



Changing Character of Conflict Platform

Understanding, Tracing, and Forecasting Change across Time, Space, and Cultures

Gendering Borderlands: A Research Agenda

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In October 2000, the UN Security Council unanimously adopted the landmark resolution 1325, inaugurating its agenda on Women, Peace and Security (WPS). Since then, the Council has adopted eight subsequent sister [resolutions](#) and 79 Member States have developed National Action Plans providing institutional mechanisms to promote the implementation of its provisions at a country level. At its core, the WPS agenda recognises that armed conflict is gendered and impacts on women, men, boys, and girls differently. In practical terms, it mandates women's formal and meaningful participation in peace processes, conflict resolution, peacekeeping and decision-making, as well as mandating their protection from sexual violence in conflict. To maximise the reach of the agenda and its constituent resolutions beyond the confines of the Council and to women's rights activists globally, UNSCR 1325 has

been translated in over 100 languages. Representing an important tool for policy, practice and peace activism, the agenda is also the centre point of a continually expanding body of scholarship. Yet, while the agenda speaks to non-state stakeholders, it remains a fundamentally state-centric agenda, restricting our understanding of its reach and potential across conflict hubs and in "settings of organised violence" (Idler 2018; Idler & Tkacova 2019) in cross-border areas. In effect, research on dynamic conflicts in borderlands and on gender, peace and security have evolved largely in parallel, rarely speaking to each other. To redress this gap, this Gendering Borderlands brief outlines what a 'gendered' and 'bordered' research agenda might look like, notably to develop more textured understandings of peace and security at the peripheries of conflict-affected states.

Gendering Borderlands: A three-pronged research agenda

Central to a gendered approach to conflict **borderlands is enhancing our understanding of the complex, quotidian realities in and across state margins.** Recognising that differently situated women, men, boys and girls experience everyday life, opportunities, and insecurities in borderland settings differently, permits us to **better understand how different gendered norms, expectations, and grievances contribute to conflict dynamics.** Indeed, it offers an understanding of gendered patterns of **conflict drivers, of gendered mobilities** across settings of organised violence, and **gendered mechanisms towards building peace.** Such a research endeavour demands an inclusive, relational, and intersectional approach to gender. At its core, 'gender' refers to "the ways in which people are socially, culturally and historically categorised as 'girls' and 'boys', 'women' and 'men', and

the effect this has on their everyday lives" (Saferworld 2019). It is also well-established **that gender identities interact with a host of other social and identity markers,** including age, race, socio-economic status and livelihood, religion, ethnicity, sexuality, marital status, ability, etc. These intersecting identities can also fundamentally shape life, including in conflict-affected borderlands (e.g. Conciliation Resources 2018: 17). This research agenda therefore strives beyond a traditional 'add women and stir' approach to gender analysis (El Bushra 2018). **Instead, it embraces one that not only integrates men and masculinities, but consistently interrogates which women, which men, why and with what effect throughout its explorations of conflict drivers and dynamics, mobilities, and opportunities for peace.**

1 - Gendering Conflict in and across Borderlands

It is now well established that armed conflicts are gendered phenomena; gender norms, relations, and expectations shape and are shaped by conflicts. Evolving research in the field of gender and armed conflict has **significantly sharpened understandings of drivers of conflict, consequences of conflict, and consequent cycles of conflict**. Emerging studies continue to illuminate gendered patterns underpinning drivers and dynamics of conflict far beyond dominant narratives of armed conflict pitting men and boys as inevitably violent and women and girls as the inevitable victims of men's violence, and peacemakers in its aftermath. Indeed, these deepen what we know about **who drives conflict dynamics, who supports and sustains conflict, about who gains and who is forced to endure the consequences of conflict, why, and with what effect**. For example, we now have a much clearer understanding of 1) how **ideals of masculinity and manhood** – and the

challenges to attaining these in conflict contexts combined with the easy access to weapons – can drive violence; 2) of the **surprising, and often invisible, ways women support and sustain conflict dynamics**, including by transporting weapons, encouraging men to fight, and securing revenue through informal trade; 3) of **gendered distributions and experiences of insecurities and vulnerabilities in conflict contexts, including but not limited to sexual violence, and their differential impacts on women, men, boys, and girls, and increasingly, of individuals identifying or identified as LGBTI**. In important ways, this growing research supports the design, implementation, and evaluation of efforts to promote sustainable and inclusive peace in conflict-affected regions. Yet, a great deal to be learnt about the particularities of these gendered drivers and dynamics of conflict in and across borderlands settings.

Guiding Research Questions for Gendering Conflict:

- ❖ What are the needs, roles, interests, and experiences of women, men, boys, and girls driving conflict in and across conflict borderlands?
- ❖ How do borderlands contexts bear upon participation in and experiences of gendered patterns of conflict drivers and dynamics in settings of organised violence?
- ❖ Which women do and do not participate in and/or experience conflict dynamics in conflict borderlands, why (not), with what implications for settings of organised violence?
- ❖ Which men do and do not participate in and/or experience conflict dynamics in conflict borderlands, why (not), with what implications for settings of organised violence?
- ❖ Which intersecting identity markers interact with gendered conflict drivers and dynamics to bear upon participation in and experiences of conflict in settings of organised violence?
- ❖ How do different gendered drivers and dynamics of conflict in and across borderlands intensify, sustain, or alleviate conflict in settings of organised violence?

2 - Gendering Mobility in and across Borderlands

People move across borders in conflict-affected regions for a whole host of reasons: civilian populations flee across borders; combatants and their dependents retreat across borders in the midst of military defeat; while 'shadow war economies' rely on the quotidian cross-border movement of informal traders. **There are gendered stories underpinning each type of cross-border movements, each of which reflect, produce and impact on connections between settings of organised violence.** It is well-documented that, whether as migrants, refugees, migrants, traders, victims/survivors of trafficking and smuggling, or combatants, a person's gender identity impacts on every stage of the journey. In effect, **gender norms, dynamics, and expectations influence who moves, why, under what conditions, and through what means.**

Gender identity also, however, impacts on assumptions made about 'people on the move'. Assumptions of gender and gendered assumptions therefore impact on how gendered bodies are perceived, counted, and responded to by national and international actors, potentially limiting access protection mechanisms or reducing suspicions surrounding mobility. **Understanding the gendered patterns of movement and the connections they forge, therefore, offers significant insights into the social fabric, to state-society relations, to conflict dynamics, their connections, and their consequences.** Moreover, understanding why people move, under what consequences, and to what ends, can shed light on their experiences, interests, and potential needs, including protection, in and across borderlands.

Guiding Research Questions:

- ❖ What are the needs, roles, interests and experiences of women, men, boys, and girls moving in and across conflict borderlands?
- ❖ How do borderlands contexts permit or restrict different gendered patterns of cross-border mobility in settings of organised violence?
- ❖ Which women do and do move across borders, why (not), and with what implications for conflict dynamics in conflict borderlands?
- ❖ Which men do and do move across borders, why (not), and with what implications for conflict dynamics in conflict borderlands?
- ❖ Which identity markers interact with gender to permit or restrict cross-border mobility in settings of organised violence?
- ❖ How do different gendered patterns of mobilities in and across conflict borderlands intensify, sustain, or alleviate conflict in settings of organised violence?

3 - Gendering Peace in and across Borderlands

Just as war and armed conflict are gendered, so are peace and the mechanisms towards achieving it. While women are conventionally cast as peacemakers, notable exceptions notwithstanding, they continue to be systematically excluded from formal peace processes and conflict resolution mechanisms. Yet, studies continually show that **where women do participate in peace processes, the probability of violence ending increases and their effects are longer lasting.** Moreover, studies further demonstrate that across a number of (post)conflict contexts, women taken on greater roles in public and political life in the aftermath of war. Closer and more critical appraisals of such gendered trends, however, raise important questions as **to which women have access to (formal) political spaces, to as the nature and limits of their power, and its implications for inclusive, intersectional, and sustainable peace,**

notably at the peripheries of conflict-affected states. Gendered approaches to peacebuilding illuminate not only the roles of women in formal political life, but their roles, opportunities, and constraints in community-level, and often informal, peacebuilding mechanisms. Indeed, given their roles and positions in society, women tend to be especially attuned to the dynamic and non-linear transitions from war to peace, as well as their consequences. As such, women's potential and limits in settings of organised violence, particularly in locales removed from political centres of influence, are certainly worthy of further critical enquiry and analysis. **Ensuring an inclusive and relational understanding of gendered peacebuilding, however, must also include attention to dynamics permitting and restricting differently positioned women's, men's, girls' and boys' access to and participation in efforts to forge peace.**

Guiding Research Questions:

- ❖ What are the needs, roles, interests, and experiences of women, men, boys and girls building peace in and across conflict borderlands?
- ❖ How do borderlands contexts permit or restrict opportunities for building peace, for women, men, boys, and girls?
- ❖ Which women do and do not build peace, why (not), with what implications for conflict dynamics in borderlands?
- ❖ Which men do and do not build peace, why (not), with what implications for conflict dynamics in borderlands?
- ❖ Which intersecting identity markers permit and limit gendered peacebuilding in conflict borderlands, why, with what effect on conflict dynamics in borderlands?
- ❖ How do different gendered dynamics of peacebuilding intensify, sustain, or alleviate conflict in settings of organised violence?

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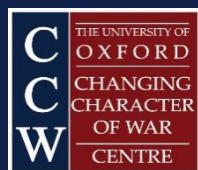
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