electoral race was need

for a second term in order to implement plans and affect greater changes in the everyday lives of

Liberians. While she is met, like every political leader, by critics within and without Liberia, she

has effectively reduced the country's foreign debt to zero and increased gross domestic product

by 400 percent. Nevertheless, the country's unemployment rate rests at 80 per cent, with 90 per

cent of Liberian's living on less than $1.25 (US) a day (Williams 2012).

Gender relations in Liberia: past and present. Liberia has been cited to have "always

been a patriarchal country" (Jones-Demen 2009, 112), evidenced by men's domination of all

spheres of public and private life. Men have a privileged status in society, holding the majority

of political and community leadership positions and dominating the formal market. The history

of Liberia has been the record of male domination at every level of society. Before the civil

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[3] The Liberian phrase "wait small" means to be patient, show patience or wait patiently.

conflict began, opportunities for women and girls in Liberia were limited, especially in rural areas of the country (Jones-Demen 2009, 99). Women are often additionally impacted because of the existing "triple burden of reproductive, productive and community management work" expected of them (Bradshaw, Castelino & Diop 2013, 11). Liberian women perform both productive and reproductive roles in society, however their "access to equal pay for comparable work, family benefits, financial credit and the right to own and inherit property [are] limited by law and traditional patriarchal constraints" (Jones-Demen 2009, 99).

During the war women took on new and different roles. For many women, they became the sole income provider and head of the household while other women, additionally, took on leadership positions within the community. As well, at least 20 000 women and girls took up positions within the various armed-factions as combatants, administrators, camp workers, or bush wives (Jennings 2009, 482). Rape and sexual violence were used as tactics of war during the Liberian conflict; gender-based violence was widespread and pervasive around the country, and used to destruct the fabric of communities. A survey conducted in 2005 found that over 90 percent (of more than 1600 women participating in the survey) reported being subjected to some form of sexual abuse during the conflict (Hodson 2007, 7). The long duration and systematic use of violence during the civil wars have "contributed to a normalization of violence in many social and political domains" (Abramowitz & Moran 2012, 126). This normalization has made the cessation of armed conflict in Liberia non-concurrent with the end of violence against women.

Violence against Liberian women thus prevails in the aftermath of war, though "women are now [often] violated in the private space by people known to them" (Njoki Wamai 2011, 61). Intimate partner violence and rape by older relatives and community members has become common. Results from a small study conducted in Nimba County in northern Liberia found that

nearly three-quarters of the women surveyed reported experiencing abuse (physical, emotional,

economic or sexual) by their intimate partner, while 87% of women surveyed indicated that men

and women are not equally partners in a marriage, with men holding more power (Allen &

Devitt 2012, 3523). Findings from this study support the argument that "perceptions of the

legitimacy of men's violence to intimate partners are constituted through agreement with the

beliefs that men should be dominant in the household and in intimate relationships, and have the

right to enforce their dominance through physical chastisement" (Flood & Peases 2009, 128;

Allen & Devitt 2012, 3524). Respondents also reported several factors that make it difficult for

women to gain equality within a relationship and to stop intimate partner abuse (Allen & Devitt

2012), most notably, women's responsibility to care for children.

　　　Armed conflict, like that which Liberia experienced for fifteen years, can often result in

women's bodies becoming the "battleground, the tool and weapon of war and violence" (Pillay,

2001: 43).   The physical impacts of sexual abuse can be extensive, however, "the trauma of rape

may, for some, be even worse than bodily harm" (Diken & Lausten 2005, 113). Women face

significant societal stigmatization as victims of rape and sexual violence, which can be further

traumatic. Jone-Demen explains how there are strongly held perceptions of rape victims in

Liberia, many of which discourses blame the survivor for the event: "rape victims are often seen

to have brought the ordeal on themselves, either by dressing provocatively or by getting too close

to the rapist. If married, the experience of rape can threaten to break up the marriage" (Jones-

Demen 2009, 105-106).   The effects of the physical and sexual abuse, along with secondary

victimization, can be compounding and unbearable for women; many suffer in silence for fear of

ostracism and rejection from family, friends and community.   Speaking out about gender-based

violence is not common, especially in the more remote rural communities of Liberia.

According to the Ministry of Gender and Development, factors responsible for GBV in Liberia include "social, cultural, and traditional constructions that enable it to evolve and persist. Sexual violence, domestic violence, sexual exploitation and abuse, incest, early and forced marriage, wife inheritance, and FGM are the most prevalent forms of GBV in Liberia" (MoGD 2009, 12). Although GBV escalated during the conflict, violence continues as "rape and other sexual offences rank among the most common crimes reported nationwide" (MoGD 2009, 12). The Ministry of Gender and Development reported that "139 cases of GBV were reported as having occurred in Liberia in April 2011", although they highlight the likelihood of underreporting of GBV (MoGD 2011).

Will the thousands of women assaulted and abused during the war "ever get redress or some form of compensation for the evil meted against her"? (Jones-Demen 2009, 105). Further yet, will victims of gender based violence since the war receive any justice either? It is yet to be seen in Liberia. While blanket impunity for crimes against women during the war has been applied, women continue to be the targets of violence during the 'reconstruction' phase after the end of war, despite domestic laws and programs aimed at targeting this issue of violence against women. Let's examine Liberia's efforts to mainstream gender to decrease gender inequality within the country.

Liberia's attempt to mainstream gender post-conflict. Article XIII of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA), signed in Accra, Ghana in August 2003 between warring factions with the support of the international community provided the blue print of transitional justice mechanisms to be implemented in Liberia, including the Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration (DDR) program and the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC). Because these peace negotiations are deeply gendered by the overwhelming presence of

men (Bell & O'Rourke 2007, 942), the "conceptualization of how accountability, justice and human rights will be approached are also deeply gendered" (Borer 2009, 1172). The CPA was written up with little influence or participation from women, therefore the various needs of Liberian women have been largely ignored in the planning of Liberia's reconstruction. First, a study of the implementation and outcomes of the Liberian DDR program will be looked at, which will be followed by an exploration of the Liberian TRC through a gendered lens. Finally, the newly adopted legal and judicial mechanisms to address gender-based violence will be investigated.

The Liberian case is an interesting one to study because of its timely interaction with legislative advancements of women's rights and equality at the international level, namely the United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325. UNSCR 1325, as described earlier was signed in 2000 and "calls on member states to ensure that gender is mainstreamed throughout all conflict prevention and peacebuilding activities, and reaffirms women's right to be involved in decision-making and to access and take on leadership positions" (Olanisaking & Barnes 2011, 3). The case of Liberia, in fact, was the first UN peacekeeping mission (UNMIL) "with an explicit mandate to mainstream UNSCR 1325" (Njoki Wamai 2011, 52)**.** Liberia's DDR program in 2003 was one of the first of its kind to incorporate gender mainstreaming into its planning and implementation.

Liberia's DDR program. Disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration (DDR) programs have become common practice in post-conflict situations to "collect weapons, disperse armed groups and facilitate the transformation of former combatants into socially and economically productive citizens" (Jennings 2009, 476).   The need for DDR programs exists in the post-conflict setting due to the security threat posed by ex-combatants to resume armed

conflict at any time throughout the transition period. Underlying this securitization issue of ex-combatants and the need to disarm and demobilize this group, but more importantly reintegration, is the assumption that "idleness equates to instability among ex-combatants" (Jennings 2009, 478). Employment training for ex-combatants and providing them with the resources to transition into civilian life, socially and economically, is the main tool used to address the threat posed by idle ex-combatants. This threat, along with its redress, is highly gendered.

In the aftermath of war, women are rarely believed to be idle, as it is assumed women revert to their care-giving roles. This perceived role of women in the post-conflict setting has been homogenized and essentialized, similar to how women's participation in conflict also becomes homogenized as passive victims. MacKenzie explains that despite the recognition that women take on various roles, the "policy community has focused almost exclusively on women and girl's victimization while largely ignoring any active role they many have played" (2009, 246). Ignoring female combatants and the security risk they also pose allows for reintegration programs to place a vastly unequal focus on men. Failing to acknowledge the various roles women play during and after conflict barricades women's inclusion in post-conflict DDR programs. UNICEF points out "DDR programmes have consistently failed to attract female combatants" (2005), the case was no different in Liberia.

Although the Disarmament, Demobilization, Rehabilitation and Reintegration (DDR) program in Liberia attempted to implement a gender perspective to the demobilization and reintegration processes, it "lacked a comprehensive program to address [women's] specific needs" (Njoki Wamai 2011, 54). Amnesty International estimates that thirty to forty percent of the fighting forces were made up of women and girls. Despite providing special arrangements

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for female combatants, such as separate interim care centers in the cantonment sites, the

implementation of other gender specific needs were not ensured due to a lack of "high level

political support … to involve women and former combatant groups in the planning and

implementation" (Amnesty International 2009). Some women had difficulty accessing the

disarmament and demobilizing phases because they could not 'prove' their active role during the

war, or they feared stigmatization for being associated with the fighting forces. This denied many

women ex-combatants of the benefits received by male fighters.

There is some evidence, however limited, of an attempt to place greater focus on the

needs of women and girls in the planning of the DDR program in Liberia. During the

disarmament and demobilization phases, women were largely treated as men, with two

exceptions: separate quarters were provided at cantonment sites, and some specific gender

projects were undertaken (UNDP 2006). In the separate care centers for women and girls,

programs surrounding sexually based gender violence were emphasized, which included:

confidential interviews conducted to screen for rape victims, treatment of STIs and infections,

providing support and care for SGBV victims, reproductive health services, and increasing

awareness and education of gender based violence (UNDPL 2004, 29). At one demobilization

care center for women during the DDR program, about 73% of women and girls reported

experiencing sexual assault during the war (UNDPL 2004, 29).

Women faced barriers in accessing the DDR programs, especially the reintegration phase

that became highly securitized in Liberia (Jennings 2009, 488). There was no lead agency to

cater for the needs of women "beyond the DD phase and as such lacked adequate and

differentiated reintegration assistance" (UNDP 2006, 2). Greater emphasis was placed on the

reintegration of men due to the idle = instability assumption, equating security with the

employment of men and marginalizing women further. The rehabilitation and reintegration

phase included opportunities of formal education, vocational training and apprenticeships (Jaye

2009, 3), however women were excluded from formal sector programs and were offered little

assistance with the informal sector.

In general, the disarmament and demobilization processes were successful in Liberia,

disarming and disbanding 103,000 participants of the war. Of this number, approximately

90,000 ex-combatants participated in the rehabilitation and reintegration phase (Jaye 2009, 2).

While a study in 2006 found that 94 percent of ex-fighters reported no problems in being

accepted back into their communities (Pugel 2007, 5), a study in 2007 by UNMIL and USAID

found that the majority of ex-combatants were still un-employed (originally cited by Jaye 2009,

4). The rehabilitation and reintegration programs have proven less successful – for those who

completed the program, and those that were not able to access the programs, especially women.

While the security threat of ex-combatants has been reduced (removal of arms and warring

factions), unemployment has become a serious issue in the country.

Liberian truth and reconciliation commission. The CPA also laid the foundations for a

Truth and Reconciliation Commission to uncover the history, causes, and political and economic

crimes that had almost completely destroyed the country. The TRC was inaugurated by President

Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf, in 2006, with the purpose of ensuring prosecution for those facing crimes

against humanity "no matter when, where, or how" (Johnson-Sirleaf 2006). As part of the

transitional justice process in Liberia, the TRC was enacted with the purpose "to establish an

independent and accurate record of rights violations and abuses occasioned by the conflict and

set the basis for justice and reconciliation that will foster national repentance, strike the delicate

balance between accountability and forgiveness in order to heal the land and unite the people of

Liberia" (Verdier 2006). Three years later, after more than 20,000 statements had been

collected, the Commission released its Final Report in 2009. This contentious report "mixes the

innocent with the guilty and exudes a moral confusion worthy of contempt" (Steinberg 2009,

143). By investigating the process of the implementation of this mechanism of transitional

justice and its impacts on the Liberian society, insight to its strengths and weaknesses, according

to its mandate and goals, have become apparent.

The Final Report of the TRC, a nearly 400-page document circulated within the country,

provided a methodological review, findings and many recommendations. In a chapter of the

TRCs 'Determinations', it determines that "the TRC Act provides that all TRC recommendations

are authoritative, binding and have the weight of law serving as quasi-judicial directives that

must be implemented by the Government of Liberia and the National Legislature" (TRC 2009,

332). This is critical, because the Liberian government has yet to implement the majority of the

recommendations of the Final Report. Another significant determination of the TRC is "that

reconciliation cannot be fully achieved without justice" (TRC 2009, 339). Therefore, the TRC

recommends the establishment of an 'Extraordinary Criminal Court for Liberia' "to try all

persons recommended by the TRC for the commission of gross human rights violations

including violations of international humanitarian law, international human rights law, war

crimes and economic crimes" (TRC 2009, 349) and listed 116 persons recommended.

The commission also recommends certain individuals "who committed egregious

violations against the generality of the population but such crimes are lesser than 'gross

violations' … be prosecuted under jurisdiction of appropriate domestic courts" (TRC 2009, 356),

including a list of 44 individuals. A second, much shorter list of 14 persons were recommended

for domestic prosecution of sexual violence crimes against women. While this could be heralded

as a success for the recognition for the rights of women, it is widely known that more than 14 persons were responsible for gender based violations during the war.

Two other lists of names for recommendations were included, becoming the topic of discussion across the entire country. A list of 49 individuals recommended for public sanctions, and to be barred from public office for 30 years for providing financial or other support to warring factions. This list includes the sitting president Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf. Second, a list of 39 individuals (perpetrators) *not* recommended for prosecution, because "they cooperated with the TRC process, admitted to the crimes committed and spoke truthfully before the Commission and expressed remorse for their prior actions during the war" (TRC 2009, 353). Included in this list is notorious warlord Joshua Blahyi (known as 'General Butt Naked' during the war) who "came to the TRC to boast of the 20,000 people he had murdered" during the war (Steinberg 2009, 142). These two recommendations by the commission became very controversial from the beginning.

Section 18.5 of the Final Report, 'Recommendations Related To Women's Rights, Protection and Empowerment', outlined twelve recommendations. Some of which highlighted the need to abolish "all forms of discrimination and violence against women" and that "the rehabilitation of victims of sexual violence be a priority" (TRC 2009, 386). One very important recommendation for the advancement of gender equality was included:

> The TRC recommends that any reparation and post-conflict assistance to women and girls must take into consideration that the violations against them were of all kinds and categories such that the impact goes far beyond their physical experiences which will require a sustained reparation programme over a period of time that will address women inequity, and their social, economic, cultural and political rights (TRC 2009, 386).

This is a very critical recommendation that highlights the commission's recognition of the extent of violence that women face, and that it goes beyond physical abuse. This is an important gain for the women of Liberia and for gender equality in the transitional justice field.

The commission presented the government and the country with many recommendations (many of which have been discussed above) that, if implemented, would lay the foundations for reconciliation, peace, and justice, as well as increased attention to the rights of women. At the surface, the recommendations purposed by the commission seem to incorporate gender well, and assert the need for justice and accountability of perpetrators. By focusing on holding perpetrators accountable for gender-based sexual violence, the commission attempted to address the ever-increasing rates of violence against women in the country since the war.

Unfortunately, the inconsistent nature of the recommendations (referring to the list of public office sanctions and those recommended to not be prosecuted) surrounding President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf and ex-warlord Joshua Blahyi, undermine the strength of the TRC. The severely flawed Final Report was neither rigorous nor thorough, neglecting to establish criteria to determine who should and who should not be recommended for prosecution (Steinberg 2009, 141), making these lists seem arbitrary. In fact, the TRC Act forbade amnesty to any one guilty of international human rights violations or war crimes (TRC Act 2005, Article VII, Section 26). How then, does a man who bragged of killing 20,000 and committing gross human rights violations receive a recommendation of amnesty?

One of the most contentious recommendations surrounds the sitting President named to the list of persons recommended to be barred from office for providing economic funds of $10,000 to war-lord Charles Taylor at the beginning of the war. During the hearings of the TRC, President Sirleaf admitted to and apologized to the nation for this 'misjudgment' in 1990

(Steinberg 2009, 141). This order of lustration against the sitting President has proved to be costly for Liberia, as Sirleaf, and the majority of the political elite, have thus far ensured none of the report's contentious proposals become law. In 2010, Sirleaf announced that she would seek a second term in office (and was re-elected in October 2011), signaling she has no intention of adhering to the TRC recommendations. This, in turn, effectively provides amnesty for all others, as it will be difficult to enforce any other set of recommendations when the President herself failed to uphold those pertinent to herself.

Consequently, "no measureable or appreciable attempts have been made to reconcile the country as per the TRC findings and recommendations" (Pajibo 2012, 307). No Liberian has been held to account, allowing Liberia's culture of impunity to reign, permitting those 'who bear the greatest responsibility' to become powerful political elites in the aftermath of the war. However flawed and inconsistent the recommendations within the Final Report, this document is embraced by many ordinary Liberians (Steinberg 2009, 136). It may in fact "come to be cherished by future generations for the fact that it named those who got away with mass murder" (Steinberg 2009, 136).

Domestic reforms. In the last ten years, since the peace accords were signed to end the war, the impacts of gender based violence has continued to increase in Liberia. Violence against women and girls is the most widely reported violent crime in Liberia, estimated to effect more than 400,000 Liberian women and girls (Republic of Liberia 2007, 230). Perhaps most concerning is the average age of victims, as one rape counselor working at a clinic in the capital city, Monrovia, observed that "most rape cases she comes across involve girls and young women between five and seventeen years old" (LAVA 2012, 8). Despite more women and children reporting gender-based violence and abuse few perpetrators have been prosecuted.

Achieving redress for violence against women has been very difficult in Liberia. In 1898 the Liberian Supreme Court recognized rape, however it was very difficult to define and prove. Furthermore, Liberia has a dual legal system, with statutory law and customary law running in parallel (Jones-Demen 2009, 103). Approximately 80 percent of Liberians use customary law to settle disputes, including cases of rape. In this informal system, rape is vaguely defined and cases are often settled (sometimes with money) between community members (perpetrator and victim) in order to "protect the reputations of both parties (Kalwinski 2007, 145). During the war, the legal structures (formal and informal) were often unable to settle rape cases.

In 2005, the Rape Amendment Act (RAA) was passed, which widened the definition of rape to cover penetration with any foreign object, and also raised the age of a child to international standard of 18 years. This law also increased the penalty for gang rape, with up to a maximum sentence of life imprisonment, and not giving the accused the opportunity to leave pre-trial detention for bail before his/her day in court (Rape Amendment Act, 2005). The RAA is, on paper, a progressive law in Liberia, however it takes more than words to prosecute perpetrators of sexual violence.

Enforcement of this new rape law has proven difficult in Liberia for various reasons. Rape prosecution requires "effective police forces, operating judicial institutions, and the additional infrastructure of functioning and accessible health clinics" (Kuipers Cummings 2011, 237). Police and judicial reforms take time, and so does the rebuilding of health clinics and hospitals, but "victims cannot wait; they need access to the law during reconstruction" (Kalwinski 2007, 146). Raising awareness and access to accurate information to the public, police, judiciary and medical staff is essential in reducing the barriers to justice during the transition phase.   Victims need to know how and where to access health care and legal services,

and the current discourses that marginalize and blame victims need to change in order to see a

change in gender based violence within communities. Due to the high use of customary law in

Liberia, reforms at the community level must also follow the lead of the RAA. Including

restorative justice programs at the community level, which "build upon the leadership and

involvement of local actors, and … offer alternatives to victims who are not appropriately served

by the courts" (Kuipers Cummings 2011, 248). The success of the RAA rests in its

implementation, but must also rely on community level initiatives to create culturally embedded

differences.

     Along with the Rape Amendment Act, Liberia also established a National Action Plan

(NAP) on Violence Against Women in 2009.   Barnes notes "the creation of NAPs offers a

potentially valuable tool for ensuring accountability of implementation by national governments"

however there are limits to these documents as implementation and monitoring mechanisms vary

widely (2011, 25). Liberia also has a unit devoted to gender based violence within the Ministry

of Gender and Development that produces monthly and yearly GBV reports.   Liberia has taken

steps since the end of the civil wars to demonstrate their commitment to addressing the pervasive

GBV within the country, however violence against women and children continues unabated ten

years later.

     Lessons to take away from the case of Liberia. There are many notable advances for

the support of women and issues around gender based violence that Liberia has taken in its

decade of peace. There are, though, more prominent shortcomings that can be highlighted in this

Liberian case study.   Most notably is the disconnect between the promises and plans made on

paper and the lived realities of Liberians. Rates of GBV continue to be alarmingly high despite

international and domestic judicial reforms (Abramowitz & Moran 2012, 126). These tools have

thus far demonstrated to be less progressive when implemented at the local level than originally

imagined among international policy makers. The lack of justice and the promotion of impunity

within society can be seen as one reason for the country's inability to curb GBV. As well,

Liberian men "in general seem to have reverted to their patriarchal tradition in order to claim

their masculinity" (Jones-Demen 2009, 115).

Some argue that lack of advances at the local level is due to UNMIL's failure to

"recognize and support the work being carried out by local women's initiatives prior to its

arrival, resulting in a failure to capitalize on local women's agency in implementing the

resolution" (Njoki Wamai 2011, 60). UNMIL was overstretched and under resourced throughout

the DDR process and its other peacekeeping initiatives. Many problems faced by UNMIL

"could [have been] greatly alleviated by integrating local capacities" (Njoki Wamai 2011, 61).

Failure to implement the many recommendations of the TRC has also underscored Liberia's

attempt to redress past violations and create a culture of human rights that includes the

promotion and defense of the rights of women.

Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, in a UN document on the impact of armed conflict on women and

women's role in peace building, believes peace will be elusive "unless those responsible for

crimes under international laws are held criminally responsible, the truth is established and the

victims obtain full reparations, or guarantee that similar crimes will not happen in the future"

(Jones-Demen 2009, 112; Rehn and Johnson Sirleaf, 2002). While the president of Liberia has

committed herself and her government to protecting women and promoting their advancement, it

remains uncertain if the election of one woman can bring about significant change to the gender

relations within country. Liberia remains entrenched in patriarchy despite the election of a

women to lead the country. Makdisi questions how women who rise to the top and achieve some

status, can often become "as insufferably patriarchal as any man" (2008, 104). She goes on to

argue that powerful women have "merely lent their faces to disguise the true picture of a brutally

oppressive world system, to symbolize the fictional progress of democratic human rights" and

women's rights at large (Makdisi 2008, 106-107). Can we say this about the first elected female

president of Africa? Or should we give credit to Johnson Sirleaf for her efforts, while

acknowledging the shortcomings inherent in the system that perpetuates gender inequality? The

next chapter will go into further detail surrounding the power relations deeply embedded within

the system, demonstrative of feminist's inability to make substantial gains in the field of gender-

violence.

Chapter 3: Feminist and Queer Theories in the Post-Conflict Transitional Process

Various theoretical frameworks have offered alternative models to making sense of complex dynamics. Queer theory and post-structural feminist theories offer substitute ways to conceptualize power and violence. This chapter will explore the use of these theories regarding the topic of post-war gender violence. First, an in-depth analysis of queer theories and post-modern feminisms, and how these theories conceptualize gender and gendered violence will be explored. How these topics relate to the post-conflict transitional period has already been established, however further analysis of why queer and feminist theories are to be beneficial in these processes will be presented in this chapter by referring back to the Liberian case.

As a way to decrease gender inequality and its many forms of violence, the intersections of feminist and queer theory can be used in the aftermath of conflict to steer gender relations in a non-dominant, non-dichotomous and non- hierarchical form. Now that the interactions between gender inequality and gender-based violence in the post-conflict transitional period of Liberia have been explored, this chapters aims to offer and advocate the use of an alternative framework to the re-establishment of gender relations, which includes queer and feminist theories in order to refrain from re-establishing the unequal gender relations of the past.

Queer theory aims to destabilize all institutionalized hierarchies and oppressions that work collaboratively to marginalize the majority of the world's citizens. By recognizing that gender is fluid, queer theorists argue for the gender binary to be dismantled, "to separate the power dynamics attached to gender, in that masculinity often means domination, and femininity, subordination" (Sallydarity 2012, 52-53). Recognizing that "hierarchy relies on separation" and that opposites depend on each other to exist allows us to observe how oppression is rooted in the structures of heteropatriarchy, white supremacy and capitalism (Heckert 2012, 64). "The entire

capitalist patriarchal white supremacy that structures our world unequally … indeed preys on

unequal relations of power" (Jeppesen 2012, 148). By deconstructing the current paradigms that

systematically and systemically oppress women through homogenous and essentialist ideals,

gender relations can be steered in the transitional phase in order to promote gender equality in a

non-binary way and increase respect of human rights for all citizens of states emerging from

conflict.

     I, along with many feminists (see: Enloe, 2005; Meintjes , Turshen, Pillay 2001;

Puechguibal, 2010; Butler, 1990, Ludwig 2011; Shepherd, 2008; etc.), argue that liberal

feminism, characterized largely through its focus on 'gender mainstreaming', is too technocratic

to manifest substantial change in relations and conceptualization of gender, along with its other

aims. In order to transform structural gender inequality within society, gender mainstreaming

must go beyond quotas and 'adding' women. It is "not enough to change the identity of the

players in the game, it is also necessary to change the rules of the game" (Porter and Sweetman

2005, 6). While there have been significant achievements in integrating 'gender' into policy,

evidenced through "most international development institutions hav[ing] put in place gender

mainstreaming policies" (Moser and Moser 2005, 15), translating policy into reality remains

difficult. As Suzanne Clisby states "unless gender mainstreaming is genuinely translated from

rhetoric to reality, there is a danger that it becomes little more than fashionable semantics co-

opted by politicians and policy makers, and that women will actually lose out in the longer term"

(2005, 23). Clisby's prediction rings true today when evaluating the case of Liberia.

     Even 'successful' mainstreaming of gender within institutionalized policy structures can

remain artificial if deep-seated cultural values and personal relationships remain unchanged.

Working from the theories of power and sexuality of Michael Foucault, queer theory aims to

acknowledge and contest the power inherent in the 'normalization' of coherence of gender and sexuality in Western society.

Theories of Power. Theories of power and dominance have been widely used within feminist and gender theories. Power is an essential aspect of social relation theories because "power hides the fact that organizations are gendered at very deep levels" (Rao & Kelleher 2005, 64). In order to exercise power, "there must be mechanisms in place to keep it going, to keep social tensions from tearing the domination apart" (Kirsch 2000, 41). The mechanisms alluded to here are produced and maintained through patriarchy. "A society is patriarchal to the degree that it promotes male privilege by being *male dominated, male identified, and male centered*" (Johnson 2005, 5). Johnson (2005) goes on to note, "an inevitable consequence of patriarchy is the oppression of women" (15) because of its male-centered characteristic. If, as I have argued a case for, the aim is to end the oppression of women, specifically the re-creation of gender inequality in post-conflict settings, then patriarchy itself must be the target of attack.

The liberal model of feminism, which has been employed in mainstream discourse, seeks "equality for women through reforms to *existing* institutional structures" (Beasley 2005, 42 emphasis orginal). As it has been stated above, liberal feminism is often criticized for upholding the mechanisms of model liberal, capitalist societies, which has largely proven limited in its ability to eliminate the oppression of women. This is largely due to patriarchy's deep entanglement within the structural systems of oppression. If the social, political, and economic systems are all patriarchal in nature, oppression (based on sex, gender, race, or class) will undoubtedly remain so long as patriarchy itself dominates.

As Johnson notes, "like all social systems, patriarchy is difficult to change because it is complex and its roots run deep" (2005, 18). Antonio Gramsci developed the concept of

hegemony to express how power is comprised of knowledge and ideas. Hegemony is maintained

through consent of the people (not through, or in addition to, direct power) by way of

concessions. It is no easy task to dismantle hegemonic forms of oppression, because "[w]hen

privilege and oppression are woven into the fabric of everyday life, we don't need to go out of

our way to be overtly oppressive for a system of privilege to produce oppressive consequences"

(Johnson 2005, 33). While Gramsci was mainly speaking to economic power relations between

the bourgeoisie and the proletariat, his concept of hegemony can, and has been, used to further

understand other dynamics of power, namely racism and sexism. Violence based on gender is a

form of hegemonic power that must be exposed and understood if this violence is to end. Queer

and post-colonial feminist theories work from Foucault's and Gramsci's theories of power and

hegemony to understand how gender-based violence is maintained. "theories of hegemony offer

the potential to irritate the dualisms between the essentialist subject positions of dominator and

dominated and of victim and perpetrator. This enables us to examine the various social positions

from where consent to and complicity in relations of domination are issued." (Mar Casto Varelo

et al. 2001, 7)

Post-colonial feminist and queer theory. Post-modern feminists and queer theorists

critique liberal feminist ideas of gender oppression and inequality by arguing an "implicit

perpetuation of a normative heterosexuality" (Ingraham 1996, 176). Ingraham goes on to

explain:

> feminist theories of gender which posit males and females, masculine
> and feminine, heterosexual and homosexual as opposites participate in
> dominant ways of thinking which organize all areas of difference as
> hierarchical and oppositional binaries. To produce theories of gender
> which bracket off heterosexuality as a social organizing structure is to
> "reinforce the current order and its values" by participating in the
> production of "acceptable" knowledges or ideologies (1996, 176-177).

The concepts of heteronormativity and hegemony, and their interplay with each other and power and oppression, offer new possibilities for political analysis from a queer perspective. By "political" I am referring here to "the *processes, regimes* or *logics* of language, knowledge and power inherent in doing politics" (Varela, Dhawan & Engel 2011, 1 emphasis original).

Feminist scholarship has argued that gender may be the most dichotomous and long-standing binary in our discourse. The dichotomy of gender codes masculine qualities (reason, agency, control, objectivity, etc) as "oppositional and more highly valued than" feminine qualities (emotion, passivity, uncertainty, subjectivity, etc) (Peterson, 2007: 2). Naturalizing the inferiority of the feminine plays a powerful role in constructing and legitimizing the gendered hierarchy, while the devalorization of femininity normalizes and legitimizes the "marginalization, subordination, and exploitation of feminized persons" (Peterson, 2007: 3),

As a corner stone of queer theory, Judith Butler's *Gender Trouble* (1990) laid the foundations for understanding heterosexuality and the 'heterosexual matrix' as a hegemonic force by radically rethinking the categories of gender and power. Butler's understanding of heterosexuality as a "grid of cultural intelligibility through which bodies, genders and desires are naturalized" (1990, 151) has incited new forms of politics beyond identities. Earlier feminist movements used identity politics, namely the categorization of "women", to assemble and unify in opposition to "men".

Identity politics are a politics organized around and based upon certain characteristics individuals share with one another (Lloyd 2005, 36). Lloyd explains how "identity politics thus operates, according to 'identarian' logic, where unity is sought beneath differences. It is in this common nature or set of experiences that the seeds of a common polity lie: 'we have an identity and *therefore* a politics' (2005, 37). Feminism, therefore, is an identity politics. Based on the

assumed shared characteristics or experiences of all women, "feminist political demands from

this viewpoint thus express either women's interests or inherent feminine values" (Lloyd 2005,

37). Liberal feminists have been scrutinized for universalizing the 'white, middle class woman'

as the every-women, failing to be an inclusive politics for the majority of women.

Queer theorist, Judith Butler, (1990 & 1993) loathes the use of identity politics in relation

to gender and sexuality. Butler believes "we must also subject our very categories to critical

scrutiny (2004, 38). In *Gender Trouble* (1990), Judith Butler proposed her theory of gender

performativity. Stable gender identities do not exist within Butler's theory, alternatively the

concept of gender is "a stylized repetition of acts" (1990, X). Gender is, therefore, "real only to

the extent that it is performed" (Butler 1990, X). Butler's theory had an extraordinary impact on

theories of gender and feminist theories. Conceptualizations of gender were maintained within a

rigid binary prior to Butler's contribution. According to this previous norm, "gender is supposed

to be complementary and coherent: gender is only thinkable, perceivable and liveable in a binary

form" (Butler 1990, 22). Not only is this conceptualization of gender constricting in that it

allows for only a binary construction, but it is also hierarchical. This Western, modern binary

model of gender is "based on a construction that associates masculinity with the universal and

femininity with the deviant other. For this reason, the binary construction of gender is deeply

interwoven with the hierarchy of gender" (Ludwig 2011, 45).

Butler's theory of gender performativity refutes first and second wave feminist theories

of gender built on a foundation of identity politics. According to Butler, "the insistence upon the

coherence and unity of the category of women has effectively refused the multiplicity of cultural,

social, and political intersections in which the concrete array of 'women' are constructed" (1990,

19-20). Not only does this model negate difference, it also "offers little hope of changing

patriarchy because patriarchy is more than how people think, feel and behave" (Johnson 2005, 37).   Patriarchy situates men in a hierarchical relation to women and to each other based on "historical forms of social differentiation such as heterosexuality" (Ingraham 1996, 171). Patriarchy thus naturalizes this gender hierarchy, and along with it, rape and violence.

Gender oppression, here, is understood as rooted in hegemony and heteronormativity, both maintained through patriarchal structures of power. Heteronormativity is a "regime that organizes sex, gender and sexuality in order to match heterosexual norms. It denotes a rigid sexual binary of bodily morphology that is supported by gender and sexual identities" (Mar Casto Varelo et al. 2011, 11).   By way of privileging heterosexuality the gender binary is preserved through the ideal 'feminine' and 'masculine' genders.   Ludwig argues "heteronormativy allows us to complicate our analysis of power as an effect of hegemonic struggles through incorporating heterogeneous social relations"(Mar Casto Varelo et al. 2011, 17).   She suggests the term 'heteronormative hegemony' to capture the dynamic intersection of both concepts.   Ludwig defines the term as a power formation that is heteronormative since it constitutes the binary division of sex as a criterion for the constitution of intelligible subjects. These effects of power are naturalized through the constitution of femininity and masculinity as the only intelligible forms of subjects" (2011, 53).   Not only does heteronormative hegemony operate throughout political structures, but it is also deeply rooted in civil society and everyday social practices.

Hegemonic world views "frame the sex binary and heterosexuality as naturally given", which legitimizes heteronormative violence "through being framed as universally valid and naturalized" (Ludwig 2011, 57).   Gender based violence, thus, is a consequence of heteronormative hegemony maintained through patriarchal structures.   Gender violence, as

discussed earlier, tends to increase in the aftermath of war. This can be attributed to the recreation of strict gender roles based on rigid concepts gender 'norms'. While recent policy mechanisms aim to end this trend, we have seen with the case of Liberia that these tools (UNSCR 1325 and its decedents) have not succeeded in their stated goals.

   Evaluating Resolution 1325. Laura Shepherd, in her book *Gender, Violence and Security* (2008), evaluates UNSC Resolution 1325 from a queer perspective. As I have explained in Chapter 1, this Resolution is the cornerstone policy mechanism for incorporating gender and advocates for gender mainstreaming in all peacebuilding initiatives in the post-conflict phase. UNSCR 1325, organized around "liberal concepts of international security and gender violence … cannot deliver the radical reforms [it] purports to seek" (Shepherd 2008, 7). Shepherd argues, "having articulated a dichotomous, broadly essentialist, narrative of gender, the Reports can only articulate a particular understanding of gendered violence" (2008, 92-93). This understanding is essentialist and has proven ill-effective in abating gender violence in the aftermath of war.

   Resolution 1325 is built upon the notion that women are *essentially* more peaceful and therefore their formal inclusion in formal peace building and post-conflict reconstruction is necessary and will prove advantageous. Resolution 1325 does not, however, view this essentialist representation of women problematic. Nor do these very important set of policy documents view their homogenous grouping of women as vulnerable as unproblematic. Linking women based on their vulnerability to violence strips them of their agency. 'Women-in-need-of-protection' becomes the "centralized signifier around which other articulations of femininity are articulated" (Shepherd 2008, 119-120).

In the case of Liberia, we can see that the essentialist discourse of key policy mechanisms failed to create non-hierarchical relations of gender. Sexual violence is multidimensional and multifaceted; and failure to acknowledge the multitude of intersections that ultimately result in sexualized violence leads to a failure in addressing the causes themselves. Liberal feminism, in its essentialist and homogenizing discourse, addresses only surface level issues of gender and violence and is not able to effect deep seated patriarchal values and idea(l)s.

Conclusions

I agree with many feminists and queer theorists (Enloe, 2005; Meintjes , Turshen, Pillay 2001; Puechguibal, 2010; Butler, 1990, Ludwig 2011; Shepherd, 2008, etc.) who argue that the root cause of gender-based violence in the post-conflict setting is due to the gendered power relations between men and women. The patriarchal nature of society allows men to use and abuse their power (Pillay 2001, 39) through economic, political, and social avenues. Women are typically viewed as property in patriarchal societies and are valued by their productive and reproductive labour (Meintjes, Pillay & Turshen 2001, 12). This allows for women's bodies to become the "battleground, the tool and weapon of war and violence" (Pillay 2001, 43).

The inclusion of liberal feminism in the liberal peacebuilding model through the adoption of UNSCR 1325 overlooks the complexities of the link between power and gender (Hudson 2012, 448) and does not challenge the structural inequalities rooted in patriarchy. Patriarchy is a principle cause of both violent societal conflicts and the "international community's frequent failures in providing long-term resolutions to those violent conflicts" (Enloe 2005, 281). It can be seen that a lack of political will and commitment, due to heteronormative hegemony, to implement Resolution 1325 has resulted in the ineffective role of dismantling the gender hierarchy that marginalizes women in multiple ways. The incorporation of women in the transitional process has not proved to be advantageous for women, as new forms and increased prevalence of violence become challenges in the aftermath of war.

Despite attempts to address the needs of women, as demonstrated through the Liberian case, post-war reconstruction, rooted in patriarchy, tends to ignore marginalizes the multiple needs of women (Meintjes et al 2001; Pankhurst 2011, 33). The discourse marginalizes women's needs in the post-war context as gender issues become sidelined in the 'high politics'

of peace operations, equating them as 'soft issues' that can be addressed 'later' (Puechguibal 2010, 178-179). By equating gender issues with women's issues, they are seen to be inconsequential at the time of peace negotiations, with more pressing issues to be addressed. By sidelining gender issues during the peace talks, and subsequent transitional justice mechanisms, to be dealt with at a later time, the patriarchal structure persists. As Enloe argues, "'Later' is a patriarchal time zone" (2004, 215). Unfortunately, later is too late to attempt to mix in a gender perspective into the restructuring of a country.

The challenges of implementing a truly gendered post-war restructuring framework lay in the patriarchal roots of the model attempting to be implemented. Enloe has highlighted how international organizations, such as the UN, perpetuate a gendered power hierarchy (Cohn & Enloe 2003, 1991). The common post-war pattern has been the re-creation of patriarchal dominance in new forms (Meintjes, Pillay & Turshen 2001, 18).   Instead of being an opening for gender equality to flourish, the transitional justice model currently serves as a space to reestablish patriarchy and sustain the binary hierarchy of gender.

The effects of unequal relations between men and women allow for gender based sexual violence to occur across the globe at alarming rates, especially during times of conflict and transitional periods after war.   Ideally, the window of opportunity to create equal societies would be seized and optimized. The patriarchal and uneven political, economic and social structures would be completely dismantled and rebuilt in equitable fashion. However, it is unrealistic to believe that the dominant structures and corresponding discourses would easily collapse. It has also been shown, through the example of UNSCR 1325, that despite policy level advances for 'women's rights', little has been transformed for women. It is extremely difficult to affect change by working within the current patriarchal structures; changing the priorities, the

discourse, and the practice of peacebuilding and transitional justice in ways that can create real gender equality gains on the ground is no small task.

I believe that queer theory and post-modern feminism provide the necessary theory and tools to create a real difference.   Patriarchy must be critiqued as a regime of exploitation on many levels, which legitimizes and justifies the production of social hierarchies and violence based on those orderings. The goal must be to queer heteronormative spaces and to expose the unnaturalness of the "natural" (produced by heteronormative hegemony), because hegemony is only powerful insomuch that the majority accepts and adopts it in their everyday lives. Exposure of these regimes will serve as a way to dismantle the hegemonic binary of gender. A critical question surrounding this paradigm concerns how to refrain from creating new hegemonic discourses? Or how do queer spaces remain non-hegemonic? These are questions continually debated within the fields of social science, and ones for which I cannot propose solutions. Here I have been concerned with the current, insufficient model of 'gendering' the reconstruction phase of post-conflict scenarios.   Liberia has provided a case in which the current model, based on liberal notions of violence, gender and international security, has not proved advantageous or successful in its aims to radically reform concepts of gender to create gender equality. Therefore, I call for the incorporation of post-structural feminist and queer theories to highlight the many dynamics of discursive power imbedded in international security policies regarding gender-based violence.

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